

Instructional Practices in Dual Language Immersion Classrooms:  
A Case Study from a Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy Perspective

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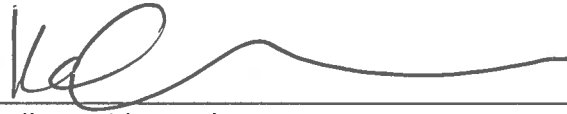
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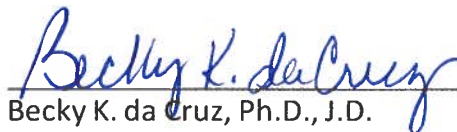
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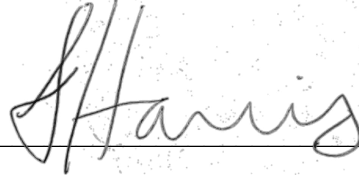
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## ABSTRACT

The number of Dual Language Immersion (DLI) programs in the United States have grown significantly in recent years, but research often overlooked the instructional tools and practices teachers use in DLI classrooms. This is especially true for those aligned with Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy (CSP). This study explored instructional practices that elementary immersion teachers at a Georgia school used to support students in developing proficiency in both English and the target language while ensuring academic achievement and intercultural competence. The study focused on practices that support linguistic and academic development while sustaining the cultural heritage of diverse student populations, which aligns with CSP principles.

Data collected through interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis revealed that teachers used strategies such as visual aids, sentence stems, and structured routines to support language development and create inclusive classrooms. Collaborative learning activities promoted language acquisition, social-emotional skills, and academic success while incorporating community languages and challenging deficit mindsets. Teachers integrated cultural relevance into instruction to foster engagement and sustain students' cultural identities. These findings provide valuable insights into effective instructional practices in DLI classrooms, offering implications for theory, practice, and future research.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I started my doctoral program in 2019, not realizing how much the world and my own life would change. Over the past five and a half years, I've relied on my faith in God and all the incredible people who have supported me.

First, I want to honor my grandmother. Her wisdom and steady encouragement guided me for as long as I can remember. Although she passed away soon after I started, her legacy inspires me daily.

I owe special thanks to my two sons, Matthew and Alexander. Matthew was born in the middle of this program and would sit on my lap during online classes. It was challenging, but it reminded me why this work matters so much.

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I am fortunate to work in a position where I can apply my research right away. Seeing it benefit others has been one of the best parts of this entire experience.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>ABSTRACT</b> .....	<b>i</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b> .....	<b>ii</b>
<b>LIST OF TABLES</b> .....	<b>vi</b>
<b>LIST OF FIGURES</b> .....	<b>vii</b>
<b>CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION</b> .....	<b>1</b>
Background.....	3
Instructional Practices.....	11
Problem Statement.....	14
Purpose of Study.....	15
Research Questions.....	16
Theoretical Framework.....	17
Significance of Study.....	19
Reflexivity/Positionality Statement.....	20
Researcher Assumptions and Delimitations.....	21
Definitions of Terms.....	23
Summary.....	24
<b>CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW</b> .....	<b>26</b>
Theoretical Framework.....	26
Overview of DLI.....	30
Instructional Practices in DLI.....	45
Teachers’ Roles and Practices in Implementing CSP in DLI Classrooms.....	56
Gaps in Literature.....	58

Summary .....	58
<b>CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY .....</b>	<b>61</b>
Purpose of Study .....	61
Research Design.....	63
Setting .....	64
Participants.....	65
Instruments of Data Collection .....	67
Research Procedures .....	74
Data Analysis .....	76
Summary .....	80
<b>CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS .....</b>	<b>82</b>
Overview of Data Collection .....	82
Data Analysis .....	86
Presentation of Findings .....	89
Summary .....	131
<b>CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION .....</b>	<b>134</b>
Summary of Key Findings .....	135
Implications for Effective Practice .....	189
Limitations .....	197
Recommendations for Future Research .....	198
Conclusion .....	201
<b>REFERENCES.....</b>	<b>203</b>
Appendix A: Invitation to Participate Email Template .....	221

Appendix B: Interview Protocol for Dual Language Immersion Teachers .....	223
Appendix C: Research Statement (Interview – recorded) .....	228
Appendix D: Observation Protocol for Dual Language Immersion Classrooms .....	231
Appendix E: Document Analysis Protocol.....	234
Appendix F: IRB Research Proposal Cover Sheet .....	237
Appendix G: Valdosta State University IRB Approval.....	239

**LIST OF TABLES**

Table 1: Participant Information.....	84
Table 2: Educational Background and Interview Completion.....	85
Table 3: Lessons Observed and Artifacts Collected.....	85
Table 4: Initial Codes, Categories, and Final Themes.....	88
Table 5: Data Summary .....	89

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Integrating Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy into Dual Language Immersion .....	56
Figure 2: Summarizing Activity Slide from Andre’s Classroom .....	91
Figure 3: Math Lesson Visual Aid from Etienne’s Classroom.....	92
Figure 4: Math Lesson Visual Aid from Graham’s Classroom .....	93
Figure 5: Math Lesson Using the Gradual Release Model from Mareus’s Classroom .....	93
Figure 6: Science Lesson Activator from Paul’s Classroom .....	94
Figure 7: Math Lesson Guided Practice from Piton’s Classroom .....	95
Figure 8: Social Studies Lesson Activator from Simon’s Classroom.....	96
Figure 9: Turn and Talk points in Andre’s Lesson Slide Deck .....	99
Figure 10: Collaborative Group Work in Etienne’s Classroom.....	100
Figure 11: List of Math Collaborative Stations and Pictures of Bins in Graham’s Class .....	101
Figure 12: “We Do” in Paul’s Lesson Plan .....	102
Figure 13: Norms for Collaboration in Simon’s Classroom.....	103
Figure 14: Partitioning Shapes Using Chocolate Bars in Graham’s Classroom.....	109
Figure 15: Differentiation Strategies in Simon’s Lesson Plans .....	121
Figure 16: Alignment of Themes and Strategies with Critical Elements of CSP.....	188

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

During a classroom observation, second-grade students engage in a collaborative conversation while solving a word problem. Student one presented the problem to the group in Spanish: “Aquí está nuestro primer problema: Ana tiene 5 manzanas y Juan tiene 3 manzanas. ¿Cuántas manzanas tienen en total?” The students collaborated and used a mix of Spanish and English to solve the problem, demonstrating their understanding of both the math concept and the language. This is not happening in a class in Madrid or Mexico City but in a dual language immersion (DLI) classroom in Georgia. Since kindergarten, these students have spent half the school day learning entirely in Spanish. It is one of several DLI programs in the school district. DLI is an educational program where students learn academic content in English and a target language, which refers to the second language students are learning (Christian, 2016; Trawick-Smith et al., 2022). Many school districts around the United States are starting DLI programs to enrich bilingual skills, support English language development, promote cultural awareness and understanding, and improve academic achievement (Burkhauser et al., 2016; Canas et al., 2020).

According to the United States Census Bureau (2022), 20% of Americans can speak two or more languages, compared with 56% of Europeans. Despite this difference, DLI is gaining popularity throughout the United States for several reasons, such as its potential to provide students with cognitive, socioemotional, economic, and cultural benefits (Martínez-Vicente et al., 2023; Neveu et al., 2021). Many school districts are also focused on educating the nation’s

millions of multilingual learners (MLs) (Mitchell, 2019). (The terms “English Language Learner” (ELL) and “English Learners” (ELs) are often used to describe the academic English learning process and the students learning English (Negrette, 2020). The Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) (2024) uses “English Learner” as the preferred term, but there is a growing acceptance for “Multilingual Learners” (MLs) as a more asset-based term that better represents these students’ diverse linguistic skills (Harman et al., 2020; Hernández et al., 2022; Yoon, 2023). One result has been an expansion of bilingual education, such as DLI programs, to help United States students catch up with their international peers. As a result of this rapid growth, many teachers hired to teach in DLI programs lack specific training in immersion pedagogy (Cammarata & Tedick, 2012; Hernández et al., 2022). This lack of training is because they typically come from traditional educator preparation programs that do not offer specialized training in this area. Teaching in an immersion setting requires an understanding of second language acquisition theories and the ability to integrate content from various subjects, such as mathematics, science, social studies, and language arts (Aguirre-Muñoz et al., 2023; Cammarata & Tedick, 2012; Hernández et al., 2022). Georgia State University started a DLI teacher endorsement program in 2019, but it is the only one of its kind in Georgia (Georgia State University, 2023).

This study aimed to explore and describe the instructional practices that elementary immersion teachers used to teach in a DLI classroom with the intent to support students in developing proficiency in both English and the target language while ensuring both academic achievement and intercultural competence (Byram, 2021; Trawick-Smith et al., 2022). In line with culturally sustaining pedagogy (CSP) principles (Paris, 2012; Paris & Alim, 2017), this study focused on practices that support linguistic and academic development and sustain and

nurture the cultural heritage of diverse student populations. This chapter provides an introduction, background on the concepts of DLI, describes the significance of the problem, and contextualizes the study. This chapter also introduces the research methodology and presents an overview of the next chapter.

### **Background**

According to the GaDOE, during the 2013-2014 school year, the state had six DLI programs. As of 2024-2025, there were 83 DLI programs in the state with additional programs planned (GaDOE, 2024). While the first DLI program in Georgia was established in 2007 (GaDOE, 2024), in the United States, DLI can be traced back to the early 20th century when immigration increased significantly due to economic opportunities, political instability, and changes to immigration policies (Crawford, 1989). At first, public schools implemented bilingual education programs to accommodate the needs of immigrant students who spoke languages other than English, serving primarily as a tool to help them acculturate and transition to English (Crawford, 1989).

Over time, the context and goals of bilingual education evolved. The Civil Rights Movement and a growing awareness of cultural and linguistic diversity in the United States led to the popularity of bilingual education in the 1960s and 1970s (Canas et al., 2020; Christian, 2016; Kim et al., 2013). This increased awareness led to the passing of the Bilingual Education Act in 1968, which supported the education of ML students by providing funding for the development of bilingual education programs (Kim et al., 2013). Flores and Murillo (2001) noted that the 1980s and 1990s also saw a shift toward promoting multilingualism in native English speakers through DLI programs.

Today, DLI programs are different from early bilingual education in that they emphasize not only language acquisition but also the development of cultural competence and intercultural understanding (Kim et al., 2013). These programs can be found in public, private, and charter schools (Center for Applied Linguistics, 2020). According to the Center for Applied Linguistics (2020), target languages for DLI programs in the United States can vary, with some of the most common languages being Spanish, French, and Chinese.

DLI programs offer students an education in two languages using several models (Christian, 2011; Collier & Thomas, 2020). These models differ based on the proportion of instruction time spent teaching in each language and the type of learners they serve. The most popular model within these programs is the partial immersion or 50:50 model, which divides instruction evenly between English and the target language (Collier & Thomas, 2017). There is also the total immersion or 90:10 model, where students receive 90% of their instruction in the target language and 10% in English (Center for Applied Linguistics, 2020). Variations of the total immersion model also exist, such as the 80:20 and 70:30 models, where students spend 70-80% of instructional time in the target language, gradually transitioning to English (Christian, 2011).

DLI programs can also be categorized based on the type of learners they serve. In one-way immersion (OWI) programs, most students are native English speakers learning a second language (Collier & Thomas, 2020). Two-way immersion (TWI) programs have approximately half native speakers of the target language and half native English speakers. In developmental bilingual programs and heritage language immersion, most students, if not all, are native speakers of the target language (Ayscue & Uzzell, 2022; Canas et al., 2020; Christian, 2011). In the Southeast, most DLI programs are either TWI or developmental bilingual programs designed

primarily to serve MLs. These students, whose first language is not English, are acquiring English language proficiency and often receive English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) services (González-Carriedo et al., 2016). MLs in these programs learn simultaneously in English and their home language, typically Spanish (González-Carriedo et al., 2016). These models have led to diverse approaches to bilingual education.

Research into DLI programs supports academic, linguistic and cognitive benefits (Baker, 2018; Bibler, 2021; Burkhauser et al., 2016; González-Carriedo et al., 2016; Li et al., 2016; Mancilla-Martinez et al., 2020; Martínez-Vicente et al., 2023; Steele et al., 2017). These advantages help foster a rich and diverse learning environment (de Oliveira, 2021). A primary goal of TWI programs is to support MLs in developing English language proficiency while preserving and enhancing their native language skills (Ayscue & Uzzell, 2022; González-Carriedo et al., 2016). In TWI programs, students acquire content knowledge in their native language and English, enabling them to achieve high language proficiency and academic success in both languages (Ramírez et al., 2018). These programs help students appreciate different languages and cultures, leading them to have positive attitudes toward linguistic and cultural diversity (Freeman & Freeman, 2004; Kotok & DeMatthews, 2017). TWI programs also foster a supportive learning environment that promotes equity, as both MLs and native English speakers have the opportunity to learn from each other and develop a mutual understanding of their diverse backgrounds (Ayscue & Uzzell, 2022; de Oliveira, 2021; González-Carriedo et al., 2016).

The three main goals of DLI programs are to promote bilingualism and biliteracy, increase academic achievement, and promote cultural awareness and understanding (Baker, 2018; Bibler, 2021; Li et al., 2016; Mancilla-Martinez et al., 2020; Steele et al., 2017). Research

findings have consistently supported that students in DLI programs achieve high proficiency levels in their first and second languages (Collier & Thomas, 2020; Lindholm-Leary, 2021). Burkhauser et al.'s (2016) work with 1,285 Portland Public School DLI students found that by 8th grade, the average DLI students scored at least Intermediate Low or higher on the Standards-based Measurement of Proficiency (STAMP) language proficiency assessment. School districts use the STAMP assessment to measure students' language proficiency nationwide (Burkhauser et al., 2016; Steele et al., 2017). DLI programs also enhance cultural awareness and understanding, with students having a more positive attitude toward linguistic and cultural diversity (Freeman & Freeman, 2004). This happens because DLI programs immerse students in a linguistically and culturally diverse environment, leading to learning that can shift attitudes and perspectives (de Oliveira, 2021; Derman-Sparks, 2008).

There are also social benefits to being in a DLI program (Kotok & DeMatthews, 2017). Students in a DLI classroom are usually more culturally and linguistically diverse (Kotok & DeMatthews, 2017). In their article, Kotok and DeMatthews (2017) discussed the social benefits of students being exposed to classmates of different cultures and linguistic backgrounds and using DLI to encourage racial and economic diversity in school districts nationwide. Participating in a DLI program helps students understand and appreciate the cultural diversity in their classrooms by connecting language with culture (Martínez et al., 2017). For Spanish-speaking students, social advantages include increased pride in their culture and language (González-Carriedo et al., 2016). This pride intrinsically motivates students to learn and allows teachers to create a more equitable learning environment (de Oliveira, 2021; González-Carriedo et al., 2016).

DLI programs can offer a variety of benefits for students, including higher test scores and cognitive improvements that extend beyond the classroom (Neveu et al., 2021). Students in DLI programs performed as well as or better than those in traditional classrooms on standardized assessments (Bibler, 2021; Burkhauser et al., 2016; Steele et al., 2017). In 2017, Steele et al. used data from over 20,000 DLI students to estimate the causal effects of standardized test scores. They discovered that fifth and eighth graders in DLI programs showed better reading performance. This improvement was mainly because these students received an extra seven to nine months of instruction in English Language Arts, achieved by integrating ELA instruction in both their home language and English (Steele et al., 2017). The study found that students in DLI programs did not show improvement in math and science scores. However, they performed just as well as those in English-only classrooms (Steele et al., 2017).

Students in DLI programs are also less likely to drop out of school (Burkhauser et al., 2016). These educational benefits show why expanding DLI programs in American schools is so important. By equipping students with a second language, DLI programs allow them access to more global opportunities (Burkhauser et al., 2016). Speaking multiple languages provides students with a future where they can communicate with more people. These multilingual adults have more job opportunities both in the United States and internationally (Kotok & DeMatthews, 2017).

DLI research findings support cognitive advantages to learning multiple languages (Burkhauser et al., 2016; Martínez-Vicente et al., 2023; Steele et al., 2017), including improved memory, increased focus, and problem-solving skills (Li et al., 2016). Burkhauser et al. (2016) found that students in DLI programs often translate information quickly and efficiently. This frequent language switching helps improve their executive functions. Since most DLI programs

start in kindergarten, students develop executive control earlier than those in traditional classrooms (Baker, 2018). From the beginning of the program, teachers fully engage students in the target language (González-Carriedo et al., 2016). Students actively build their understanding by linking what they already know with new language skills, which requires them to quickly grasp and adapt to language challenges (Cummins, 2000; Harman et al., 2020). These cognitive advantages continue to increase as students use and master both languages and continues into adulthood (Li et al., 2016). In addition to the benefits mentioned above, research has also shown that adult bilingualism can delay the onset of Alzheimer's disease (Jafari et al., 2021). This finding further demonstrates the long-term cognitive advantages associated with bilingualism and participation in DLI programs.

Focusing specifically on the benefits of DLI programs for MLs, one of the main advantages of DLI as an ESOL program model is that it supports the development of bilingualism and biliteracy in students (González-Carriedo et al., 2016). Burkhauser et al. (2016) stated that Spanish-speaking MLs attained higher English proficiency rates at a faster pace. This advantage means students spent less time receiving ESOL services than MLs in standard monolingual programs (Burkhauser et al., 2016). Mancilla-Martinez et al. (2020) researched English reading comprehension of Spanish-speaking students from low-income homes in a Spanish DLI program. They found that students' English reading comprehension increased as their Spanish reading proficiency and comprehension increased (Mancilla-Martinez et al., 2020). These benefits encourage school districts to develop high-quality DLI programs to support the increasing number of MLs in public schools.

However, teaching in a DLI program comes with challenges, as it requires specialized teaching methods and a deep understanding of effective approaches. A DLI program needs well-

organized structures (Palmer et al., 2015), thorough and multi-level assessment methods (de Valenzuela et al., 2022; Steele et al., 2017), and continuous professional development for teachers (Cammarata & Tedick, 2012). The language proficiency of instructors is crucial in DLI programs (González-Carriedo et al., 2016), as the bilingual setting requires advanced skills to teach effectively in both English and the target language.

Besides these challenges, TWI programs face specific issues that need careful attention. These include multilingual learners needing time to catch up academically (Lindholm-Leary, 2021) and initially underperforming in grade-level work (Genesee & Lindholm-Leary, 2013). Other issues involve assessing reading skills in the non-English language (Lindholm-Leary, 2021), managing language use in the classroom (Potowski, 2007), and the pressure on administrators to prioritize English instruction (Lindholm-Leary, 2021). To address these challenges, effective language acquisition strategies, support for language use, and appropriate assessment practices are essential (de Valenzuela et al., 2022; Lindholm-Leary, 2021; Potowski, 2007). Additionally, managing assessment issues is important because English reading proficiency is linked to proficiency in the target language (de Valenzuela et al., 2022; Lindholm-Leary & Howard, 2008). CSP can play a key role in effectively addressing the linguistic and educational diversity within DLI programs (Paris, 2012).

CSP encourages teachers to incorporate their students' lived experiences and funds of knowledge (FoK) into the classroom (Moll, 2019). FoK refer to the valuable skills and knowledge students gain from their cultural backgrounds and life experiences. These funds connect what students know from their everyday lives to their academic learning, leading to a deeper understanding of the material. Both DLI programs and CSP aim to build intercultural competence and foster an appreciation for diversity in the classroom. DLI programs, particularly

TWI initiatives, focus on promoting bilingualism and intercultural understanding among native English speakers and emerging bilingual students (Ayscue & Uzzell, 2022; Baker, 2018).

Similarly, CSP supports all students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds and strives to provide equal learning opportunities for everyone (Paris, 2012).

By integrating CSP into DLI programs, educators can create learning environments that promote bilingualism and help students understand different cultural perspectives. This approach leverages the valuable cultural and life experiences that students bring from their homes and communities (de Oliveira, 2021; Gay, 2010; Moll, 2019). By fostering an inclusive and culturally supportive environment, DLI programs that incorporate CSP can enhance both the academic and social success of all students. Additionally, using CSP in DLI classrooms can address challenges faced by linguistically and culturally diverse students, such as the reading-vocabulary gap and underrepresentation in advanced programs (Mancilla-Martinez et al., 2020).

While the theoretical framework of CSP can significantly influence the success of DLI programs, observing its application in practice is essential for understanding its real-world effects. Alexander Matthew Elementary School (AMES) in Georgia, is a leading example of a successful TWI program within the state. The school entered its eleventh year of implementing the DLI program in the 2024-2025 school year. As one of the pioneering DLI initiatives, AMES was among the first three elementary schools in the district to start DLI in 2014 (GaDOE, 2024). Each year, the DLI program adds a new grade level, beginning with kindergarten and advancing students to higher grades. In the 2024-2025 school year, the first group of students entered 10th grade and continued in the DLI program. AMES's DLI program promotes bilingualism and incorporates elements of CSP as key teaching strategies. In this setting, CSP supports all

students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds and promotes equal learning opportunities (Paris, 2012).

Building on this success, AMES achieved impressive results, meeting and exceeding state expectations despite the challenges of implementing and maintaining the program (GaDOE, 2024). The school's strong performance highlighted the positive outcomes of the DLI program. Exploring the DLI program at AMES, with its notable achievements and use of CSP, provided valuable insights into bilingual education and its effectiveness.

### **Instructional Practices**

One key instructional practice in DLI programs is the use of comprehensible input. Comprehensible input involves using language that is both meaningful and understandable for learners, gradually increasing in complexity (Krashen, 1982). Also known as the 'i + 1' principle, this approach ensures that instruction matches the learner's current proficiency level while encouraging further language development (Krashen, 1982, p. 20). When combined with CSP principles, comprehensible input can significantly enhance learning outcomes by creating a more inclusive and engaging classroom environment (Paris, 2012).

Interactive activities and collaborative learning are essential instructional practices in DLI programs (Collier & Thomas, 2017; Johnson, 2008; Slavin et al., 2011; Squire & Clark, 2020) that can align with CSP. Through activities like role-playing and group discussions, students develop their language and problem-solving skills by examining, evaluating, and synthesizing information (Collier & Thomas, 2017). Building on these foundational practices, students engage in dialogues and problem-solving tasks that require them to use language creatively to find answers or create group products. This approach highlights the importance of collaborative learning in language instruction. Methods such as role-play and group discussions allow students

to incorporate their unique cultural experiences, which acknowledges and affirms their cultural identities (Paris & Alim, 2017).

According to research published by Collier and Thomas (2017), interactive activities promoting critical thinking can significantly enhance language development and academic achievement in DLI classes. Collaborative learning, where students work together in pairs or small groups, also supports language development (Slavin et al., 2011; Squire & Clark, 2020). Johnson (2008) found that collaborative learning activities in DLI classrooms led to improved language skills and higher student engagement. By connecting these tasks to students' cultural backgrounds and experiences, educators create more relevant and engaging learning experiences, further advancing language development and academic progress (Paris, 2012; Paris & Alim, 2017).

Translanguaging is an effective instructional practice in DLI programs that allows learners to use their full linguistic repertoire for learning and communication (Creese & Blackledge, 2010; Dougherty, 2021; Palmer et al., 2014). Beyond just a language technique, translanguaging connects language to culture, identity, and learning. This approach empowers students to fully utilize their linguistic abilities, enhancing their understanding of the material and deepening the connection between their cultural experiences and learning.

Translanguaging aligns with the principles of CSP. CSP connects classroom learning to students' real-life experiences. In doing so, it protects and nurtures both cultural and linguistic skills. These skills are crucial for students' academic growth (Paris, 2012). This framework recognizes that meaningful learning requires integrating students' dynamic cultural identities and FoK (Paris, 2012). Therefore, combining translanguaging with CSP can significantly enhance instructional effectiveness in a DLI context.

Palmer et al. (2014) supported this view, suggesting that translanguaging encourages a more fluid and realistic use of language in DLI. By applying CSP principles, translanguaging challenges the traditional classroom practice of keeping languages separate (Creese & Blackledge, 2010). Instead, it promotes an inclusive and dynamic approach to language use, mirroring how we naturally communicate in real-life situations (Palmer et al., 2014). This approach not only facilitates language learning but also creates a culturally affirming environment that values the rich linguistic diversity of students (Durán et al., 2022; Johnson, 2008; Paris & Alim, 2017).

CSP plays an important role by encouraging teachers to consider students' diverse cultural backgrounds and experiences (Paris & Alim, 2017). Integrating these elements into teaching practices can help educators build and sustain a dynamic, inclusive learning space where everyone feels valued. Along with the instructional practices discussed previously, several pedagogical best practices can support the success of DLI students. These include providing explicit and structured instruction, using authentic materials and real-world tasks, and differentiating instruction to meet individual students' needs (Collier & Thomas, 2017; Du, 2004; Tomlinson, 2017). Teachers should also foster a positive and supportive learning environment that encourages risk-taking and the use of the new language (Lindholm-Leary, 2021). For example, Du (2004) found that teachers who employed a variety of teaching strategies and created a supportive learning environment in DLI classrooms were more effective in promoting language development and academic achievement.

DLI teachers often implement CSP by incorporating students' cultural backgrounds and experiences into their lessons, making the curriculum more relevant and engaging (Paris, 2012). This approach may include using culturally relevant texts, discussing social issues, and

encouraging students to explore their own cultural identities and those of others (de Oliveira, 2021; Gay, 2010). By integrating CSP into their instruction, teachers can make learning feel more personal and helps students relate better to each other (Paris & Alim, 2017).

Recent studies have called for more research into effective teaching practices within DLI to help guide educators in implementing successful and sustainable programs (Baker, 2018; Li et al., 2016; Mancilla-Martinez et al., 2020; Steele et al., 2017). Research findings support DLI programs as effective in supporting the language and academic development of students (Collier & Thomas, 2020). However, there is a need to understand the specific teaching practices that elementary immersion teachers use in DLI classrooms (Lyster, 2007). This understanding is crucial for fostering proficiency in both English and the target language, while also promoting academic success and intercultural competence.

### **Problem Statement**

In recent years, research on DLI programs has grown significantly, emphasizing their benefits for students (Li et al., 2016; Mancilla-Martinez et al., 2020). These studies offer important findings on student outcomes. However, they often overlook the instructional tools and practices that teachers use in DLI classrooms, especially those aligned with CSP.

While examining student outcomes can indicate the effectiveness of DLI programs, it does not always clarify which specific teaching strategies contribute to these results. Current research provides limited information about the instructional methods that contribute to effective language and academic growth, including those that may incorporate CSP. Few studies focus on how teachers implement language-rich instruction, support students' language growth, or manage the diverse linguistic and cultural dynamics in DLI classrooms. This gap highlights the

need for more research to inform CSP-focused teacher training and professional development for DLI educators.

The lack of research on DLI instructional strategies, especially those rooted in CSP, has several consequences. According to Hansen-Thomas et al. (2014), a lack of research knowledge makes it difficult for teachers to effectively support students' language and academic development. Teacher practices play a critical role in student outcomes, making it essential to understand and implement effective strategies (Darling-Hammond & Wei, 2012).

Limited research also hinders the development of training and professional development programs for DLI educators, resulting in insufficient support (Hansen-Thomas et al., 2014). As a result, there may be a lack of support for DLI teachers, which can contribute to teacher burnout and turnover, ultimately threatening the continuity of DLI programs (Aguirre-Muñoz et al., 2023). Additionally, understanding effective teaching practices is vital for identifying strategies that help DLI teachers address challenges, particularly those within the CSP framework. Without this research, school districts may struggle to create culturally sustaining policies and practices that benefit both teachers and students.

### **Purpose of Study**

The purpose of this study was to explore and describe the instructional practices that elementary immersion teachers used in DLI classrooms at a specific elementary school. These practices aimed to support students in developing proficiency in both English and the target language while ensuring academic achievement and intercultural competence through a CSP lens (Paris, 2012; Paris & Alim, 2017). Exploring these instructional practices was crucial, as it highlighted effective strategies that contribute to student success in DLI programs (DeMatthews & Izquierdo, 2017; Li et al., 2016).

By examining these practices, educators and policymakers can gain a better understanding of the teaching approaches that promote language proficiency, academic achievement, and intercultural competence. The results can inform the development of more effective teacher training and professional development programs for DLI educators, ultimately leading to improved student outcomes (Baker, 2018). This study identified successful practices that support language development, academic achievement, and intercultural competence in DLI programs. This understanding is essential for implementing and refining DLI programs to ensure their success and continuity (Lyster, 2007).

This study used a qualitative case study research design to examine instructional practices that elementary immersion teachers used to teach in a DLI classroom. This research design was appropriate for understanding how teachers navigate teaching within a DLI and CSP setting, as it allowed for a closer look at the participants' real experiences (Patton, 2015). Data was collected through interviews, classroom observations, and an analysis of teaching materials used in the selected school to provide a complete picture of the instructional practices.

### **Research Questions**

Exploring instructional practices was crucial for identifying effective teaching strategies and those that may require improvement or modification (DeMatthews & Izquierdo, 2017; Li et al., 2016). The purpose of this study was to investigate and describe the instructional practices used by elementary immersion teachers in a DLI program at a specific elementary school. By examining these practices through a CSP lens (Paris, 2012; Paris & Alim, 2017), the study aimed to support students in developing proficiency in both English and the target language while ensuring academic achievement and intercultural competence. This study employed a qualitative case study research design to examine instructional practices in the DLI classroom context

(Patton, 2015) utilizing interviews, classroom observations, and the analysis of teaching artifacts as data collection methods. The findings will inform the development of more effective teacher training and professional development programs for DLI teachers, ultimately leading to better student outcomes (Baker, 2018).

1. How do elementary immersion teachers in a DLI classroom employ instructional practices that support students' language development, academic achievement, and intercultural competence through a CSP lens?
  - a. In what ways do these instructional practices promote intercultural competence in students?
  - b. How do instructional practices integrate curriculum content of various disciplines with target language instruction that adheres to the principles of CSP?
2. What challenges do elementary immersion teachers face when implementing a CSP approach in a DLI classroom, and how do they address these challenges?

### **Theoretical Framework**

DLI teachers must use instructional practices to effectively cater to their students' diverse linguistic, academic, and cultural necessities, all within their classroom environment (Lyster, 2007). These needs include developing bilingual abilities, academic proficiency, and intercultural competence.

CSP provides a crucial framework for developing and implementing instructional techniques in DLI programs (Paris, 2012; Paris & Alim, 2017). To properly recognize and sustain the rich cultural diversity typical of DLI classrooms, these teaching practices should align with the principles of CSP. The methods must aim to respect and foster students' cultures and languages while concurrently providing them with opportunities to learn and achieve proficiency

in the dominant language and culture. Fundamentally, these techniques should seek to integrate the preservation of cultural identities with the acquisition of new linguistic and cultural skills (Paris & Alim, 2017).

The effectiveness of teaching techniques that DLI educators use depends on their alignment with the central goals of DLI programs, including bilingualism and biliteracy, grade-level academic proficiency, and sociocultural competence (Baker, 2018). By integrating the principles of CSP into their instructional techniques, educators can successfully navigate the complex linguistic and cultural environment of DLI classrooms. In doing so, they can foster inclusive learning environments that value and support the diverse cultural identities of their students while concurrently promoting their academic and language advancement (Paris, 2012; Paris & Alim, 2017).

CSP, proposed by Paris (2012) and expanded upon by Paris and Alim (2017), builds upon foundational principles of previous pedagogical theories such as culturally relevant pedagogy, culturally responsive pedagogy, and linguistic pedagogy (Paris, 2012). CSP takes a significant step forward by emphasizing acknowledging, nurturing, and fostering students' cultural identities within the educational system (Paris & Alim, 2017). This perspective presents educational institutions as supporters of diverse cultural traditions rather than promoters of cultural assimilation. Additionally, CSP advocates for equality and encourages students to engage thoughtfully with societal structures (Paris, 2012; Paris & Alim, 2017). This commitment to diverse cultures and languages makes CSP a suitable framework for analyzing teaching strategies in the complex, multicultural environment of DLI classrooms. By employing a CSP approach, this study aimed to significantly contribute to improving teacher training and professional

development programs, ultimately enhancing student outcomes in DLI settings (Baker, 2018; Lyster, 2007).

### **Significance of Study**

There is a growing body of research on DLI programs and their impact on student outcomes (Li et al., 2016; Mancilla-Martinez et al., 2020). Furthermore, recent studies by Herrera (2022) and Spycher et al. (2020) have illuminated the roles and practices of teachers implementing CSP within DLI classrooms. Nevertheless, more in-depth qualitative research on specific teaching practices is still needed. Studying instructional practices that elementary immersion teachers use to teach in a DLI classroom is significant, especially when the practices are successful. Though considerable research on DLI programs exists, there remains a gap in qualitative studies that spotlight specific teaching methodologies within this unique context, especially those that align with CSP principles. Addressing this gap is significant for several reasons.

First, this study provided insights into the methods elementary immersion teachers use effectively by aligning with CSP to enhance students' linguistic and academic growth, an aspect highlighted in Baker's (2018) and Li et al.'s (2016) work. This knowledge can inform the development of teacher preparation and professional development programs and provide resources and support for elementary immersion teachers as they work to promote their students' language and academic development (Steele et al., 2017).

Second, a thorough examination of teaching practices aligned with CSP can significantly enhance comprehension of the effectiveness of DLI education (Martínez et al., 2017). By identifying best practices and challenges faced by elementary immersion teachers, school districts can better understand the factors contributing to the success of DLI programs and

identify areas for improvement, a process highlighted in DeMatthews and Izquierdo's (2017) research. This information can inform the design and implementation of DLI programs at the local and national levels, thus reinforcing their efficacy (Baker, 2018).

Finally, this study's results would interest many stakeholders, including educators, policymakers, researchers, and parents. Understanding the best CSP-aligned practices used by elementary immersion teachers can inform the development of effective and sustainable DLI programs that support students' language and academic growth while promoting intercultural competence. Consequently, the influence of such education extends beyond the boundaries of DLI classrooms, considerably contributing to students' overall academic success and personal development within an intercultural society (Byram, 2021).

### **Reflexivity/Positionality Statement**

My educational philosophy has been significantly influenced by my multilingual upbringing. The seeds were planted at Les Gais Lurons in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, where I was taught in both French and Haitian-Creole. At the age of five, immigrating to the United States brought me to a Brooklyn public school that adopted a Haitian-Creole bilingual approach in its ESOL program. Although I may not have fully understood it at the time, this method not only facilitated my adjustment to a new educational system but also ensured I never felt like an outsider, embracing my linguistic heritage. Reflecting back, I can see how those early experiences were instrumental in shaping my understanding of how language education can foster welcoming, learner-centered communities.

As an educator, I've had the privilege of teaching in Spanish and French DLI programs in Georgia, teaching the English component and fostering bilingual proficiency among my students.

These roles provided a practical canvas to observe the efficacy of DLI education and its impact on students' cultural and linguistic identities.

In my current role as a district Multilingual Learner Program Specialist, my primary function is to provide support to ESOL teachers, thereby contributing to the wider goals of multilingual education. Although DLI is recognized as a state-approved model for ESOL in Georgia, it does not fall within the scope of my direct responsibilities. This is a key distinction, as it permits me to independently observe, analyze, and research the implementation and outcomes of the DLI program. My role excludes direct instructional involvement, enabling me to uphold an ethical and impartial perspective in my work.

In approaching this study, I brought a perspective shaped by my personal journey as an immigrant and my professional experiences within education. These experiences are not just biographical facts but informed the way I perceive and engage with DLI education. My intention was to leverage this rich tapestry of experiences to inform a research approach that is both critically aware and sensitive to the nuances of DLI settings. In doing so, I was committed to upholding the highest standards of scholarly rigor and ethical research practices.

This study was not just a professional undertaking but also a personal journey back to the roots of my educational beginnings, providing a platform to contribute meaningfully to the discourse on DLI education. By integrating CSP into this inquiry, I sought to underscore the practices that celebrate and elevate the linguistic and cultural assets that students like my former self brought into the classroom each day.

### **Researcher Assumptions and Delimitations**

According to Creswell (2009), researcher assumptions are beliefs or assumptions the researcher holds about the study topic or population. These assumptions can influence how the

researcher approaches the study and their conclusions from the results. There were several assumptions underlying this study. One assumption was that the elementary immersion teachers who participated in this study had the necessary knowledge and skills to teach in a DLI classroom and support their students' language and academic development. Another assumption was that shared strategies and practices effectively aided in students' language mastery and academic success in alignment with CSP (Paris, 2012; Paris & Alim, 2017).

Delimitations are the specific boundaries or parameters the researcher sets for the study and help define the study's scope and focus (Creswell, 2009). The study was limited to elementary immersion teachers at AMES School who had at least three years of teaching experience. Their greater experience and classroom expertise potentially equipped them to better identify and articulate effective instructional strategies and best practices. The data collected in this study was restricted to the practices that elementary immersion teachers used in a DLI classroom and did not include data on student outcomes or other aspects of the DLI program. Educators' insights and professional evaluations of instructional strategies provided an indirect lens to evaluate their effectiveness. By focusing on instructional practices rather than student outcomes, the study provided a more detailed understanding of the specific techniques and approaches teachers used in the classroom, particularly in the context of DLI and CSP (Paris, 2012; Paris & Alim, 2017). However, it should be noted that while this study did not directly assess student outcomes, the effectiveness of these practices could be inferred from their alignment with successful DLI programs. This approach added a novel perspective to the existing body of research focused on the benefits and outcomes of DLI programs.

## Definitions of Terms

Defining terminologies used throughout the study is important. The definitions will help readers understand what certain terms mean and how they relate to the study's purpose.

**Best practices** - widely accepted, research-based approaches to teaching and learning that have been proven effective in various settings (Li et al., 2016).

**Bilingual education** - refers to the teaching of academic content in two languages, a native and a second language (Baker, 2018).

**Comprehensible input** - language input that is slightly beyond the learner's current level of competence but still understandable (Krashen, 1982)

**Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy (CSP):** A pedagogical approach that seeks to perpetuate and foster—rather than merely recognize and accommodate—linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism as part of the fabric of schooling (Paris, 2012; Paris & Alim, 2017).

**Differentiated instruction** - an approach to teaching in which the teacher adjusts the content, process, or product of instruction based on the needs and abilities of individual students (Tomlinson, 2017).

**Dual language immersion (DLI)** - is an educational program in which students learn academic content in two languages, English and a second target language (Lindholm-Leary, 2021).

**English for speakers of other languages (ESOL)** - a type of educational program or support service provided to students who are learning English as a second or additional language (González-Carriedo et al., 2016).

**English learner (EL)** - a student who is learning English as a second or additional language (Lindholm-Leary, 2021).

**Funds of knowledge (FoK)** - refers to the culturally specific knowledge and skills that individuals acquire through their participation in their communities, families, and cultural practices (Moll, 2019). It highlights the importance of recognizing and valuing this expertise to foster inclusive and culturally responsive educational practices.

**Instructional strategies**- are specific techniques or approaches teachers use to help students learn and understand new material. Examples of instructional strategies include direct instruction, cooperative learning, and problem-based learning (Li et al., 2016).

**Intercultural competence** - the ability to understand, communicate with, and effectively interact with people from different cultural backgrounds (Byram, 2021; Steele et al., 2017).

**Multilingual Learner (ML)**- refer to students in the pre-K-12 school system that speak one or more languages at home other than English (Hernández et al., 2022)

**Scaffolding** - a teaching strategy in which the teacher provides temporary support to help students complete a task or learn a new skill, gradually reducing the support as the students become more proficient (Tomlinson, 2017).

**Target Language** – refers to the language that students are learning in addition to English (Christian, 2016; Collier & Thomas, 2020).

**Vocabulary development** - the process of acquiring new words and increasing understanding of their meanings (Kotok & DeMatthews, 2017).

### **Summary**

The purpose of this study was to explore and describe the instructional practices that elementary immersion teachers used in DLI classrooms at a specific elementary school intending to support students in developing proficiency in both English and the target language while ensuring both academic achievement and intercultural competence through a CSP lens (Paris,

2012; Paris & Alim, 2017). This study used a qualitative case study research design to examine instructional practices that elementary immersion teachers used to teach in a DLI classroom. This research design was appropriate for exploring the complexities of teacher practices within the context of DLI and CSP, as it allowed for an in-depth examination of the unique context and experiences of the participants (Patton, 2015). The study results have implications for the practice and policy of DLI education, as they provide insight into effective teaching strategies and inform the development of professional development opportunities for immersion teachers. Overall, the study aims to contribute to the understanding of teaching in DLI classrooms and support students' language and academic development in these programs.

Chapter 2 will thoroughly discuss the theoretical framework for the study. The literature review will examine relevant research on immersion education, focusing on the strategies and practices used by elementary immersion teachers to support their students' language and academic development in a DLI classroom. The literature review will include an analysis and synthesis of literature supporting language proficiency and academic achievement and promoting intercultural competence in DLI programs. The review will critically evaluate the current knowledge on these issues and identify gaps or areas for further research that may inform the development of effective teaching practices in DLI classrooms.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Dual language immersion (DLI) programs have increased in recent years to promote bilingualism and biliteracy, reduce educational disparities, and foster a more positive cross-cultural understanding among students (Baker, 2018; Li et al., 2016). As these programs grow, educators face unique challenges in effectively teaching diverse student populations. Culturally sustaining pedagogy (CSP), as defined by Paris and Alim (2017), seek to address these challenges by respecting and incorporating students' cultural backgrounds. A deeper understanding of implementing CSP within these settings could be crucial to creating a more inclusive and effective learning environment. This research aimed to identify and describe the instructional practices of elementary immersion teachers in DLI classrooms from the perspective of CSP. The nuanced understanding of these practices is instrumental in building effective DLI programs, shaping more successful MLs, and promoting multicultural education. The current literature review synthesizes, conceptualizes, and explains research related to CSP and associated practices. This chapter covers the following areas: a summary of the research problem, a review of the related literature, and a conclusion that summarizes the key findings and implications of the study.

#### **Theoretical Framework**

According to Maxwell (2013), a theoretical framework consists of a set of assumptions, concepts, and ideas that guide and inform the research process. This section of the literature

review provides a detailed overview of CSP, including its main principles and implications for educational practices (Paris, 2012; Paris & Alim, 2017). For Paris and Alim (2017), the framework offers valuable insights into how education can perpetuate or disrupt inequality and provides strategies to promote equitable educational outcomes for students from diverse backgrounds. This study used CSP to understand and describe the strategies and practices adopted by elementary immersion teachers to provide instruction in DLI classes. It served as a guiding framework for analyzing the research on DLI instructional strategies and practices and helped inform the interpretation of the findings.

CSP is a construct that evolves from and builds upon previous pedagogical theories, notably culturally relevant pedagogies (Ladson-Billings, 1995) and culturally responsive pedagogies (Gay, 2010). It expands on the foundations laid by these earlier pedagogies, which primarily sought to acknowledge and accommodate the cultural diversity present in classrooms. CSP, however, ventures a step further by advocating for the active fostering and sustaining of the cultural practices, languages, and knowledge that students bring to schools (Paris, 2012; Paris & Alim, 2017). This transformation in educational ideology signifies a pivotal paradigm shift, a moment Ladson-Billings (2014, p. 76) metaphorically denotes as when the “beat drops.”

The principles of CSP place emphasis on students’ cultural identities as valuable assets in the learning process (Paris, 2012; Paris & Alim, 2017). Instead of seeing these identities as barriers to overcome, CSP seeks to sustain students’ home languages and cultural practices while simultaneously equipping them with the tools to navigate society. By doing so, CSP acknowledges the role of students’ culture and language in influencing their engagement and achievement in the classroom. Paris and Alim (2017) highlight this point by emphasizing the importance of fostering these cultural identities within the broader society.

CSP greatly values what students bring to the classroom through their funds of knowledge (FoK) (Moll, 2019). The FoK concept represents the cultural knowledge and skills students have already accumulated, which are essential for their well-being and daily life. The democratic process of schooling, as defined by Paris and Alim (2017), emphasizes the active participation of students in their education, fostering a shared decision-making process that values their cultural competencies. By incorporating FoK into teaching, CSP bridges the gap between students' real-world experiences and their classroom learning, aligning with the tenets of the democratic process of schooling. This integration of FoK within CSP, as Paris (2012) discussed, provides meaningful connections between students' lived experiences, cultural and linguistic heritages, and their learning process.

Paris and Alim (2017) outline four critical elements of CSP: incorporation of community languages, practices, and knowledge; emphasizing student and community agency; historicization of content and instruction; and contesting internalized oppressions. The first of these elements, the incorporation of community languages, valued practices, and knowledge, are integral to the curriculum in a CSP-based educational approach (Paris, 2012). This is distinct from traditional teaching methods or even culturally relevant pedagogy where these elements of a student's identity are often seen as supplemental to the core curriculum. In CSP, they are central to the learning experience and are directly tied into classroom projects and units (Paris, 2012; Paris & Alim, 2017).

The second element emphasizes student and community agency, encouraging regular dialogue between educators and the communities they serve. This interaction ensures that the curriculum aligns with community interests and values, fostering cultural continuity in the learning process (Paris, 2012; Paris & Alim, 2017). Moreover, it holds educators accountable to

these communities, enhancing the relevancy of the curriculum, and reinforcing the integration between school and home cultures. The value of this integration is backed by studies that have underscored the positive impact of incorporating community input on student outcomes (Paris, 2012).

The third critical element of CSP calls for the historicization of content and instruction (Paris & Alim, 2017). This implies connecting the present learning materials to the histories of racial, ethnic, and linguistic communities, as well as to those of the neighborhoods and cities in which students live (Paris, 2012; Paris & Alim, 2017). This contextualization deepens the understanding of the subject matter, helping students to see the relevance of their studies to their lives and communities (Paris, 2012; Paris & Alim, 2017).

The fourth element addresses the need to contest internalized oppressions within the context of CSP, meaning challenging narratives of deficiency and encouraging students from diverse backgrounds to value their own culture and communities (Paris, 2012; Paris & Alim, 2017). This approach not only empowers students by strengthening their sense of self-worth and individual identity, but it also drives home the importance of creating and using curriculum that respects and reflects these foundational aspects of CSP.

For DLI classrooms, CSP has substantial implications. First, it requires that teachers perceive the home languages and cultures of their students as valuable resources to be sustained, not problems to be solved (Paris, 2012). This perspective deviates from deficit approaches in education, which often regard the diverse cultures and languages of students as hurdles to overcome rather than assets to leverage. This viewpoint motivates teachers to capitalize on their students' existing knowledge and skills, creating an inclusive atmosphere and enhancing student involvement (Paris & Alim, 2017). Furthermore, CSP compels educators to confront societal

injustices, urging them to scrutinize their teaching methods and course content to ensure they're promoting fairness and not exacerbating existing disparities (Paris, 2012).

In summary, Paris and Alim's (2017) CSP, with its foundations in earlier pedagogies and a forward-thinking focus on fostering and sustaining students' dynamic cultural and linguistic heritages, provides the theoretical framework for this study (Paris & Alim, 2017). This framework, along with its associated concepts like FoK, guides the exploration of diverse teaching strategies and methodologies that aim not only to acknowledge but also to help flourish the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of learners in DLI classrooms. This study endeavored to enrich understanding of how CSP and practices within its umbrella can be implemented within DLI classrooms to provide equitable and effective learning experiences for all students.

### **Overview of DLI**

DLI programs have grown in popularity in recent years to support the simultaneous development of two languages by students in the program. Several studies support that DLI programs can provide a wide array of benefits to students, including enriched academic and linguistic outcomes (Baker, 2018; Collier & Thomas, 2020; Lindholm-Leary, 2021), cognitive benefits such as increased cognitive flexibility and problem-solving abilities (Baker, 2018; Li et al., 2016; Mancilla-Martinez et al., 2020; Neveu et al., 2021). This section provides an overview of DLI programs, beginning with their history and the various types, including two-way immersion (TWI). It then delves into the goals and guiding principles of DLI programs, supported by research findings on their effectiveness. Lastly, it investigates the challenges that emerge during the implementation and maintenance of DLI programs. The aim is to provide a well-rounded understanding of the complexities involved in these educational initiatives.

## **History of DLI**

Bilingual education programs in the United States have a history that dates back to the early 20th century with increased immigration to the country (Crawford, 1989). The programs were initially implemented in public schools to meet the needs of immigrant students who spoke languages other than English. Later, the Civil Rights Movement and greater awareness of cultural and linguistic diversity in the United States led to the popularity of bilingual education in the 1960s and 1970s (Canas et al., 2020; Kim et al., 2013). As noted by Canas et al. (2020) and Kim et al. (2013), the Bilingual Education Act of 1968 provided funding for developing such programs as their popularity increased.

According to Kim et al. (2013), the modern DLI program began in Canada in the 1960s as an educational program for French-speaking children living in English-speaking provinces. Early immersion programs rely on the assumption that children can naturally learn languages, and immersion in a second language would facilitate language acquisition. In the United States, DLI programs began to emerge in the 1980s and 1990s to support MLs' academic and linguistic development, particularly Spanish-speaking students (Canas et al., 2020; Kim et al., 2013). Since their inception, DLI programs have gained popularity in various settings, including public, private, and charter schools (Center for Applied Linguistics, 2020). Today, DLI programs are in many states across the United States and other countries around the world (Roberts & American Councils for International Education, Research Center, 2021).

## **Types of Dual Language Programs**

DLI programs encompass a variety of models that offer high-quality bilingual education. These models differ based on the language of instruction, the proportion of native English speakers and speakers of the target language, and the program's specific goals and objectives

(Christian, 2011; Collier & Thomas, 2020; Lindholm-Leary, 2021). A common approach within these models is the partial immersion or 50:50 model, which evenly divides instruction between the target language and English. Another model is the total immersion or 90:10 model, wherein 90% of instruction is delivered in the target language and 10% in English. Additionally, there are variations to this model, such as the 80:20 and 70:30 models, where 70-80% of instruction occurs in the target language, transitioning gradually to English (Canas et al., 2020; Center for Applied Linguistics, 2020; Christian, 2011).

DLI programs offer distinct models to accommodate the varying learner populations, according to Christian (2011). These models include one-way immersion (OWI), TWI, developmental bilingual programs, and heritage language immersion. OWI programs primarily serve native English speakers who aspire to learn a new language. In this model, all students move in one direction towards achieving proficiency in the target language, with at least 50% of instruction occurring in that language (Christian, 2011; Collier & Thomas, 2020). TWI models involve approximately half native speakers of the minority language and half native English speakers. Students in this model strive in two directions: acquiring a new language while reinforcing their first language. These programs demonstrate a balanced focus on both languages and have shown potential for improved academic achievement, increased bilingual proficiency, and cognitive flexibility (Christian, 2011; Collier & Thomas, 2020; Lindholm-Leary, 2021; Neveu et al., 2021).

Developmental bilingual programs cater specifically to students who are native speakers of the minority language, focusing on reinforcing their linguistic proficiency while aiding their acquisition of English (Christian, 2011). Heritage language immersion programs aim to support students from language minority communities who possess little to no proficiency in their

heritage language. The program's objective is to foster proficiency in the minority language while concurrently promoting English language skills (Canas et al., 2020; Christian, 2011).

Elementary immersion teachers must be aware of these DLI program variations. Considering their students' unique needs and characteristics when selecting and implementing language learning strategies in DLI classrooms is crucial (Collier & Thomas, 2017; Lindholm-Leary, 2021). By doing so, they can cultivate a supportive and inclusive learning environment that fosters improved language learning and positive academic outcomes (Collier & Thomas, 2017). Furthermore, this focus on the cultures, languages, and communities of the students as part of their FoK suggests that these teachers can utilize a CSP approach to align the educational practices with the diverse cultural backgrounds of the students (Paris, 2012).

Elementary immersion teachers must be aware of these DLI program variations. Considering their students' unique needs and characteristics when selecting and implementing language learning strategies in DLI classrooms is crucial (Lindholm-Leary, 2021; Collier & Thomas, 2017). By doing so, they can cultivate a supportive and inclusive learning environment that fosters improved language learning and positive academic outcomes (de Oliveira, 2021; Collier & Thomas, 2017).

Furthermore, this focus on the cultures, languages, and communities of the students as part of their FoK suggests that these teachers can utilize a CSP approach to align the educational practices with the diverse cultural backgrounds of the students (Paris, 2012). Importantly, the CSP approach acknowledges the dynamic and evolving nature of students' cultural and linguistic heritage. These heritages are not static; they are fluid, ever-evolving, and often blend, creating unique linguistic and cultural pathways specific to one school community or another (Paris & Alim, 2017). This CSP-based approach not only recognizes and respects students' cultural and

linguistic heritage in various DLI models, but it also bridges the gap between their home and school environment, thereby enhancing the learning experience and outcomes. In doing so, it accommodates the continuous evolution and transformation of students' cultural and linguistic identities in the classroom, making education a more reflective, inclusive, and dynamic process (Paris & Alim, 2017).

### **Goals of DLI**

Given the research aim to discern the strategies and practices of elementary teachers in DLI classrooms through the lens of CSP, it is critical to consider the principal goals of DLI programs. One of the main goals is to promote bilingualism and biliteracy (Collier & Thomas, 2020). Biliteracy is the ability to read and write in two languages, while bilingualism is speaking, reading, and writing in two languages. Research findings support that DLI programs can improve students' linguistic proficiency in both languages (Collier & Thomas, 2020; Lindholm-Leary, 2021). For example, a study by Watzinger-Tharp et al. (2018) found that students in DLI programs outperformed their non-immersion peers on standardized English and Spanish language skills tests.

Another goal of DLI programs is to enhance academic achievement for participating students (Collier & Thomas, 2020; Lindholm-Leary, 2021). These benefits may be due to bilingualism's cognitive and linguistic benefits and increased exposure to academic content in two languages (Lindholm-Leary, 2021). DLI programs can also effectively reduce educational disparities between language minority and majority students (de Oliveira, 2021; Kotok & DeMatthews, 2017). A study by Collier and Thomas (2017) found that students in DLI programs had higher levels of academic achievement than their non-immersion peers, particularly in math and science. These findings suggest that DLI programs may provide a supportive learning

environment for language minority students, helping them to catch up to their language majority peers.

DLI programs also have cultural goals, including promoting cultural awareness and understanding (Baker, 2018; Li et al., 2016; Mancilla-Martinez et al., 2020; Steele et al., 2017). While DLI programs often employ culturally responsive teaching practices, in pursuing these cultural goals, they can also align well with the principles of CSP, which offer a more holistic approach to cultural inclusion. Culturally responsive pedagogy has been a step towards acknowledging and respecting the cultural diversity of students in education, a practice commonly employed in DLI programs. However, the evolution to CSP takes the concept a step further. It aims not just to respond to or accommodate the cultural heritage of students, but also to actively foster and sustain them. CSP provides a framework that can further enrich the cultural inclusiveness of DLI programs.

Leveraging authentic materials and real-world tasks to provide a culturally inclusive learning environment, as seen in these programs, aligns with the CSP principle of sustaining the cultural practices and languages students bring to school (Paris, 2012). This understanding provides a context within which the instructional practices and strategies of teachers in DLI classrooms can be effectively analyzed from a culturally sustaining perspective.

### **Benefits of DLI**

Many research findings show the benefits of DLI programs, including not only enhanced academic and linguistic outcomes but also cognitive, social-emotional, and cultural competencies (Baker, 2018; Li et al., 2016; Neveu et al., 2021). Reflecting the core principles of CSP, these programs amplify students' cultural competency and awareness, substantiating CSP's emphasis

on validating and sustaining cultural identities and consciousness within educational environments (Paris, 2012).

Biliteracy and bilingualism are among the primary goals and benefits of DLI programs (Li et al., 2016; Mancilla-Martinez et al., 2020). Studies have consistently found that students in DLI programs outperform their non-immersion peers on standardized tests of both English and the target language (Burkhauser et al., 2016; Steele et al., 2017). For example, a study by Burkhauser et al. (2016) found that students in DLI programs had significantly higher scores on English and target language tests compared to their non-immersion peers. In addition, research has shown that students in DLI programs are more likely to maintain their native language skills over time than in traditional bilingual education programs (Cenoz, 2015). This evidence underscores the efficacy of DLI programs in supporting bilingualism and biliteracy development, mirroring the values of CSP in sustaining diverse linguistic practices (Palmer et al., 2015; Paris, 2012).

DLI programs also have positive effects on academic achievement. A study by Collier and Thomas (2017) found that students in DLI programs had higher levels of academic achievement than their non-immersion peers, particularly in math and science. Another study by Kotok and DeMatthews (2017) found that students in DLI programs had higher grades and standardized test scores in English and the target language than their non-immersion peers. In a recent study, Serafini et al. (2020) assessed the long-term linguistic and academic outcomes associated with different bilingual language education models for low-income dual language learners. The research, as a component of the Miami School Readiness Project, revealed the compelling impact of bilingual, as opposed to monolingual, instructional models. Serafini et al. (2020) discovered that bilingual forms of instruction notably accelerated English language

acquisition and enhanced all facets of 5th-grade academic achievement. Especially significant was the finding that TWI programs, supporting home language and culture and integrating both language majority and minority learners, not only expedited English acquisition but also fortified the connection to higher GPAs. These results reaffirm the essential role of DLI programs in advancing equitable academic outcomes, aligning with the core principles of CSP.

In addition to academic and linguistic benefits, DLI programs can provide students with social-emotional benefits and increase cultural awareness and competency. A study by Martínez et al. (2017) found that students in DLI programs had higher levels of cultural awareness and tolerance than their non-immersion peers and were more likely to engage in positive cross-cultural interactions. These findings suggest that DLI programs may effectively promote understanding and acceptance of diverse cultures among students. Other research has found that students in DLI programs have higher self-esteem and social competence levels than their non-immersion peers (Morcom, 2017). DLI programs can also support the maintenance of linguistic and cultural heritage among students who are part of linguistic minority groups (Genesee et al., 2006). Importantly, these cultural benefits of DLI programs can have long-term impacts on students, potentially encouraging positive intercultural interactions throughout their lives.

Moreover, DLI programs serve as a platform for students to reframe their perspectives, fostering enhanced cultural exchanges and helping students recognize the evolving nature of their own and others' cultural and linguistic heritages (de Oliveira, 2021). In alignment with the views of Curtain and Dahlberg (2016), this is especially beneficial in the elementary school setting, where language learning can be most effective due to the adaptability and receptiveness of young minds.

Derman-Sparks (2008) underscored the early age at which children begin to form evaluative and classificatory decisions about others, indicating a potential onset of bias from a young age. DLI programs can help offset such biases by boosting cultural interactions and promoting an understanding of the dynamic nature of their own and others' cultural and linguistic heritages. This approach aligns well with the anti-bias curriculum proposed by Derman-Sparks (2008), thereby further substantiating the role of DLI programs in sustaining cultural diversity.

Research findings have also shown that DLI programs can provide cognitive benefits for students (Burkhauser et al., 2016; Giovannoli et al., 2020; Jafari et al., 2021; Steele et al., 2017). A study by Giovannoli et al. (2020) found that bilingualism can positively affect cognitive skills such as problem-solving and decision-making. They further noted that bilingual individuals possess an advantage in tasks that involve switching between languages or different types of information, due to their enhanced ability to suppress irrelevant language or information. The same study revealed a slower rate of cognitive decline in old age among bilingual individuals compared to their monolingual counterparts (Giovannoli et al., 2020).

In recent years, there has been a growing body of research examining the impact of DLI programs on multilingual learners (MLs). DLI programs positively affect the rate at which MLs exit English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) programs positively (Durán et al., 2022). A study published by Serafini et al. (2020) found that MLs who enrolled in DLI programs had a higher rate of exiting ESOL programs and being reclassified as fluent English proficient (FEP) than those enrolled in traditional ESOL programs. Similarly, a study carried out by Burkhauser et al. (2016) indicated that MLs who participated in DLI programs were more likely to exit ESOL programs and to be reclassified as FEP than MLs who participated in traditional bilingual

education programs. DLI programs can offer many advantages to MLs. One is the opportunity to receive academic instruction in their native language, which can significantly reduce these students' language barriers when attending school (Collier & Thomas, 2017; Durán et al., 2022). This instructional setting can be critical for MLs who may have limited or no prior exposure to academic content in English, as it allows them to build a strong foundation in their native language (Collier & Thomas, 2017; Durán et al., 2022). These findings reveal DLI programs' capacity to reduce language barriers and enhance native language academic instruction for MLs, strengthening their academic foundation and substantiating the alignment of DLI programs with discussions of language education in CSP.

In summary, the diverse benefits of DLI programs, which encompass academic, linguistic, cognitive, social-emotional, and cultural domains, strongly align with the principles of educational practices that nurture cultural and linguistic FoK. These programs have the potential to not only support the education of linguistic minority students but also promote cultural understanding and acceptance among all students (Collier & Thomas, 2020; Lindholm-Leary, 2021), thus having implications for educational practice. The various student benefits provided by DLI programs, including academic, linguistic, cognitive, and cultural advantages, underscore their potential to foster inclusive and culturally responsive learning environments.

### **Challenges in Implementing and Maintaining DLI Programs**

Implementing and maintaining DLI programs can present several challenges and considerations, especially when viewed through the lens of CSP. One challenge is the need for specialized teacher training to develop a strong grasp of effective instructional practices and methodologies specific to bilingual teaching and learning (Azovide & Bouchamma, 2021; Haj-Broussard et al., 2017). These practices play a crucial role in creating an environment that

supports students' overall development, including their language skills and cultural understanding (Cammarata & Tedick, 2012). However, understanding these methodologies alone is not enough. Successful application relies on teachers' language proficiency in both English and the target language (Aguirre-Muñoz et al., 2023; Cammarata & Tedick, 2012; González-Carriedo et al., 2016; Hernández et al., 2022). This proficiency extends beyond basic communication skills and is crucial for effective curriculum delivery, as well as meaningful interactions during the entire school day. The school environment itself becomes an extension of the learning space where the target language envelops all facets of the students' experience, from classroom discussions to extracurricular activities.

Also, the ever-evolving nature of language and pedagogical practices highlights the need of ongoing professional development for educators (Azovide & Bouchamma, 2021; Cammarata & Tedick, 2012; Hernández et al., 2022; Li et al., 2016). This commitment to continuous learning equips teachers with up-to-date strategies and tools that are essential for addressing the unique challenges of DLI settings, not only during formal instruction but also during less structured parts of the school day. Viewed through the lens of CSP principles, this commitment and its applications could be intricately linked (Azovide & Bouchamma, 2021). Regular professional development, as stated by Cammarata and Tedick (2012) and Azovide and Bouchamma (2021), played a vital role in improving instructional effectiveness and enhancing student outcomes in DLI programs.

DLI programs require a robust, meticulously designed structure to effectively meet the demands of bilingual education (Hernández et al., 2022; Palmer et al., 2015). One crucial component within this structure is the comprehensive and multilevel assessment procedure (de Valenzuela et al., 2022). Such procedures not only measure students' progress in both languages,

but also offer critical insights into individual learning trajectories, promoting the development of tailored instructional strategies (Bibler, 2021; Steele et al., 2017). This student-centric approach, emphasizing the evaluation and adjustment of teaching strategies based on individual progress, aligns closely with the principles of CSP that prioritizes individualized learning.

Another challenge is balancing the demands of two languages in the classroom. This challenging task involves careful, strategic planning to ensure that students receive an equitable distribution of exposure and support in both languages, a foundational element of DLI programs (Genesee & Lindholm-Leary, 2013). Further complicating this task is the need to account for disparities in students' proficiency levels in each language. Teachers, therefore, must adapt their pedagogical strategies to these varying proficiency levels, thereby fostering an inclusive, effective learning environment (Cammarata & Tedick, 2012).

The rich diversity of language and cultural backgrounds within a DLI classroom, while a significant strength, can also pose potential challenges, including misunderstandings or conflicts (Cammarata & Tedick, 2012). Addressing these challenges requires embracing the principles of CSP as one approach among others (Paris, 2012). Teachers play a crucial role in fostering an inclusive, welcoming, and culturally responsive environment by embodying sensitivity and respect toward these differences (Gay, 2010; Jong et al., 2020). This commitment to inclusion is a cornerstone of CSP, valuing the cultural and linguistic diversity inherent in all students and promoting a shared sense of belonging within the classroom.

To summarize, implementing and maintaining DLI programs involve overcoming a range of challenges. These include the need for specialized teacher training that equips educators with the necessary skills to deliver effective instruction in a bilingual context and the intricate task of balancing bilingual instruction. Further, educators must manage potential language and cultural

conflicts that may arise from the diverse make-up of DLI classrooms. Navigating these challenges requires meticulous planning, continuous support, and a commitment to lifelong learning (Li et al., 2016; Palmer et al., 2015). While CSP provides beneficial guidelines and methods, it's crucial to understand that tackling these challenges may necessitate a mix of strategies (Cammarata & Tedick, 2012). According to Cammarata and Tedick (2012), these include continuous professional growth, solid support systems, and a mindset embracing inclusivity. This approach highlights the importance of recognizing and sustaining the linguistic and cultural diversity of students, a fundamental aspect of maintaining a thriving and inclusive learning environment.

### **Challenges of Two-way DLI Programs**

Two-way DLI programs, though beneficial, pose several unique challenges. One key issue is the length of time required for students to learn a new language. MLs participating in these programs often need around 5-7 years to catch up academically with students who are native English speakers (Lindholm-Leary, 2021). Research indicates that students in DLI programs may initially have lower grades than their peers (Genesee & Lindholm-Leary, 2013). This information might pressure school administrators to focus more on English instruction or even think about stopping the program (Lindholm-Leary, 2021).

Another challenge is the assessment of students' reading skills in the non-English language. This can create confusion about how much progress students are making in the target language (Lindholm-Leary, 2021). Students who read well in English typically also read well in the target language, which has significant implications for MLs (Lindholm-Leary & Howard, 2008). However, even though DLI programs aim to develop biliteracy, there is limited research on effective ways to encourage bilingualism and improve biliteracy.

Furthermore, even though students in dual language programs learn to speak more than one language, challenges continue to exist in language usage in the classroom (Potowski, 2007). These include achieving proficiency and balancing skills in both languages, which can be difficult due to a lack of support for high levels of Spanish usage (de Jong & Bearse, 2011). Such challenges can raise concerns related to accountability in language education (Cammarata & Tedick, 2012). Employing CSP as a framework can be a critical aspect in managing these challenges, highlighting the value of the linguistic and educational diversity of all students (Paris, 2012).

### **Guiding Principles for Dual-language Education**

The book *Guiding Principles for Dual-language Education* by Howard et al. (2018) stood as an important tool for educators in DLI programs. It offers guidance for planning, introspection, and adaptative enhancements. The book distinguishes seven key strands, including program structure, curriculum, instruction, assessment and accountability, staff quality and professional development, family and community, and support and resources (Howard et al., 2018). All these strands aim to achieve three primary DLI goals: bilingualism and biliteracy, academic achievement, and the cultivation of cross-cultural understanding among students (Baker, 2018). This section will specifically examine *Strand 3: Instruction*, which delves into the instructional practices within a dual language program. This strand explores the teaching methods used in a DLI program, with a focus on strategies supporting language development, academic achievement, and intercultural competence among students (Howard et al., 2018) Even though other strands offer useful insights, strand three is most directly relevant to the study's objective: examining instructional practices in DLI classrooms.

Research shows that instructional methods in DLI programs should be research-based and adhere to principles of dual language education, while also ensuring fidelity to the model (Howard et al., 2018). Instructional strategies that benefit both MLs and native English speakers often exhibit significant similarities (Zhang et al., 2021). However, precision in DLI instruction is crucial to achieve bilingualism, biliteracy, sociocultural competence, and to cater to students with diverse needs and language proficiency levels (Genesee & Lindholm-Leary, 2013). Importantly, bilingual students can transfer skills and knowledge across languages, which requires a range of techniques to accommodate various language proficiency levels and potentially diverse learning styles among ethnic groups (Howard et al., 2018; Zhang et al., 2021).

Research findings strongly advocate for learner-centered environments with positive teacher-student interactions (Ciabatti, 2023; Cornelius-White, 2007). In these settings, teachers act as facilitators, promoting higher cognitive skills over factual recall. The application of these interactions can enhance academic performance for all students.

Although the instructional principles outlined by Howard et al. (2018) for DLI programs and the elements of CSP (Paris & Alim, 2017) were not identical, they overlap in areas such as sustaining and nurturing the cultural heritage of diverse student populations, while focusing on practices that promote linguistic and academic development. These shared principles foster a comprehensive, inclusive, and effective teaching model, paving the way for culturally adaptive, linguistically diverse, and academically challenging learning environments.

To summarize, *Strand 3: Instruction* provides crucial insights into DLI instruction's complexities. The discussion above emphasizes the significance of a culturally sustaining, linguistically diverse pedagogy in achieving bilingualism, academic achievement, and cross-

cultural understanding. This section thus sets the groundwork for a comprehensive exploration of instructional practices in DLI classrooms.

### **Instructional Practices in DLI**

This literature review section examines the major themes in research on the instructional practices used by immersion teachers in DLI classrooms. First, it explores the impact of CSP on creating inclusive learning atmospheres (Paris, 2012; Paris & Alim, 2017). It then delves into language acquisition practices, including comprehensible input (Krashen, 1982), scaffolding (Vygotsky, 1978), and translanguaging (Wei, 2017), which foster bilingualism and biliteracy.

The next focus is on the integration of language and content, an approach bolstering language development through academic content (Zhang et al., 2021). The importance of differentiated instruction in catering to diverse learner needs follows (Tomlinson, 2017), with an exploration of the role of authentic materials and real-world interactions in classroom instruction (Erlam & Ellis, 2018; Fang et al., 2020; Genesee et al., 2006; Mac Gearailt et al., 2021).

Next, the significance of a positive learning environment and learner-centered classrooms in promoting engagement and achievement is highlighted (Alvarez & Downer, 2023; Morcom, 2017; Sadoughi & Hejazi, 2023; Wang & Eccles, 2013). Last, the section underscores collaborative learning strategies, like cooperative learning and peer tutoring, in students' social-emotional development and academic achievement (Collier & Thomas, 2017; Hameed, 2020; López & Iribarren, 2014; Slavin & Cooper, 1999).

Understanding these practices informs DLI strategies, thus contributing to a broader discourse on second language teaching and multicultural education.

## Language Acquisition Practices

Language acquisition practices are key to DLI. These techniques include comprehensible input (Krashen, 1982), scaffolding (Vygotsky, 1978), and translanguaging (Dougherty, 2021; Hernández et al., 2022; Wei, 2017). They are all fundamental in promoting effective bilingualism and biliteracy.

The use of comprehensible input is a core practice in second language acquisition (Krashen, 1982). Krashen (1982, p. 20) referred to comprehensible input as using meaningful and understandable language for the learner. He introduced the concept of ' $i + 1$ ', where ' $i$ ' symbolizes the learner's current language stage, while  $i+1$  represents a slightly more advanced language input. This principle suggests that the most effective instruction gives students input slightly beyond their proficiency, encouraging language development and academic progress (Krashen, 1982). Teachers should aim to instruct in a language level students can comprehend even if they do not know all the vocabulary words or grammar structures.

Comprehensible input could potentially enhance DLI teaching. Especially when this input is aligned with principles such as those proposed by CSP, which emphasizes the value of acknowledging and leveraging students' cultural and linguistic resources, it may aid students in grasping complex concepts (Paris, 2012). Comprehensible input may include visual aids, gestures, and other non-verbal cues to bolster language comprehension (Fang, 2020). These supports not only make the instruction more accessible but also foster an understanding and acknowledgment of students' unique cultural and linguistic strengths. Such alignment with CSP principles fosters active participation and successful learning within the DLI setting. Several studies have examined the effectiveness of using comprehensible input in DLI classrooms to enhance learning (Du, 2004; Fang, 2020; Genesee et al., 2006; Swain, 2005). For example, a

study by Genesee et al. (2006) found that visual aids and comprehensible input effectively promoted language development and improved academic achievement.

Similarly, a study by Du (2004) found that comprehensible input promoted language development and academic achievement in DLI classrooms. In addition to comprehensible input, Swain (2005) and her colleagues emphasized the importance of providing students with opportunities for “pushed output” (p. 473). This approach involves students having chances to actively use the target language, with the belief that language acquisition cannot occur without these opportunities (Swain, 2005). DLI naturally aligns with this approach because it provides opportunities for comprehensible input and pushed output.

Krashen’s concept of the  $i + 1$  principle relates closely to the idea of scaffolding, a process where educators provide support and incrementally raise the complexity of input as learners’ proficiency grows, enabling effective progression and language development (Vygotsky, 1978). This scaffolding assists in making the  $i+1$  level more comprehensible and attainable for students. Research has shown that the use of scaffolding techniques, such as providing explicit explanations, modeling, and feedback, can effectively support the language and academic development of students in DLI classrooms (Genesee et al., 2006). For example, a study by Rodríguez-Valls et al. (2017) found that elementary immersion teachers in DLI classrooms used a range of scaffolding techniques, such as providing explicit explanations and support for language production, to support the language and academic development of students.

Translanguaging is another practice that encourages learners to use their entire linguistic repertoire. This practice helps to forge connections between two languages and enhances understanding of the curriculum (Creese & Blackledge, 2010; Dougherty, 2021; González-Carriedo et al., 2016; Hernández et al., 2022; Wei, 2017). When applied in an educational

context, translanguaging generates classroom spaces allowing students to leverage their entire meaning-making arsenal to engage with the curriculum and exhibit their learning (Dougherty, 2021; Harman et al., 2020; Wei, 2017).

Particularly within DLI contexts, translanguaging emerges as a powerful instructional practice (Creese & Blackledge, 2010; Hernández et al., 2022; Palmer et al., 2014). Beyond mere language use, it integrates language with culture and identity, thereby enriching the learning experience (Hernández et al., 2022). Translanguaging facilitates the integration of students' cultural experiences into their learning process by enabling them to activate their full linguistic capacities (Dougherty, 2021). This intricate interplay between language, culture, and curriculum, inherent in translanguaging, dovetails with the principles of CSP. It forms a link between the classroom environment and students' lived experiences, reinforcing the significance of their cultural and linguistic competence for academic success (Collier & Thomas, 2017; Paris, 2012; Paris & Alim, 2017). Indeed, in this context, the incorporation of students' dynamic cultural identities and their FoK is vital for meaningful learning to occur (Moll, 2019; Paris, 2012).

The practices of comprehensible input, scaffolding, and translanguaging, when balanced to meet diverse learner needs, cultivate an environment conducive to bilingualism, academic achievement, and cross-cultural understanding. bearing significant potential for alignment with the principles of CSP, validate and build upon the cultural knowledge, experiences, and performance styles of diverse learners. When coupled with an intentional focus on cultural inclusivity, they further enhance the potential of DLI as a pathway for learners to experience not only linguistic and academic growth but also socio-cultural development.

## **Integration of Language and Content**

Integration of language and content is a key principle of DLI. This pedagogical practice combines language acquisition with academic content, fostering an enriching and meaningful learning environment for students (Cloud et al., 2000; Harman et al., 2020; Mac Gearailt et al., 2021; Villabona & Cenoz, 2021). The concept of integrating language and content transcends traditional language instruction. It is not merely about learning a language in isolation, but instead, it immerses students in meaningful real-world knowledge and skills (Cloud et al., 2000). According to Cloud et al. (2000), as students explore various academic disciplines, they simultaneously learned the language, which deepened their comprehension and ability to communicate complex ideas.

An additional benefit of this approach lies in its impact on student motivation and engagement. By connecting language learning with academic content, students often feel more connected to their education (Cloud et al., 2000; Harman et al., 2020). The context provided by the content gives language learning a practical application that can enhance student engagement and improve academic outcomes (Villabona & Cenoz, 2021).

This integration of language and content has broader implications, extending beyond the DLI classroom. It is also a fundamental theme in ML education and ESOL programs (August et al., 2014; Ayscue & Uzzell, 2022). These educational paradigms utilize content to teach language skills, recognizing the power of context and practical application in language acquisition (Villabona & Cenoz, 2021). Collier and Thomas (2017) conducted a longitudinal study that evaluated different program models for MLs in United States schools, finding that, among the models evaluated, which included ESOL pull-out, transitional bilingual, maintenance bilingual, and DLI programs, the latter consistently demonstrated the highest student

achievement. They attributed this success to the concurrent development of academic and language skills in the DLI model, thereby validating the integration of language and content as a powerful instructional strategy (Collier & Thomas, 2017). This study is often cited as a key piece of evidence supporting DLI programs' effectiveness, specifically highlighting the benefits of integrating language and content for MLs. It reflects the positive impact of such an approach on academic outcomes, thus reinforcing the importance of this theme in the discourse around DLI instruction.

This integration of language and content in DLI instruction is in alignment with the principles of CSP. CSP endorses the inclusion of students' cultural contexts in learning experiences, fostering relevance and meaning (Paris, 2012; Paris & Alim, 2017). The integration of language and content in DLI, when mindful of students' cultural backgrounds, can bolster students' academic and linguistic development while simultaneously affirming their cultural identities and promoting inclusivity (Negrette, 2020; Yoon, 2023). This reinforces the intersection of language, content, and culture in effective DLI instruction.

### **Differentiated Instruction**

Differentiated instruction, a pivotal practice in DLI, recognizes and addresses the unique needs, interests, and learning styles of students, serving as a vital tool to promote academic growth and language development (Tomlinson, 2017). This approach aligns closely with the principles of CSP, which encourages the incorporation of students' cultural and linguistic resources into teaching and learning practices (Paris, 2012; Paris & Alim, 2017).

In differentiated instruction for the language classroom, flexibility is key. It involves an assortment of teaching and learning practices, including flexible grouping based on language proficiency or task nature, and tiered assignments that allow all students to explore the same

central ideas but at different complexity levels (Tomlinson, 2017). Such practices echo the CSP's focus on leveraging students' individual strengths and backgrounds, enabling a more inclusive and effective learning environment (Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1995). La Serna (2022) underscore the importance of small-group interventions for students grappling with reading and math in Two-Way Immersion (TWI) classrooms, where the partner language is Spanish. This focus on targeted, small-group interventions parallels the differentiated instruction strategy of flexible grouping, allowing for individualized attention and support based on students' unique needs and proficiencies. By applying these instructional strategies, significant improvements in language and academic development are achieved, highlighting the effectiveness of differentiated instruction in a DLI context.

The success of differentiated instruction relies upon thoughtful planning and execution. It requires an ongoing process of tailoring instruction to meet learners' needs, informed by the continuous assessment and the teacher's understanding of student differences (Tomlinson, 2017). This focus on individual student strengths and needs reflects the core principles of CSP. These principles assert that academic success is possible only when we genuinely recognize and incorporate each student's FoK (Moll, 2019) and their community's heritage/history. This integration gives rise to inherently differentiated instruction at least at linguistic and cultural levels, which are dynamic and personal (Paris, 2012; Paris & Alim, 2017).

In summary, differentiated instruction forms an integral part of DLI. By concentrating on individual learner needs and leveraging students' cultural resources, it fosters an inclusive learning environment that promotes bilingualism, biliteracy, and cross-cultural understanding. Through the exploration of the importance of differentiated instruction for DLI, it is possible to identify how CSP can serve as a useful framework through which these practices can be viewed.

### **Authentic Materials and Real-world Interactions**

In Dual Language Instruction (DLI), the use of authentic materials and tasks significantly influences the educational experience. Authentic materials pertain to real-world items and texts crafted for native speakers, encompassing the language and culture of the target language community (Genesee et al., 2006). Examples may include newspapers, literature, cultural artifacts, and digital content, among others. According to Genesee et al. (2006), engaging with authentic materials enriched students' linguistic proficiency and cultural understanding. It facilitates a tangible connection between classroom learning and the real world. Research supports the efficacy of such an approach for sustaining students' language and cultural development in DLI classrooms (Erlam & Ellis, 2018; Fang et al., 2020; Genesee et al., 2006). In parallel, real-world interactions present opportunities for learners to apply their language skills in authentic contexts. Whether through peer interaction, dialogue with native speakers, or digital communication, these real-life encounters foster confidence in language use beyond the classroom (Fang et al., 2020). Authentic tasks also play a role in DLI, requiring students to use the target language in real-life scenarios (Genesee et al., 2006). Task-based language teaching (TBLT), for example, invites students to engage with the target language in practical contexts, promoting language proficiency and academic skills development (Erlam & Ellis, 2018; Fang et al., 2020).

The integration of authentic materials and tasks, coupled with real-world interactions, creates a rich, immersive learning environment in DLI classrooms. Such practice aligns with CSP, which emphasizes the preservation and utilization of students' cultural and linguistic resources in educational practices (Paris, 2012; Paris & Alim, 2017).

## **Positive Learning Environments and Learner-Centered Classrooms**

Establishing positive, learner-centered environments is another central theme in DLI research. This practice emphasizes creating classrooms that support each student's emotional well-being and unique learning needs, fostering an environment of security, acceptance, and active participation (Alvarez & Downer, 2023; Sadoughi & Hejazi, 2023; Wang & Eccles, 2013).

A defining characteristic of positive learning environments is the presence of supportive interpersonal relationships and an atmosphere of mutual respect (Alvarez & Downer, 2023). Recent research by Sadoughi and Hejazi (2023) emphasized the significant role of perceived teacher support and a growth language mindset in enhancing academic engagement among MLs. Their findings highlighted the idea that students with greater teacher support and a stronger growth language mindset can overcome learning challenges by demonstrating more persistence in language learning (Sadoughi & Hejazi, 2023).

In these classrooms, students often exhibit heightened self-esteem and motivation, contributing to better academic outcomes (Morcom, 2017; Sadoughi & Hejazi, 2023; Wang & Eccles, 2013). A study by Wang and Eccles (2013) found that students learning in positive environments demonstrated increased engagement and academic achievement. Positive learning environments in DLI are sensitive to students' cultural and linguistic diversity, an approach consistent with CSP principles. CSP encourages the validation and incorporation of students' cultural identities within the learning environment, promoting inclusivity and recognition of diversity (Paris, 2012; Paris & Alim, 2017).

Complementing the establishment of positive environments, learner-centered classrooms in DLI aim to accommodate the unique learning needs and interests of each student. This

personalized approach engages students actively in their learning process, inviting them to partake in decision-making processes, goal setting, and self-assessment activities (Chong & Reinders, 2022). A study by Kassem (2018) supported the significance of learner-centered strategies in multilingual classrooms. This study highlighted how such strategies ensure that instruction remains accessible and engaging for all students, notwithstanding their proficiency in the target language (Kassem, 2018).

In summary, creating positive, learner-centered environments in DLI classrooms is a key instructional practice. These environments, which are supportive, engaging, and responsive to the students' cultural and learning profiles, can significantly enhance academic and language outcomes in DLI settings. The essence of these learner-centered environments dovetails with the principles of CSP, emphasizing the interconnected nature of these instructional frameworks.

### **Collaborative Learning**

In DLI research, collaborative learning practices occupy an important role. These strategies foster interaction and cooperation among students, offering a dynamic context for language acquisition and academic learning (Hameed, 2020). One key collaborative approach is cooperative learning, which utilizes strategies where students work together to accomplish a shared goal (López & Iribarren, 2014). Often, this method includes activities such as group projects, problem-solving tasks, and peer discussions. López and Iribarren (2014) suggest that through the use of collaborative learning strategies, such as group projects and peer tutoring, students received numerous chances to use the target language in real-life communication scenarios. This could consequently result in improved language proficiency.

Cooperative learning techniques are found to support students' social-emotional development effectively in DLI settings (Collier & Thomas, 2017). It aligns with the principles

of CSP as these methods stimulate student interaction, recognize diverse perspectives, and nurture a sense of community within the classroom (Paris, 2012; Paris & Alim, 2017). A study by Collier and Thomas (2017) observed that DLI teachers used cooperative learning methods, such as group work and peer tutoring, to facilitate students' social-emotional development.

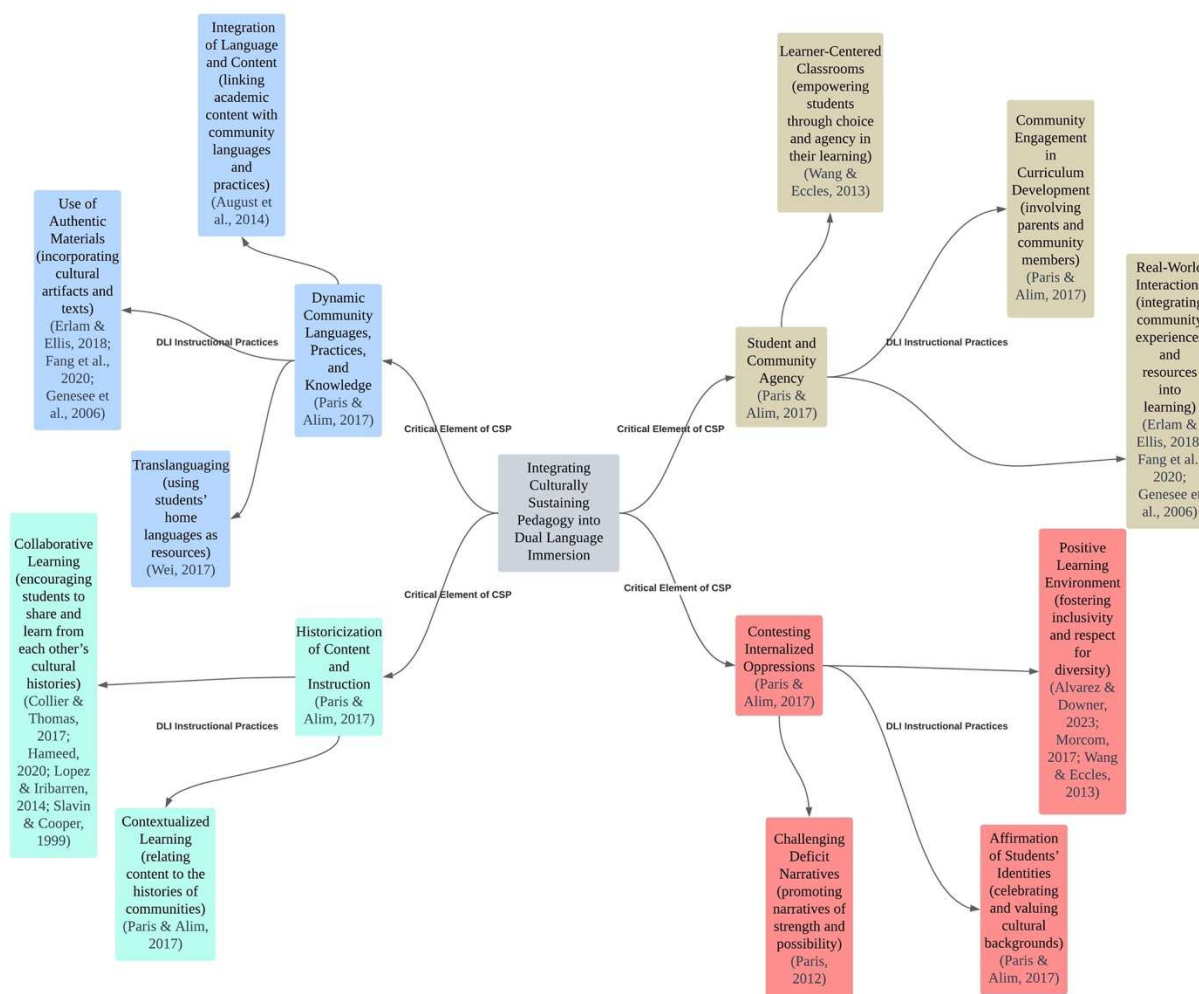
Academic outcomes also show significant enhancement from collaborative learning strategies. A study by Slavin and Cooper (1999) suggested that students participating in collaborative learning activities outperformed peers in more traditional individualistic learning environments, both in academic achievement and language proficiency. Additionally, students benefit from collaborative learning strategies in terms of social and emotional development (Slavin & Cooper, 1999; Squire & Clark, 2020). These approaches foster respect for diverse viewpoints, conflict resolution skills, and interpersonal growth—critical facets of overall personal development and social integration (Jong et al., 2020; López & Iribarren, 2014).

In summary, collaborative learning strategies serve as a fundamental theme in DLI research. These strategies offer enrichment to students' language and academic development, boost socio-emotional skills, and nurture a respect for cultural diversity (Jong et al., 2020).

Instructional practices in DLI play a pivotal role in shaping the learners' bilingual and biliterate development, academic achievement, and socio-cultural competence. The exploration of these approaches highlights the importance of CSP, language acquisition practices, integration of language and content, differentiated instruction, use of authentic materials, positive learning environments, learner-centered classrooms, and collaborative learning strategies in DLI.

Figure 1

### *Integrating Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy into Dual Language Immersion*



*Note.* This figure illustrates the integration of CSP into dual language immersion programs, showing critical elements and instructional practices that support this integration.

#### **Teachers' Roles and Practices in Implementing CSP in DLI Classrooms**

Teachers have a pivotal role in DLI, particularly in the successful implementation of CSP (Paris, 2012). According to Paris and Alim (2017), these educators, as crucial facilitators, shape student experiences and outcomes by the degree to which they comprehend and apply CSP principles.

The understanding and application of CSP differ among teachers, varying significantly across educational contexts. For instance, in an engineering course, Chen et al. (2021) found that educators who grasp the importance of CSP skillfully harnessed students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds, thereby addressing systemic inequities. Similarly, in DLI classrooms, teachers who validate the role of cultural inclusivity enrich the learning experience. This approach bolsters students' self-confidence and feelings of acceptance in the classroom, fostering a more engaging and welcoming learning environment (Jong et al., 2020; Morcom, 2017; Paris, 2012).

Despite its importance, CSP implementation presents challenges. Some teachers find integrating CSP principles difficult due to resource scarcity, limited institutional support, or a limited understanding of CSP principles (Chen et al., 2021). Hence, ongoing professional development and strong institutional backing are essential to help teachers adeptly incorporate CSP into DLI classrooms.

Instructional strategies supporting CSP within DLI classrooms require careful selection. These may encompass culturally relevant materials, the integration of students' home languages and cultures into lessons, and activities encouraging multicultural awareness and understanding (Cammarata & Tedick, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 2014). Recent studies, such as those conducted by Herrera (2022) and Spycher et al. (2020), shed light on teachers' roles and practices in implementing CSP in DLI classrooms. However, significant knowledge gaps persist. Further in-depth studies are necessary to understand how teachers negotiate the challenges and opportunities CSP presents. Thus, this study aimed to contribute to this discourse by examining the instructional practices of elementary immersion teachers in DLI classrooms from a CSP lens.

### **Gaps in Literature**

Research on DLI programs has grown significantly, examining their impact on student outcomes (Li et al., 2016; Mancilla-Martinez et al., 2020). Yet, few qualitative studies focus on teaching methods within these programs, especially those linked to CSP. Understanding how elementary immersion teachers implement CSP principles in their teaching is an unexplored area. This research aimed to fill this gap by studying the strategies teachers used to enhance students' language and academic growth through the lens of CSP (Baker, 2018; Li et al., 2016).

This research was necessary because it provided a detailed understanding of teaching practices connected with CSP within DLI education (Martínez et al., 2017). Identifying the most effective strategies and the challenges faced by teachers can help improve DLI programs (DeMatthews & Izquierdo, 2017). These insights could help design and implement stronger DLI programs (Baker, 2018).

The study's findings will interest various stakeholders, including educators, policymakers, researchers, and parents. Learning about the best CSP-aligned practices used by elementary immersion teachers could lead to better DLI programs. These programs not only boost students' language and academic growth but also promote intercultural competence. DLI has far-reaching benefits, contributing to academic success and personal growth in an intercultural society (Byram, 2021).

### **Summary**

In closing, this literature review highlights the potential of CSP as a theoretical framework through which to study the instructional practices of DLI educators. The reviewed research demonstrates the efficacy of DLI programs in promoting students' linguistic and academic growth (Baker, 2018; DeMatthews & Izquierdo, 2017; Haj-Broussard, 2018; Li et al.,

2016; Martínez et al., 2017), and points towards the value of CSP in fostering a culturally sustaining educational environment. However, the specifics of how teachers interpret and implement CSP principles within DLI settings remain largely unexplored. Moreover, the existing literature lacks detailed examination of the challenges teachers encounter in this integration and how they navigate these challenges, leaving room for further investigation.

By examining the unexplored intersections of CSP and DLI, this research aimed to generate valuable insights that can inform teacher preparation, enhance professional development programs, and support the effective implementation of DLI programs that not only foster students' academic success but also contribute to their personal development within an intercultural society (Banks & Banks, 2019; Byram, 2021). In shedding light on these areas, this study stands to contribute to the body of research on DLI and CSP, offering a comprehensive perspective that could guide the evolution of future pedagogical practices in this vital area of education.

Chapter three of the study, titled "Methodology," provides a detailed description of the research design and methods to be used to achieve the study's objectives of identifying and describing the instructional practices of elementary immersion teachers in DLI classrooms from a CSP perspective. Specifically, the chapter describes the research design, the research questions, and the population and sample. The chapter also outlines the data collection methods, including the use of interviews as the primary data-gathering tool, the procedures for administering these interviews, and the data collection schedule. The chapter discusses data analysis techniques, including coding and thematic analysis, and the measures taken to ensure the reliability and validity of the data. Finally, the chapter addresses the study's limitations and ethical

considerations, such as obtaining informed consent from the participants and ensuring confidentiality.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **METHODOLOGY**

Chapter three provides an overview of the research design, methods, and ethical considerations that guide this study. It describes the qualitative case study approach used to explore and describe the instructional practices of elementary immersion teachers in the Dual Language Immersion (DLI) program at Alexander Matthew Elementary School (AMES) from a Culturally Sustaining Pedagogical (CSP) perspective. This chapter discusses the research questions, participant selection, and data collection methods —interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis. It explains the data analysis procedures, including coding and thematic analysis, and measures to ensure data reliability and validity. The chapter also addresses the limitations of the study and the important ethical considerations, such as informed consent (Squire & Clark, 2020).

#### **Purpose of Study**

This research was primarily grounded in the work of Paris and Alim (2017) and focused on the exploration and description of instructional practices used by elementary immersion teachers in DLI classrooms at AMES. The goal was to understand how these practices fostered students' bilingual proficiency, academic success, and intercultural competence, all within the context of a CSP (Paris, 2012). The study sought to uncover effective strategies that fostered language development, academic achievement, and intercultural competence within DLI programs while also pinpointing areas of potential improvement. Insights derived from this

research were anticipated to enrich teacher training initiatives and professional development for DLI educators.

Employing a qualitative case study research design (Patton, 2015), the study actively explored the complexity of instructional practices within DLI and CSP contexts. Data was gathered through interviews, classroom observations, and the examination of teaching artifacts allowed for an in-depth understanding of instructional practices within the DLI classrooms of the focus school.

This research took its direction from two questions that surfaced from existing literature and identified gaps within the research related to DLI programs and CSP. Despite the growing body of research on DLI, there was a noticeable lack of studies that provided an in-depth exploration of the instructional practices used by elementary immersion teachers from a CSP perspective. While previous studies acknowledged the importance of intercultural competence and integrated language-content instruction in DLI classrooms, few explicitly examined how these elements were put into practice within a CSP framework. To address these identified gaps, research questions for this study sought to clarify the practical applications and challenges of instructional strategies in DLI settings from a CSP standpoint. The goal was to enhance the understanding, implementation, and improvement of DLI practices, thereby positively impacting educational practices and policymaking.

1. How do elementary immersion teachers in a DLI classroom employ instructional practices that support students' language development, academic achievement, and intercultural competence through a CSP lens?
  - a. In what ways do these instructional practices promote intercultural competence in students?

- b. How do instructional practices integrate curriculum content of various disciplines with target language instruction that adheres to the principles of CSP?
2. What challenges do elementary immersion teachers face when implementing a CSP approach in a DLI classroom, and how do they address these challenges?

### **Research Design**

This research used a qualitative case study research design chosen for its efficacy in exploring complex phenomena within real-world contexts (Merriam, 2002).

According to Merriam (2002), qualitative research seeks to understand how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meanings they connect to those experiences. This form of research utilizes an inductive process by generating insights from specific observations to broader generalizations. Grounded in process theory, qualitative research perceives the world in terms of individuals, situations, events, and the processes that connect these entities (Maxwell, 2013). This viewpoint aligned with the study's objectives, seeking to comprehend the instructional strategies used in DLI classrooms and their relationships with teacher experiences, challenges, and successes.

The qualitative case study design allowed a detailed exploration of the instructional practices employed by elementary immersion teachers at AMES. This approach emphasized understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem (Merriam, 2002), which in this case, referred to the teaching strategies and practices employed in DLI classrooms. By focusing on a specific case, it became possible to gain a deeper understanding of the complex relationship between instructional practices, language development, academic achievement, and intercultural competence within a DLI.

The chosen design aligned with the study's aim to not only describe instructional practices but also to understand their effectiveness and potential areas for improvement (Patton, 2015). Through rich, contextual, and detailed data, the case study design uncovered the realities of DLI teaching practices within a CSP framework.

### **Setting**

The qualitative data collection for this study occurred within AMES, which is a part of a school district in Georgia. Among the 11 DLI programs hosted in the district, AMES stands out due to its success in implementing the DLI program.

AMES exemplifies a successful Two-Way Immersion (TWI) program in action. The school entered its eleventh year of DLI program implementation in the 2024-2025 school year. AMES was among the first three schools in the district to initiate DLI in 2014.

Each academic year, the DLI program at AMES expanded by adding a new grade level, beginning with kindergarten and progressing students to subsequent grades. In the 2024-2025 academic year, the first cohort of students entered 10th grade, continuing in the DLI program. The program uses a 50/50 model, in which students spend half the day learning in English and the other half in a target language (Collier & Thomas, 2020). In AMES's case, the target language is Spanish. The school's DLI program also integrates CSP strategies, supporting all students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds while fostering equitable learning opportunities (Paris, 2012).

Despite challenges associated with program implementation and maintenance, AMES has demonstrated considerable success, meeting and exceeding state expectations. This school's accomplishments serve as evidence of the positive outcomes of the DLI program. The study of

the DLI program at AMES, considering its notable achievements and the application of CSP, provided valuable insights.

There were several benefits to conducting research at AMES. It allowed participants to participate in interviews in a familiar and comfortable environment. Also, being immersed in the actual setting where the instructional practices were implemented and observed provided a deeper, more nuanced understanding of the strategies in action. However, it was important to note that while this authentic context had the potential to positively impact the data collected and the study's findings (Maxwell, 2013), it required careful management throughout the study.

### **Participants**

Participants for this study were elementary immersion teachers from AMES who had been teaching in DLI classrooms for at least three years. The selection of teachers with this level of experience was grounded in research that teaching effectiveness tends to rise during the first few years before reaching a plateau (Rice, 2010). The three-year mark, as supported by research (Paige et al., 2019; Papay & Kraft, 2015), was critical for overcoming the initial learning curve associated with DLI and CSP practices. Teachers with at least three years of experience were more likely to have a well-rounded understanding of various instructional scenarios and to have developed effective strategies within DLI. This period also allowed for substantial professional growth and a deeper comprehension of CSP in DLI. While teachers with less experience offered valuable perspectives, those with three or more years were poised to provide richer insights and a more seasoned reflection, enhancing the quality of the study's findings.

The goal was to recruit three to five teachers from the pool of 24 DLI teachers at AMES with three or more years of experience. DLI teachers at AMES consisted of teachers with varying years of experience, only about half of whom had more than three years of experience in

the classroom. For the purposes of this study, the recruitment process targeted these more experienced teachers. Ultimately, seven teachers were recruited: two English teachers and five target language (Spanish) teachers, spanning grade levels from kindergarten to fifth grade. Their years of experience in DLI ranged from three to twenty-six years, with educational backgrounds including Bachelor's, Master's, and Specialist degrees. The participants also held various certifications, such as P-5, ESOL, Gifted, Reading, and Spanish.

Purposeful sampling was used to recruit teachers, which involved choosing individuals based on their potential to contribute rich, detailed data relevant to the research question (Creswell, 2009). For this study, the main criteria for selection were the teachers' experience in a DLI classroom and their demonstrated ability to implement CSP practices. The initial determination of participants was based on the researcher's interactions such as informal discussions with potential participants and observations during professional development sessions. Maxwell (2013) emphasized the importance of selecting participants in qualitative research who could offer specific insights related to the research question. This guidance aligned with the strategy of choosing participants based on their expertise in DLI and CSP practices, supported by preliminary interactions and professional dialogues.

Recruitment involved an informational email sent in early January 2024 outlining the study, participation expectations, and the potential benefits of the research to DLI instruction (see Appendix A). This email also guaranteed participants' rights and confidentiality, assuring that their responses would be strictly used for research purposes. About 13 teachers replied that they wanted more information. Subsequently, a follow-up email was sent outlining the commitment required in addition to everything mentioned in the original email. A few teachers responded. During the last week of January, the researcher visited the school and spoke with

potential participants who had not replied. Many indicated that they did not have the required three years of experience, while others cited school or personal obligations that prevented them from committing. The researcher also leveraged personal connections with potential participants to discuss the study and address any concerns, being mindful not to allow the existing professional relationship to interfere with voluntary participation in the study. Ultimately, seven teachers agreed to participate. Throughout the recruitment process, the researcher emphasized that participation was voluntary and that teachers had the right to withdraw from the study at any point without any repercussions.

The pre-existing relationship between the researcher and the participants, due to the researcher's position as an instructional coach, carried the potential to both enhance and challenge the data collection process. On one side, this relationship created an atmosphere of trust, enabling open and sincere conversations that could deepen the data collected (Patton, 2015). On the other hand, it might have influenced participants to suppress or modify their responses based on perceptions about the researcher's awareness or anticipated views. These dual possibilities were diligently acknowledged throughout the investigation, and appropriate actions were implemented to diminish any potential biases or obstacles to authentic communication.

### **Instruments of Data Collection**

This study used interviews, classroom observations, and the analysis of teaching artifacts as data collection methods. This diverse set of methods helped in gaining a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the instructional practices employed in a DLI classroom from a CSP perspective.

#### **Individual Interviews**

Interviews with DLI teachers served as the primary data collection method, providing firsthand insights into the experiences, perspectives, and instructional practices of DLI teachers (Creswell, 2009). This approach aligned with Seidman's (2013) principle of understanding the "lived experiences" of others and how they interpret these experiences. Seidman suggested a series of three separate 90-minute interviews to: (a) establish rapport and document how a participant relates to the topic or experience in the first interview, (b) examine a participant's existing contextual experience with the topic and/or experience in the second interview, and (c) follow-up with a third interview that asks participants to reflect upon their experience. This study modified the format to better suit the objectives of examining instructional practices within DLI classrooms and understanding how these practices align with CSP principles. Specifically, the modified format consisted of two separate 90-minute interviews per participant. The participants were familiar with the researcher, so establishing a researcher-participant relationship was not as important. Between the two interviews, the researcher conducted classroom observations that helped address questions that came up in one of the interviews.

Each interview covered different topics. The first interview included a common set of questions for all participants that focused more on the participants' experiences. Following classroom observations and initial data analysis, the second interview was scheduled approximately a month or two after the first. The second interview included a few predetermined questions but was driven by the initial data analysis of the first interview and observations. This format provided time for participants to reflect between interviews and observations. Despite the researcher's employment at the district where the study was conducted, interactions with DLI teachers were not a component of the existing professional role, which was primarily centered on

support for ESOL teachers. This separation helped the researcher maintain objectivity during observations and interviews.

The interview protocol was designed around key thematic areas directly linked to the research questions, serving as a dynamic guide rather than a rigid set of questions for the first interview (see Appendix B for the interview protocol). The thematic areas, aligned with the corresponding research questions, included: (a) teachers' experiences in a DLI setting and the challenges they face (Research Question 2), (b) instructional strategies used in DLI classrooms, their integration with curriculum content, target language instruction, and adherence to CSP principles (Research Questions 1 & 1b), (c) the role of CSP in instructional decisions (Research Questions 1 & 1b), and (d) teachers' perceptions of the impact of their practices on student outcomes, especially in promoting intercultural competence (Research Questions 1 & 1a). The actual questions for the first interview, although structured around these themes, emerged dynamically in response to participants' answers, enabling more in-depth exploration of the topic (Maxwell, 2013).

The second interview had questions aligned with the initial research questions while incorporating insights from the initial data analysis and classroom observations conducted in the time between the two interviews. This approach allowed for a deeper, context-specific exploration of teachers' practices and experiences. The flexibility of this approach ensured each interview was uniquely adapted to the participant, fostering a richer understanding of their experiences and perspectives.

The interviews were conducted virtually via platforms like Zoom and Microsoft Teams, as per the participant's preference, to foster open and honest dialogue. Initially, Zoom was used, but Microsoft Teams was later preferred for its ease of use and better transcribing features, which

assisted in data collection and analysis. The decision to conduct the interviews virtually prioritized the comfort and privacy of the participants. Data from these virtual interviews were recorded and transcribed using the platforms' recording features and transcribing tools. The researcher then re-listened to the recordings and made corrections to the transcriptions as needed to ensure accuracy (see Appendix C for the Research Statement: Interview - recorded).

### **Classroom Observations**

Classroom observations supplemented the interviews, enabling a real-time examination (Merriam, 2002) of instructional strategies in the DLI classrooms. Teachers were given a few options for observation days, with each observation scheduled to last approximately one hour. This timing allowed flexibility and respect for their schedules while enabling sufficient time to capture a range of teaching practices and student-teacher interactions.

These observations allowed for the capture of practices and subtle interactions that might not surface during interviews (Patton, 2015). The observation process, guided by an observation protocol that focused on the use of language, pedagogical techniques, student interactions, and integration of cultural elements, was carefully documented (see Appendix D for the Observation Protocol). The observation protocol's development was informed by the research questions and an extensive literature review on DLI and CSP. The intention was to create a tool that not only aligned with the study's focus but also built upon the rich body of existing knowledge in these areas. For example, the observation protocol included elements such as "instructional strategies" and "classroom environment," which directly corresponded to research question one. It focused on how DLI teachers used instructional practices to promote students' language development, academic achievement, and intercultural competence. The protocol also considered the principles

of CSP, reflecting the elements of bilingualism, biliteracy, and students' diverse cultures visible in the classroom, which were topics recurrently highlighted in the literature.

The protocol also addressed the second research question by investigating challenges faced during the implementation of a CSP approach. It aimed to record observed challenges and how teachers addressed these situations, providing a real-time perspective on the practical difficulties encountered and the strategies used to overcome them. The researcher's history as a bilingual educator added another layer of depth to developing the protocol. This blending of research-based design with practical experience aimed to create an observation protocol that was both academically rigorous and contextually relevant.

Data were recorded through detailed field notes, incorporating both descriptive and reflective elements. Descriptive notes covered direct observations such as teachers' actions, student reactions, and classroom interactions. Reflective notes included the researcher's thoughts, ideas, and interpretations about the observed phenomena. This dual note system ensured a clear distinction between factual observations and interpretive remarks (Emerson et al., 2011). Field notes were taken both during and immediately after each observation session.

The second interview took place after these observations, allowing for a deeper, context-specific exploration of teachers' practices and experiences. This setup enabled the researcher to triangulate data from different sources, thereby enhancing the study's validity.

The observational data was instrumental in addressing the research questions. Observations provided a direct view into classroom practices, allowing for a deeper understanding of the interview data and a more comprehensive representation of DLI teachers' experiences and practices.

## Document Analysis

Document analysis supplemented the other data collection methods. This process involved an evaluation of related documents, such as lesson plans and small group activities related to the observed lessons, using a document analysis protocol (see Appendix E for the Document Analysis Protocol). This systematic method of evaluation, as recommended by Bowen (2009), ensured consistency in analysis and offered additional insights into the intended instructional practices and strategies. These documents represented tangible evidence of the instructional strategies discussed during interviews and documented during classroom observations. They provided an understanding of the planned teaching strategies, expected learning outcomes, and the integration of CSP, serving as an important layer to the data gathered.

Some of the resources were in Spanish. These documents were translated using Google Translate. To ensure the accuracy and context of the translations, the original teachers were contacted to verify the translations. This step was crucial in maintaining the integrity of the original meaning and context. Squires (2009) supports the use of translation in qualitative research, emphasizing the importance of accurate translation to preserve the data's validity and reliability.

The document analysis protocol outlined key areas to focus on during analysis. This included evidence of language use planning, alignment of instructional strategies with CSP, and considerations for cultural diversity. The development of this protocol drew on the research questions, a comprehensive review of literature on DLI and CSP, and the researcher's experience in multilingual program instruction, which informed the practical aspects of the analysis.

The document analysis played a key role in addressing the research questions. It provided a broader understanding of the intended instructional strategies in DLI classrooms, the role of

CSP in lesson planning, and the envisioned impact of these practices on student outcomes. By examining documents related to the observed lessons, a more direct and context-specific comparison was made between the planned and actual teaching practices, thereby offering a multifaceted understanding of DLI teaching practices. Bowen (2009) emphasized this point, noting the value of document analysis in enhancing the depth of qualitative research.

All data were recorded, transcribed, and securely stored to maintain participant confidentiality and ensure accurate data representation. The combination of interviews, observations, and document analysis offered a well-rounded view of instructional practices in a DLI context, aiding a thorough examination of DLI teachers' experiences, challenges, and successes with CSP implementation (Maxwell, 2013). Therefore, the study committed to a comprehensive understanding of the topic using a multi-method approach to data collection.

### **Indirect Evaluation**

This study did not directly analyze student outcomes. This research primarily investigated the methods and strategies used by teachers in these high-performing DLI classrooms. Although student performance data was not used for direct evaluation, the effectiveness of these instructional practices was indirectly assessed. This assessment was based on the extent to which the observed practices aligned with established principles of effective DLI and CSP programs (Paris, 2012; Paris & Alim, 2017). An assumption supporting this research was that practices aligned with research-supported best practices could be viewed as effective, an assertion supported by existing literature on best practices in education (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017).

Indirect evaluation, a term referring to assessment based on observable indicators rather than direct outcome measurement, was enhanced by classroom observations (Creswell, 2009). These observations provided insight into teacher-student interaction dynamics during instruction.

The presence of positive engagement and clear signs of comprehension indicated the effectiveness of teaching practices. Teacher interviews also offered valuable insights, providing firsthand accounts of strategies perceived to contribute to enhanced student engagement and language proficiency.

Important to note was that the successful DLI program under study consistently met and exceeded district and state expectations. Such success suggested that the instructional practices used within these classrooms contributed positively to student outcomes, even if those outcomes were not the direct focus of this research. The implications and recommendations in the final chapter were grounded in these indirect assessments, the teachers' narratives, and the overall findings of the study, all of which aimed to inform and enhance future DLI instructional practices.

### **Research Procedures**

Several steps were involved in the research procedures for this study, ranging from initial planning to final data analysis. The first step was to secure approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the local school district and Valdosta State University (see Appendix F), a critical measure to uphold ethical standards in research involving human subjects. The school district IRB approval was received on December 15. Afterward, paperwork for Valdosta IRB was submitted, which took about a month (see Appendix G for the Valdosta State University IRB Approval). Once approval from both IRBs was obtained, an email was sent to the principal of AMES for permission to conduct research at the school and to start recruiting participants. The principal responded the same day, and emails were then sent to potential participants.

Recruiting participants was the next step. An email outlining the study's purpose, expectations, and potential contributions was sent to prospective participants. In early January

2024, approximately 13 teachers expressed interest and requested additional information. Follow-up emails detailed the required commitment and further explained the study, resulting in a few positive responses. During a school visit in late January, non-responding teachers were approached directly. Many declined participating due to not meeting the three-year experience requirement or having other commitments. Ultimately, seven teachers agreed to participate in the study.

Interviews with the teachers served as the primary method for data collection. Each participant participated in two separate up-to 90-minute interviews. These sessions, scheduled approximately two months apart, afforded participants ample time to reflect on their experiences and responses. These interviews were guided by an interview protocol with thematic areas related to the teachers' experiences and instructional practices in a DLI setting, challenges encountered, the role of CSP in their decisions, and their perceptions of the impact of their practices on student outcomes. These interviews took place virtually via platforms such as Microsoft Teams or Zoom, based on the preference of the participants, ensuring their comfort and facilitating honest dialogue. All interviews were recorded through the recording features of the virtual platform and later transcribed verbatim to ensure data accuracy.

Classroom observations and document analysis supplemented the interviews, enabling a real-time examination (Merriam, 2002) of instructional strategies in the DLI classrooms. Teachers were given a few options for observation days in the upcoming week of the study, with each observation scheduled to last approximately one hour. This timing allowed flexibility and respect for their schedules while enabling sufficient capture of a range of teaching practices and student-teacher interactions.

After the observations, the researcher collected all resources that teachers used for the observed lesson. This included lesson plans, student worksheets, pictures of classroom anchor charts, and lesson slides. Data from the initial interviews, observations, and documents analysis were analyzed.

This data analysis involved transcribing the interview recordings verbatim, alongside a detailed review and documentation of the data from classroom observations and document analysis. A systematic thematic analysis, as recommended by Saldana (2021), was then employed to code all the data, using Dedoose to assist with data organization and analysis. All these steps ensured a systematic exploration of the instructional practices in DLI classrooms, upholding participant confidentiality and privacy throughout the process. After this initial data analysis, the researcher scheduled the second interviews. The data analysis process was repeated with the second interview data.

Overall, the research procedures served as a roadmap, guiding the study to effectively address the research questions and subsequently contributing to a comprehensive understanding of the instructional practices within the DLI setting at AMES.

### **Data Analysis**

According to Patton (2015), data analysis is where the researcher “seeks to understand the multiple interrelationships among the dimensions that emerge from the data” (p. 122). Unlike quantitative research, which seeks to confirm or reject a hypothesis, qualitative studies look for patterns and group responses without prior assumptions (Patton, 2015). The data analysis for this study involved several steps to ensure that the data were analyzed systematically and rigorously. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis, a qualitative method involving identifying, coding, and interpreting patterns and themes in the data (Saldana, 2021). This common approach

in qualitative research is often used to identify themes and patterns related to the research questions and aims of the study (Maxwell, 2013).

The first step in the data analysis was the verbatim transcription of the interviews (Creswell, 2009). This process ensured an accurate reflection of participants' responses in their own words. Following the transcription, a thorough accuracy check was performed on the transcripts. The data obtained from classroom observations and document analysis were also examined to ensure the information aligned with the themes emerging from the interview data.

There was an obstacle during the analysis phase. Five out of the seven teachers observed were target language teachers, and their classroom lesson slides, as well as other artifacts, were in Spanish. While the lesson plans were obtained in English, some teachers were able to provide the resources in English, but others required translation. For these instances, Google Translate was used to translate the materials, and the translated versions were shared with the teachers to obtain their approval of the translation (Squires, 2009). This extra step ensured accuracy and maintained the integrity of the data.

Once the data from all sources were organized, a thorough reading of the transcripts and review of observation notes and documents was performed. During this stage, notes and memos were created to identify patterns and develop preliminary ideas about categories and relationships (Maxwell, 2013).

After organizing and understanding the data, the next phase was coding. The study used open coding, a process involving the creation of codes based on standout themes while reviewing the data (Maxwell, 2013). The data were coded and stored with the assistance of Dedoose. It is important to note that the interpretation of interview data, as well as data from observations and

documents, occurred throughout the process, as memory tends to deteriorate over time (Seidman, 2013).

After the coding, the next step involved analyzing the coded data to identify common themes and patterns (Seidman, 2013). This phase entailed examining the data, moving back and forth between the dataset and the emerging codes to refine the thematic categories (Saldana, 2021). The recurring themes were related back to the research questions and objectives of the study, which guided the interpretation of the results. This analysis process provided insights into the instructional practices within the DLI context at AMES. As emphasized by Saldana (2021), this cyclical, iterative process of data analysis ensured that the findings were reflective of the data collected, thus enhancing the trustworthiness of the study and its potential to inform future DLI instructional practices.

### **Ethical Considerations and Validity**

Ethical considerations and validity are essential and multilayered components of research. These aspects required attention to protect the rights of participants, ensuring findings that are credible, confirmable, and trustworthy (Creswell, 2009). This study's design incorporated multiple safeguards and strategies to meet these standards.

Informed consent, as described by Creswell (2009), involves participants voluntarily agreeing to take part in a study. A research statement was read to participants at the start of each data collection session (see Appendix C). This statement outlined the study's objectives, described how data would be collected (including the potential use of digital platforms such as Microsoft Teams or Zoom), and clearly stated participants' rights. It also highlighted the confidentiality and anonymity measures, emphasizing the study's commitment to transparency. Participants were encouraged to ask questions about the study before giving their consent.

According to Kaiser (2009), protecting participants' confidentiality is a critical obligation of researchers. This study upheld this requirement by de-identifying participant data and removing personal identifiers, ensuring no link existed between the collected data and the participant's identity. An additional layer of data protection was provided by storing the data securely in a location accessible only to the researcher. The data were also retained for a specified period in alignment with ethical guidelines, after which they would be securely destroyed (Creswell, 2009).

The design of the data collection and analysis procedures in this study prioritized participant comfort and minimized any potential distress (Creswell, 2009). The research process included measures to keep the participants' experience respectful and non-intrusive. Being respectful entailed recognizing the autonomy and dignity of participants by ensuring informed consent, allowing them the freedom to withdraw at any time, and treating their responses with confidentiality and sensitivity (Kaiser, 2009). A non-intrusive approach avoided pressuring participants for responses, allowed for flexible scheduling of interviews, and ensured that any data collection methods used were not overly demanding or stressful (Creswell, 2009). The research process integrated these principles to prioritize the participants' well-being throughout.

In the spirit of transparency and to avert potential conflicts of interest, the study also disclosed any possible conflicts to the participants. For instance, the primary researcher's current role as a Multilingual Learner Program Instructional Coach for the district could be perceived as a potential conflict of interest. Important to note that the researcher did not directly work with DLI teachers at AMES. This distinction helped mitigate potential biases. However, this study implemented specific procedures to ensure such a role did not influence the results.

As Creswell (2009) indicated, validity in qualitative research was about ensuring an accurate representation of participants' experiences in relation to the social phenomena under scrutiny. Two main threats to validity in this context are bias and reactivity, attributed to the researcher's influence (Maxwell, 2013). Although completely eradicating these threats is challenging, strategies were in place to limit their impact and use them productively. One such strategy involved personal journaling. This reflective practice allowed for the ongoing recording of the researcher's thoughts, feelings, and observations during the data collection and analysis phases. It acted as a mechanism for the researcher to identify and address potential biases (Maxwell, 2013).

Another strategy to enhance validity was member checking. This process solicited participant feedback about the accuracy and completeness of the data collected and its interpretations (Creswell, 2009). This practice ensured participants' perspectives and experiences were accurately presented in the study.

Following these procedures strengthened both the ethical integrity and the validity of the research. These measures elevated the research's credibility and trustworthiness. As a result, this study can become a valuable addition to academic discussions, particularly those exploring pedagogical approaches in diverse linguistic and cultural settings.

### **Summary**

In summary, this research explored and described the instructional practices of elementary immersion teachers in a specific DLI school from a CSP perspective. The study utilized a qualitative case study design, integrating in-depth interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis. These triangulated methods ensured a rich and varied data collection. Steps for preserving the study's credibility, confirmability, and trustworthiness were detailed,

emphasizing ethical considerations such as obtaining informed consent and upholding participant confidentiality.

Chapter 4 of this dissertation presents the findings from the interviews, observations, and document analysis conducted within the DLI classroom at AMES. The data underwent thematic analysis to identify emergent patterns and themes relevant to the research questions. Consistent with Maxwell's (2013) guidelines for qualitative research, the results chapter offers a detailed account of the findings, incorporating direct quotes from participants, descriptions of observed behaviors, and insights gleaned from document analysis. This approach aimed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the culturally sustaining instructional practices in this DLI context, thereby enriching pedagogical strategies, teacher training, and professional development in linguistically and culturally diverse educational environments.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS**

The primary aim of this study was to examine the instructional practices of elementary Dual Language Immersion (DLI) teachers at Alexander Matthews Elementary School (AMES) through the lens of Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy (CSP). Chapter four presents an in-depth exploration of the data collected. This information is organized around five themes because these represent the major patterns that emerged from the analysis. For each theme, quotes and observations from the teachers are included to illustrate and support the findings. Each theme also includes a Data Overview section, which is a synthesis of data across all three collection methods. This approach provides a detailed and layered understanding of how CSP principles were implemented in the DLI setting.

#### **Overview of Data Collection**

The study collected data using three main qualitative methods, including interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis. First, in-depth interviews were conducted with seven DLI teachers on their teaching practices and experiences. After these interviews, the researcher scheduled time to observe each teacher during an instructional block to see these practices in action. The lesson plans and materials used during instruction were collected for document analysis. This added context as well as a richer understanding of the instructional environment. Last, follow-up interviews were conducted to provide clarification and gain better

insight into emerging themes. Using multiple data sources allowed for triangulation, enhancing the validity and reliability of the findings (Patton, 2015).

Several challenges came up during the data collection process. A significant challenge involved a language barrier, as five of the seven teachers were target language instructors, resulting in many documents being in Spanish. The teachers were able to provide some of the materials, such as the lesson plans in English. Translation tools were used for the lesson slides and student materials. Translated versions were shared with the teachers for approval, ensuring accuracy and proper context (Squires, 2009).

Another challenge was scheduling follow-up interviews during the testing period and the end of the school year, which resulted in only four of the seven teachers being able to commit to the second interview. This limitation potentially affected the diversity of perspectives in the follow-up data and may have influenced the comprehensiveness of the findings. To address this limitation, detailed notes and reflections have been maintained in a research journal to ensure a thorough account of how these factors influenced the study's findings. This limitation will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 5, where the impact on data collection and interpretation will be discussed in more detail. Despite this challenge, the response rates and item completion rates were noteworthy. All seven teachers participated in an initial interview and observation, which indicated a high level of engagement and commitment despite scheduling issues.

The participants represented a diverse range of grade levels, language roles, and years of experience in DLI education. Pseudonyms in the form of fictional last names were used to ensure anonymity and confidentiality. The group included two English language teachers and five target language teachers. The English language teachers were Andre (1-2E), who taught second grade with nine years of DLI experience, and Simon (7-5E), who taught fifth grade with six years of

DLI experience. The target language teachers were Etienne (2-3TL), teaching third grade with six years of experience; Graham (3-2TL), teaching second grade with ten years of experience; Mareus (4-2TL), teaching second grade with twenty-six years of experience; Paul (5-0TL), teaching kindergarten with three years of experience; and Piton (6-1TL), teaching first grade with nine years of experience.

The participant IDs, such as 1-2E and 2-3TL, were created to anonymize each participant while providing specific information: the first number indicates the order in which they were interviewed, the second number represents their grade level, and the last letter(s) indicates their role in the DLI program (TL for Target Language and E for English). The participants also varied in their educational backgrounds and certifications. Andre, Graham, and Mareus held master's degrees, while Simon had a specialist degree. The rest of the participants held bachelor's degrees. All teachers had various certifications, including ESOL, Gifted, and Spanish. Tables 1 and 2 provide detailed information about the participants. Table 1 presents the participants' grade levels, language roles, and years of DLI experience, while Table 2 outlines their educational backgrounds, certifications, and whether they completed the second interview.

**Table 1**

*Participant Information*

Participant ID (Pseudonym)	Grade Level	Language Role	Years of DLI Experience
1-2E_(Andre)	Second	English	9
2-3TL_(Etienne)	Third	Target Language	6
3-2TL_(Graham)	Second	Target Language	10
4-2TL_(Mareus)	Second	Target Language	26
5-0TL_(Paul)	Kindergarten	Target Language	3
6-1TL_(Piton)	First	Target Language	9
7-5E_(Simon)	Fifth	English	6

*Note.* Participant IDs indicate interview order, grade level, and role in the DLI program (TL = Target Language, E = English).

**Table 2***Educational Background and Interview Completion*

Participant ID(Pseudonyms)	Education Level	Certifications	Completed Second Interview?
1-2E(Andre)	Master's	P-5, ESOL, Gifted, Reading	Yes
2-3TL(Etienne)	Bachelors	P-5, ESOL, Gifted, Spanish	No
3-2TL(Graham)	Masters	P-5, Gifted	No
4-2TL(Mareus)	Master's	P-5, ESOL, Gifted, Spanish	Yes
5-0TL(Paul)	Bachelors	P-5, ESOL, Spanish	No
6-1TL(Piton)	Bachelors	P-5, ESOL, Gifted, Spanish	Yes
7-5E(Simon)	Specialist	P-5, ESOL, Gifted	Yes

*Note.* P-5 = Pre-kindergarten through 5th grade; ESOL = English for Speakers of Other

Languages; Gifted = Gifted Education; Reading = Reading; Spanish = Spanish Language.

Table 3 provides a detailed overview of the lessons observed for each participant in the study, including the subjects taught, lesson descriptions, and the instructional documents collected. The table illustrates how each teacher integrated various strategies such as visual aids, sentence stems, manipulatives, and collaborative learning activities to enhance language development and content understanding in subjects ranging from math and science to social studies. This summary highlights the diverse teaching approaches and resources utilized to support students' learning in a Dual Language Immersion (DLI) setting.

**Table 3***Lessons Observed and Artifacts Collected*

Participant ID(Pseudonyms)	Subject	Lesson Description	Artifacts Collected
1-2E(Andre)	Social Studies	Focus on Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and civil rights. Emphasis on student engagement and participation. Use of primary and secondary resources, visual aids, and vocabulary previews to support language development.	Lesson plan, slide deck, student assignment

2-3TL(Etienne)	Math	Lesson on representing fractions on a number line. Use of sentence stems and visuals to support learning. Students engage in turn-and-talk activities to discuss fractions.	Lesson plans, slide deck, math stations, and student assignments
3-2TL(Graham)	Math	Lesson on geometric shapes and vocabulary. Use of realia and manipulatives to teach concepts. Visual aids and anchor charts around the room.	Lesson plans, slide deck, student assignments
4-2TL(Mareus)	Math	Lesson on time-telling using number lines and clocks. Sentence stems and collaborative learning strategies. Use of visuals and realia to support understanding. This was a review before a test.	Lesson plans, slide deck
5-0TL(Paul)	Science	Lesson on day and night sky and scientific concepts through video and songs. Emphasis on interactive and visual learning. Use of sentence stems and modeling.	Lesson plans, slide deck with embedded videos, multimedia resources, and student assignment.
6-1TL(Piton)	Math	Lesson on identifying and comparing coin values. Use of visuals and manipulatives to support learning. Structured activities with clear language objectives.	Lesson plans, slide deck, visual aids, manipulatives, math stations, and student assignments
7-5E(Simon)	Social Studies	Lesson on the Cold War and historical decision-making. Use of collaborative conversations and sentence stems. Integration of cultural backgrounds and schema in discussions.	Lesson plans, slide deck, graphic organizer, and Instructional Conversation Student Task Card

### Data Analysis

Chapter three outlines several steps for data analysis that were followed to ensure a systematic and rigorous analysis. It occurred in two stages. Data from the initial interviews and observations were analyzed. After that analysis, the second interviews were scheduled. That

allowed the second interview to have clarifying questions and for teachers to share their thoughts on the emerging themes. After completing the follow-up interviews, the analysis process was repeated to incorporate the new insights and perspectives gained.

All interviews were transcribed verbatim to accurately capture participants' responses (Creswell, 2009). Afterward, data from classroom observations and document analyses were reviewed to align with the emerging themes from the interviews. The researcher read through all the transcripts, observation notes, and documents. Following Maxwell's (2013) guidelines, during this phase, notes and memos were created to find patterns and develop initial ideas about possible categories and relationships.

### **Coding Process**

The coding method played a central role in analyzing the collected qualitative data. This process is shared in order to contribute to the credibility and reliability of the study (Creswell, 2009; Maxwell, 2013; Patton, 2015; Saldana, 2021).

1. **Open Coding:** While reviewing the data, initial codes were generated based on standout themes (Saldana, 2021).
2. **Categorization:** The initial codes were then grouped into categories that represented broader themes (Creswell, 2009).
3. **Theme Development:** The categories were then condensed into final themes that aligned with the research questions guiding this study. This process involved continuously going back and forth between the data and the emerging codes to adjust and refine the themes as new insights emerged. The Dedoose Coding Qualitative App help facilitate this process, allowing for efficient organization and retrieval of the

data, making it possible to systematically refine thematic categories (Maxwell, 2013; Saldana, 2021).

Finally, the identified themes were then aligned with the study’s research questions and objectives, to guide interpreting the results. This integration of findings across all data sources provided an overview of what instruction looked like in DLI classrooms through a CSP lens.

Table 4 displays how the codes developed in the analyses led to categories and themes. For example, initial codes such as “visual aids, sentence stems, hands-on activities” were categorized under “Instructional Practices,” which were then developed into the final theme of “Instructional Practices Supporting Language Development.” Similarly, “turn and talk, group projects, peer tutoring, Instructional Conversations” were categorized under “Collaborative Learning Strategies,” leading to the final theme of “Collaborative Learning and Instructional Conversations.”

**Table 4**

*Initial Codes, Categories, and Final Themes*

<b>Initial Codes</b>	<b>Categories</b>	<b>Final Themes</b>
Visual aids, sentence stems, hands-on activities	Instructional Practices	Instructional Practices Supporting Language Development
Realia, anchor charts, structured routines	Supporting Language Development	
Turn and talk, group projects, peer tutoring, Instructional Conversations	Collaborative Learning Strategies	Collaborative Learning and Instructional Conversations
Strategic grouping, Instructional Conversations	Structured Routines	
Cultural artifacts, cultural mapping, diverse backgrounds	Culturally Relevant Instructional Materials	Cultural Relevance and Integration

Stories and traditions, visual aids	Integration of Students' Cultural Backgrounds	
Time management, scheduling constraints	Challenges in Implementing CSP	Challenges and Adaptations in Implementing CSP
Classroom management, varied proficiency levels	Adaptations and Strategies	
Joint planning, co-teaching, shared resources, mirrored classroom	Teacher Collaboration	Teacher Collaboration Between Target and English Teachers
Coordinated activities, aligned instruction	Impact of Collaboration	

### Presentation of Findings

#### Data Summary Table

Table 5 provides an overview of the key themes identified from the various data sources, including initial interviews, classroom observations, document analysis, and follow-up interviews. This table helps to summarize and highlight the main findings before delving into the detailed thematic analysis.

**Table 5**

*Data Summary*

Themes	Initial Interviews	Observations	Documents	Follow-Up Interviews
<b>Instructional Practices Supporting Language Development</b>	Use of visual aids, sentence stems, hands-on activities	Visuals, anchor charts, realia, sentence stems	Visual aids, interactive discussions, hands-on activities	Instructional conversations, gradual release
<b>Collaborative Learning and Structured Routines</b>	Structured routines, strategic grouping, Instructional Conversations	Structured routines, collaborative learning, Instructional Conversations	Structured routines, collaborative learning strategies,	Collaborative learning, structured routines, peer learning

<b>Cultural Relevance and Integration</b>	Incorporation of cultural backgrounds, prior knowledge	Culturally relevant word problems, visual aids	interactive activities Culturally relevant examples, problem-solving activities	Culturally relevant materials, discussions on diverse perspectives
<b>Challenges and Adaptations in Implementing CSP</b>	Time management, need for flexibility	Time management, classroom management, flexible scheduling	Ensuring student comprehension, addressing varying levels of proficiency	Differentiated instruction, peer support strategies, varying levels of proficiency
<b>Teacher Collaboration Between Target and English Teachers</b>	Emphasized importance of collaboration, joint planning, aligned instructional strategies	Not specifically observed	Not specifically documented	Discussed the importance of collaboration, joint planning

### **Theme 1: Instructional Practices Supporting Language Development**

Instructional practices that support language development are critical in DLI classrooms. This theme includes strategies such as the use of visual aids, sentence stems, hands-on activities, and structured routines. These practices increase students' language acquisition and boost their confidence in using a second language. While these practices can align with the principles of CSP, they do so only when implemented with intentionality. CSP emphasizes the importance of utilizing students' cultural and linguistic resources to support their learning (Paris & Alim, 2017), and this alignment requires educators to purposefully integrate these resources into their instructional practices.

#### ***Participant Insights and Practices***

**Andre (1-2E)**

Andre emphasized how valuable visual aids and structured routines are in her classroom. She explained, “My lessons are very enriched with presentations with pictures and sentence stems. It’s like repetition over and over again.” This repetition makes it easier for students to understand the content and know what to expect. It creates a steady and predictable environment. Andre also highlighted the importance of morning meetings and strategic grouping, saying, “Students know what to expect due to repetition and visual aids.” She reinforced the idea that consistency, both in terms of visuals and class structure, students learn the language and stay engaged.

During the social studies lesson observed in Andre’s classroom, she used a summarizing activity to engage students in examining actions of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and other figures from the Civil Rights Movement. The activity involved students looking closely at pictures related to Dr. King, discussing their observations with partners, and writing down the actions they observed. The figure below is from her slide deck, which not only lists the steps with visuals but also shows the exact graphic organizer that students used.

## Figure 2

*Summarizing Activity Slide from Andre’s Classroom*

The slide, titled "Summarizing Activity", illustrates a classroom activity. On the left is a graphic organizer table with the heading "Actions of the Civil Rights Movement" and a sub-heading "Write the names of the people and the actions they did." The table has 6 rows and 2 columns, with small checkboxes in the top-right corner of each cell. To the right of the table are three numbered steps, each with an icon and a text box:

1. LOOK closely at the ACTIONS of Dr. King and others. (Icon: a person with a magnifying glass)
2. TALK to your partners about the ACTIONS you see. (Icon: two people talking)
3. WRITE down the ACTIONS you see. (Icon: a hand writing on a notepad)

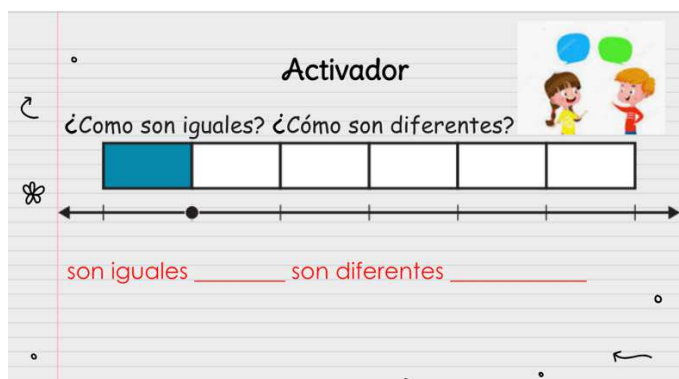
**Etienne (2-3TL)**

Etienne used anchor charts to display key vocabulary and concepts, which supported students' understanding and retention. She stated, "Visuals and realia make a significant difference in students' grasp of new vocabulary." This practice was observed during a math lesson where students used sentence stems and visuals to discuss fractions, enhancing their comprehension through structured and collaborative activities.

In her lesson, Etienne used a visual aid to help students compare fractions. The activity involved students looking at a number line and fraction bars, discussing their similarities and differences with partners, and filling in sentence stems to articulate their observations.

### Figure 3

*Math Lesson Visual Aid from Etienne's Classroom*



### Graham (3-2TL)

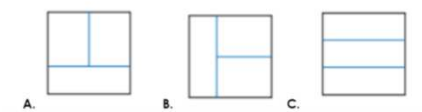
Graham's classroom is filled with visuals. He shared, "I have my room labeled with Spanish words... Everything is written out and there's pictures to go with it." This approach helps students associate words with images, aiding their language acquisition. Graham was observed using geometric figures to teach mathematical concepts, allowing students to visualize and manipulate shapes for better understanding. Students started the activity by looking at different shapes before discussing with partners which shapes were correctly divided into thirds. They used sentence stems to explain their reasoning to their partner.

**Figure 4**

*Math Lesson Visual Aid from Graham's Classroom*

**Activador**

¿Cuáles de las figuras están divididas en tercios?



La figura que está dividida en tercios es la opción \_\_\_ porque \_\_\_.

**Mareus (4-2TL)**

Mareus incorporated a variety of visual aids and structured routines in her lesson plans. She explained, “The Frayer Model and math dialogue charts are regularly used to help students understand and use new vocabulary in context.” She focuses on using materials and interactive strategies that reflect students’ cultures, helping them connect with the content on a deeper level.

In a math lesson on telling time, Mareus used the Gradual Release of Responsibility (GRR) model to introduce and model the concept of telling time to the nearest five minutes. The activity involved using a human-sized timeline on the floor to visually represent hours and minutes, allowing students to engage in hands-on learning.

**Figure 5**

*Math Lesson Using the Gradual Release Model from Mareus's Classroom*

**Gradual Release Model****I Do (Teacher Modeling):**

1. Introduction (5 minutes):
  - Begin by reviewing the concept of telling time to the nearest five minutes.
  - Show students an analog clock and discuss the minute and hour hands.
2. Modeling with Timeline (15 minutes):
  - Introduce the human-sized timeline on the floor.
  - Explain the timeline and how it represents the hours and minutes of a clock.
  - Demonstrate by standing at the beginning of the timeline (e.g., 12:00) and walking to different times (e.g., 12:05, 12:10).

### Paul (5-0TL)

Paul used multimedia resources and interactive discussions to support language development and cultural relevance. In her observed science lesson, Paul used a video as an activator to get students thinking before the mini-lesson on day and night sky. The video served as a visual and interactive tool to stimulate students' curiosity and discussions about the scientific concepts they would explore. Paul also mentioned:

Well, I took the English for Speakers of Other Languages endorsement, and that gave me a clearer view. The only thing that just switched was the language. You know, we have to use features like sentence stems, a lot of visuals, and a lot of songs.

These tools were crucial in helping students bridge language gaps while engaging with the content.

### Figure 6

*Science Lesson Activator from Paul's Classroom*

## Activador

¿Explica que ves en este video?

<https://somup.com/c3i3IRwH6Y>



3 minutos

### Piton (6-1TL)

Piton highlighted the integration of structured routines and language supports in her classroom. Her classroom observations showed frequent use of visual aids and manipulatives to

support learning, ensuring students understand routines and expectations through repetition and visual supports. Piton used a guided practice activity to engage students in collaborative learning. The activity involved students working in pairs to order coins from least to greatest value and using sentence stems to guide their discussion.

### **Figure 7**

#### *Math Lesson Guided Practice from Piton's Classroom*

##### **We Do (Guided Practice):**

1. Collaborative Activity (15 minutes):
  - Divide students into pairs and give each pair a set of coins.
  - Have students order the coins from least to greatest value.
  - Use the provided sentence stems to guide the discussion.
2. Example Sentence Stems:
  - "This coin is a \_\_\_\_\_ and it is worth \_\_\_\_\_ cents."
  - "A \_\_\_\_\_ is worth more than a \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_."
  - "The coin with the greatest value is the \_\_\_\_\_ because it is worth \_\_\_\_\_ cents."

##### **Simon (7-5E)**


Simon discussed the importance of having structured routines and using visual aids in her classroom, explaining, "Anchor charts in both languages provide visual support that helps students connect concepts across languages. Collaborative group activities, especially those structured around Instructional Conversations, promote peer learning and help students practice language skills in a meaningful context." Her structured activities facilitated content and language instruction that created an atmosphere for students to engage in high-level academic discussions and critical thinking.

The lesson focused on introducing the origins and consequences of the Cold War. Simon began her lesson on the Cold War by using an activator to engage the students. She first clarified the day's objectives, ensuring students understood what they'd be exploring. Next, she displayed a series of images tied to key events in the Cold War. As the students observed the visuals,

Simon encouraged them to pair up for a “Turn and Talk” discussion. This allowed students to share their thoughts and discuss the events shown in the images with a partner.

## Figure 8

### *Social Studies Lesson Activator from Simon’s Classroom*

<b>Activator:</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Review lesson objectives.</li> <li>2. Connection-Remind students that we are currently learning about the origin and consequence of the Cold War.</li> <li>3. Display the following slide. Allow students about 30 seconds to review the pictures and think.</li> </ol> <div style="text-align: center; margin: 10px 0;">  </div> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. Students will Turn and Talk to a partner and answer the following question: What do these events have in common?</li> <li>5. Walk around and listen in on student conversations. Join in to ask probing questions or quickly address misconceptions when necessary.</li> <li>6. Share a few themes that students discussed.</li> </ol>
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### **Data Overview**

The initial interviews highlighted several effective strategies to support language development, such as the use of visual aids, anchor charts, sentence stems, and structured routines. These strategies helped create a visually stimulating environment that aided in language acquisition. For instance, Etienne (2-3TL) stated, “I have like vocabulary words around the classroom, anchor charts, all that kind of stuff that they can enrich their learning. And they can refer back when they don’t remember.” Because these resources were readily available, students always had access to academic language support, which they could refer to as needed. Similarly, Graham (3-2TL) mentioned:

I have a place to point to for anything you need to tell them. So, if a student comes up to me and doesn’t have enough Spanish language skills to say, ‘Can I go to the bathroom?’ I have a sign where I can just point and say, ‘Hey, look at that sign, you can figure it out.’

Graham’s approach provided non-verbal scaffolding that empowered students to independently navigate classroom routines and activities, reinforcing their language development.

Mareus (4-2TL) explained, “Using anchor charts and making sure that the anchor charts are like math dialogues—what I’m gonna say, how I’m saying it, how the student is going to remember step by step. By using anchor charts in this way, Mareus offered a clear, structured reference for students to follow during lessons, helping them internalize language and content strategies.

Piton (6-1TL) highlighted the extensive use of visuals stating, “There are tons of visuals in my room. When you walk in, you’ll see visuals everywhere. There are visuals for math, science, and sentence frames. Everything is labeled.” Piton’s classroom provided a language-rich environment where students were constantly exposed to visual cues that supported their comprehension and language acquisition across subject areas.

Classroom observations reinforced these findings. In Andre’s (1-2E) class, the teacher asked, “Who knows what a march is?” allowing students to share their background knowledge. There were anchor charts on the wall, a word wall, academic vocabulary picture cards, and a vocabulary preview with pictures of protest, peaceful, and social studies concepts. In Mareus’s class, choral reading of the word problem was a common practice, while in Simon’s (7-5E) class, students mostly spoke English, with one newcomer multilingual learner (ML) using a word bank and word-to-word dictionary to support her thinking.

Document analysis further supported these observations. For instance, Andre’s social studies lesson plans focused on Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and civil rights, emphasizing student engagement, primary and secondary resources, and visual aids. Etienne’s math lesson plans on fractions included sentence stems, visuals, and turn-and-talk activities. Graham’s math lesson plans emphasized geometric shapes, realia, manipulatives, and anchor charts. Mareus’ math lesson plans and slide decks focused on time-telling using visuals, realia, and collaborative

strategies. Paul's (5-0TL) science lesson plans included multimedia resources, interactive discussions, and structured language support. Piton's math lesson plans focused on identifying and comparing coin values, using visuals and manipulatives. Simon's social studies lesson plans included collaborative conversations, sentence stems, and integration of cultural backgrounds.

The second interviews provided additional insights, with Marcus (4-2TL) sharing, "You're following the same routine and using the same vocabulary, the same expressions, and they tie it to that context." This consistency in routines and vocabulary was observed to significantly benefit students' language development, allowing them to internalize academic language more effectively by connecting it to familiar contexts. Simon (7-5E) added, "Language development is supported through activities that promote language use in context, such as analyzing different accounts of events, explaining historical decisions, and writing informational essays." These activities provided students with opportunities to apply language in meaningful and relevant scenarios, further enhancing their ability to use academic language purposefully.

The data consistently showed that visual aids and structured routines were frequently used in DLI classrooms to support students' language learning. These methods were effective in enhancing students' linguistic competence and academic achievement. While all teachers incorporated these strategies to some extent, they adapted these strategies in different ways, depending on their teaching styles and what their classrooms needed. These practices align with the principles of CSP by utilizing students' cultural and linguistic resources, which supports both language development and cultural identity (Paris, 2012; Paris & Alim, 2017).

## **Theme 2: Collaborative Learning and Instructional Conversations**

Collaborative learning and Instructional Conversations are essential components in DLI classrooms for enhancing both language development and academic achievement. These

strategies involve students working together in a structured manner to deepen their understanding and application of content and language. While these strategies have the potential to align with the principles of CSP, this alignment occurs only when they are employed with a clear intention to leverage students' cultural and linguistic strengths in meaningful ways. CSP emphasizes interactive and inclusive educational practices, but achieving this requires a purposeful focus on centering these strengths within the learning process (Paris & Alim, 2017).

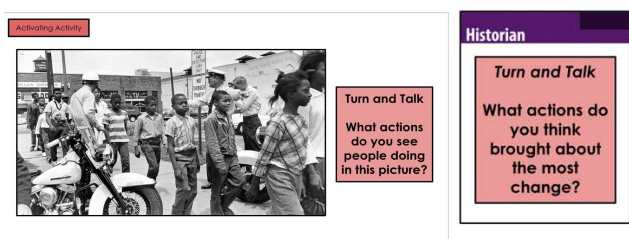
### *Participant Insights and Practices*

#### **Andre (1-2E)**

Andre highlighted the importance of collaborative learning in her classroom. She mentioned, "I use strategic grouping and conversational partners. It helps make sure that students are with the right partner to help stimulate conversation." This approach ensured that students engaged in meaningful discussions, using their peers as resources to deepen understanding and language development. Observations noted the use of a Think-Pair-Share poster on the wall, encouraging students to discuss and share their thoughts during lessons. This was observed during a social studies lesson where students examined pictures related to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and engaged in structured discussions with their partners about the actions they observed in the images. The collaborative activity fostered an interactive environment where students could share their ideas and learn from each other.

#### **Figure 9**

*Turn and Talk points in Andre's Lesson Slide Deck*

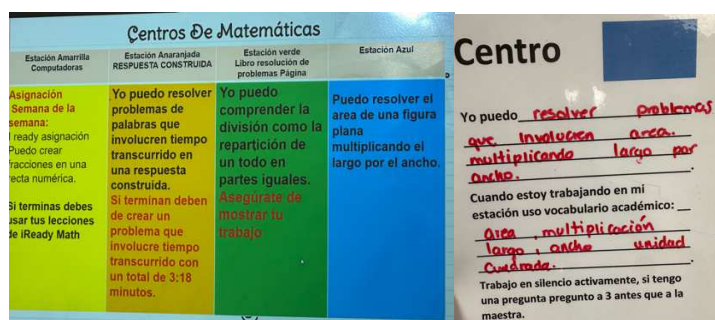


### Etienne (2-3TL)

Etienne used collaborative learning strategies extensively. She stated, “A lot of the activities is like collaboration. For math, we’ll try to have different grouping... I can force them to speak to each other.” By intentionally structuring activities to encourage peer interaction, Etienne ensured that students practiced language skills through discussion, which was crucial for reinforcing both content understanding and language acquisition. In her classroom, everything was labeled in Spanish, and there were anchor charts and word walls that further supported language development and collaborative learning. During a math lesson on fractions, students used a number line and fraction bars to compare fractions, discussing their observations with partners and filling in sentence stems to articulate their thoughts. This combination of visual supports and structured conversations strengthened students’ ability to express mathematical concepts in the target language, demonstrating the value of collaborative learning for both language and content development

### Figure 10

#### *Collaborative Group Work in Etienne’s Classroom*



### Graham (3-2TL)

Etienne used collaborative learning strategies extensively. She stated, “A lot of the activities is like collaboration. For math, we’ll try to have different grouping... I can force them to speak to each other.” In her classroom, everything was labeled in Spanish, and there were

anchor charts and word walls that supported language development and collaborative learning. During a math lesson on fractions, students used a number line and fraction bars to compare and contrast fractions, discussing their observations with partners and filling in sentence stems to articulate their thoughts. By encouraging this type of collaboration, Etienne ensured that students had frequent opportunities to communicate in the target language, which reinforced both their content understanding and language skills.

### Figure 11

*List of Math Collaborative Stations and Pictures of Bins in Graham's Class*

Grupos de Mate AZUL			
Ian 	Lucas 		Santino 
Student Names			
			

### Mareus (4-2TL)

Mareus integrated collaborative learning strategies into her teaching by using interactive learning methods. During a math lesson on telling time, students used a human-sized timeline on the floor to visually represent hours and minutes. They then had the opportunity to work with a partner to solve an elapsed time word problem before moving on to an independent task. This hands-on activity allowed students to discuss the concept and work together, enhancing their understanding through collaboration.

### **Paul (5-0TL)**

Paul emphasized the importance of collaborative learning in her classroom. In a science lesson, students watched a video as an activator to stimulate their thinking before the mini-lesson on day and night sky. They then engaged in group discussions and collaborative tasks to explore the scientific concepts presented in the video. Paul stated:

It's not only about saying 'I agree' or 'I disagree.' It's more about getting to the point where they are comfortable saying, 'I agree with you because...' or 'I disagree with you because...' I also always ask, 'What do you think about this?' so they have to respond, 'I think this because of that.' When they talk to each partner, by the end of the year, it's more about developing their reasoning and communication skills.

This approach encouraged students to share their ideas, develop their reasoning, and learn from each other.

### **Figure 12**

#### *“We Do” in Paul’s Lesson Plan*

We do:

The teacher will project the following video to explain how to draw a model.

- [Video link](#)

Tell students that today they are going to draw a model of night and day from a space point of view. The teacher will model first and will ask the students to go to their desk to draw a model with a partner.

### **Piton (6-1TL)**

Piton highlighted the integration of collaborative learning strategies in her teaching. She noted, “Structured routines, sentence stems, and collaborative learning strategies are integral to my teaching approach.” These structured routines created a predictable environment, allowing students to engage meaningfully in both language development and content learning. The use of sentence stems further supported students’ ability to articulate their thoughts, helping them build confidence in their language use. She explained:

There are all those different centers that I was talking about mixed in there. It could be a paired activity, an individual activity, or a game. Then, the last center I have is for conversational starters. They have to speak and have conversations, agreeing or disagreeing, about whatever topic I put in there. They get paired up with a partner who is at a higher level than them to help them.


This approach allowed Piton to foster interactive discussions and student collaboration, encouraging students to engage more actively with the content. By grouping students strategically, she ensured that higher-level learners could support their peers, reinforcing learning through conversation. During a math lesson, students worked in pairs to order coins from least to greatest value, using sentence stems to guide their discussion. This collaborative activity fostered a supportive environment where students could learn from each other.

### **Simon (7-5E)**

Simon emphasized the role of collaborative learning and Instructional Conversations in her classroom. She described her approach as involving, “Instructional Conversations, a lot of collaboration and group activities where students work together with norms to create a shared product.” This method ensured that students not only engaged with the content but also learned from one another, developing their communication and collaboration skills. By creating a shared product, Simon fostered a sense of ownership and accountability in the learning process.

To explore the origins and consequences of the Cold War, Simon engaged students using an activator that encouraged both engagement and discussion. She reviewed the lesson objectives, displayed a slide with images related to the Cold War, and facilitated a Turn and Talk activity where students discussed the events depicted in the images. This approach promoted high-level academic conversations and critical thinking.

**Figure 13***Norms for Collaboration in Simon's Classroom*

	<b>Norms for Collaboration</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Give everyone a chance to talk and participate</li> <li>• Focus and allow everyone a chance to talk and share</li> <li>• Everyone participates to find the best solution</li> <li>• Everyone will get a chance to talk and we will take turns talking</li> <li>• Get to know the people that you are working with-share your goals at the beginning</li> <li>• Everyone needs to take turns talking, only one person talking at a time</li> <li>• People should stay locked in and focus</li> <li>• Assume goodwill</li> </ul>

***Data Overview***

In the initial interviews, several participants highlighted various strategies to support collaborative learning and Instructional Conversations. These strategies help create an interactive environment that aids in language acquisition and comprehension. For example, Etienne (2-3TL) mentioned:

I do not always use homogeneous grouping. I mix it up for some of the groups.

Sometimes, students in a group have the same level, depending on what I'm going to teach or what I need to remediate with them. They love activities like matching.

By adjusting the grouping based on the content or skill being targeted, Etienne ensured that students could both challenge themselves and help others, fostering a collaborative classroom environment.

Graham (3-2TL) emphasized the importance of peer support, stating, "So everybody needs a buddy. If they can't figure something out on their own, they should be able to talk to someone about it." Paul (5-0TL) added:

Students help each other build language skills. For example, I have a student who came from another country. Although he is new and still learning English, he is a leader in my Spanish class. I chose him to help other students who are not yet fluent in Spanish.

Observations in the classroom reinforced these findings. These quotes demonstrated the consistent use of peer support and collaborative strategies in these classrooms, as students learned by engaging with each other, which contributed to their language development.

Teachers frequently used collaborative learning activities and Instructional Conversations to enhance comprehension. For instance, in Andre's (1-2E) classroom, students were asked to share what they saw, encouraging everyone to share their observations with a partner. There was not a wrong or right answer, allowing students to express their connections freely. In Simon's (7-5E) class, students engaged in Instructional Conversations, empowered to listen to each other's viewpoints, and ultimately come up with a group decision. They set conversational goals and used established norms to guide their discussions.

Document analysis also supported the theme of collaborative learning and Instructional Conversations. Lesson plans and instructional materials included various collaborative activities and structured dialogues designed to engage students and support their language learning. For example, lesson plans from Paul (5-0TL) detailed group activities and interactive tasks, underscoring the focus on collaborative learning. Additionally, Etienne's (2-3TL) math lesson plans on fractions included sentence stems, visuals, and turn-and-talk activities, while Graham's (3-2TL) math lessons emphasized geometric shapes, realia, manipulatives, and anchor charts.

Follow-up interviews provided additional insights into the impact of these practices.

Mareus (4-2TL) remarked:

Grouping is the key. It's the secret, but it's not always easy because, for example, when we're doing Instructional Conversations, it's the most difficult part. You have to juggle the peer language, the knowledge, the content knowledge, and the skills. So it's a lot, but it's feasible.

Mareus highlighted the complexity involved in creating groups that balance language proficiency, content understanding, and peer support, but also emphasized the benefits of this strategy in enhancing classroom discussions and student engagement. Similarly, Piton (6-1TL) explained:

I have them grouped by ability, and in each group, I have one model student. Each group has a leader who is in charge of controlling the group. The leader is responsible for telling me what happened in the group, putting the materials out, and dealing with any problems the group may have.

By assigning group roles, Piton ensured that each student had a clear responsibility, helping to foster both independence and accountability within the classroom.

These comments were supported by López and Iribarren's (2014) findings, which suggested that collaborative learning strategies such as group projects and peer tutoring provided numerous opportunities for real-life communication in the target language. López and Iribarren emphasized that such strategies not only enhanced language skills but also fostered a sense of community and collaboration among students. This aligned with the practices observed in the participants' classrooms, where students were given structured opportunities to interact and communicate, thereby reinforcing their language development in meaningful contexts.

Data consistently showed that collaborative learning and Instructional Conversations were used in DLI classrooms to support language development. DLI teachers fostered a more

interactive and supportive classroom environment. Using this approach helped improve student engagement, academic success, social-emotional growth, and cultural competence, which are all elements of CSP (Paris & Alim, 2017).

### **Theme 3: Cultural Relevance and Integration**

At AMES DLI classrooms, integrating cultural relevance was crucial for fostering an inclusive environment that acknowledged and incorporated students' diverse cultural backgrounds. This theme aligns with CSP principles, which emphasize not just maintaining students' cultural identities, but also creating spaces where these cultures can thrive and be sustained through active integration into the learning process (Paris, 2012; Paris & Alim, 2017).

#### *Participant Insights and Practices*

##### **Andre (1-2E)**

Andre emphasized the importance of connecting lessons to students' cultural backgrounds. She integrated cultural relevance by including diverse cultural artifacts and visual aids in her lessons. Observations noted the presence of Black History Month artwork and Hispanic cultural artifacts on the walls. Andre stated, "Students had several opportunities to turn and talk through the lessons, discussing their observations of the cultural artifacts displayed." During a lesson activator, students shared their connections to the artifacts. The teacher asked, "Who knows what a march is?" Students had the chance to share their background knowledge. Document analysis revealed a focus on Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and civil rights, providing opportunities to connect historical events to current situations. This approach helps students see the relevance of their cultural heritage in the curriculum. As seen in Figure 9, students were engaged in a Turn and Talk activity where they looked at a series of pictures describing actions and shared which ones they thought brought about the most change.

**Etienne (2-3TL)**

Etienne used cultural artifacts and examples from students' backgrounds to make content more relatable. She stated:

When they relate the content to their lives, I think they learn better. That's how I incorporate it. For example, in science, we're currently talking about habitats. Today, we started with a map of Georgia. I asked them to think about their country or the state they were born in, like Texas or New York. I asked if they think the habitats there are the same as here. They bring all that experience to their learning, and I think that enriches what they are learning.

This approach highlighted the importance of connecting academic content to students' lived experiences, making learning more meaningful and fostering deeper engagement with the material.

Observations noted that everything in her classroom was labeled in Spanish, with anchor charts, word walls, and conversational norms prominently displayed. The classroom also had books in different languages and representing various cultures. For example, a math word problem included names and context from Hispanic culture.

**Graham (3-2TL)**

Graham integrated cultural relevance by understanding students' cultural exposures and incorporating them into lessons. He shared:

I ask questions about their backgrounds to understand their cultural exposures better. But I just try to find things, and it's easier around the holidays. For example, Christmas is different around the world, and we can talk about different traditions. These seem more like conversations than formal instruction. Although I do have a read-aloud that I'm

making for a book called ‘The Tooth Fairy versus El Ratón Pérez.’ Rather than a fairy, it’s a mouse that comes and takes your teeth for money.

This method showed how Graham facilitated culturally relevant conversations that allow students to share their experiences, making lessons more engaging and personally meaningful.

Observations showed posters around the room stating, “We are stronger because of our differences,” and students working in small groups that incorporated student choice. Lesson slides contained examples that students could connect with, such as partitioning shapes like chocolate bars. Figure 14 illustrates one of these examples, highlighting the integration of cultural relevance in his teaching.

### Figure 14

*Partitioning Shapes Using Chocolate Bars in Graham’s Classroom*



Dos amigos quieren compartir el chocolate. ¿Cuáles son algunas maneras de particionar el chocolate en partes iguales?



### Mareus (4-2TL)

Mareus incorporated students’ diverse backgrounds into her lessons by using real-world scenarios and culturally relevant examples. Observations noted the presence of cultural books displayed around the room and a word problem example connecting the Dominican Republic to Atlanta. Mareus stated:

It could be as easy as using diverse names in word problems, not only Hispanic names but also names from other cultures, like Vietnam or Africa. I have many students from different backgrounds, so I make sure to include their cultural knowledge and how it relates to other cultures. For example, we were working on personal narratives, and they brought in photos of themselves when they were little. They then created stories based on those photos.

By including diverse cultural references in the learning process, Mareus ensured that students could see themselves and their backgrounds reflected in the lessons, which promoted a sense of belonging and relevance in the classroom. Document analysis also highlighted Mareus's use of real-world scenarios in lesson plans, reinforcing the connection between students' cultural backgrounds and their learning experiences.

#### **Paul (5-0TL)**

Paul emphasized the inclusion of cultural elements in her lessons. She noted, "Incorporating stories and traditions from various cultures helps students see themselves in the curriculum." This approach allowed students to find personal relevance in the material, enhancing their sense of belonging and engagement with the content. Observations highlighted the use of a world map rug and collaborative group activities where students shared their cultural backgrounds, further supporting this goal of inclusivity. Paul explained, "This book is like 'Se Necesita Todo un Pueblo,' which is about a mom who sells items in the market. It's not set in an unusual environment; instead, it's something the students can relate to and connect with." By using relatable cultural contexts, Paul helped students connect their learning to everyday experiences, making the lessons not only more engaging but also meaningful. These strategies

ensured that students saw their identities reflected in the curriculum, fostering a deeper connection to the material.

### **Piton (6-1TL)**

Piton integrated cultural elements into her lessons to make them more engaging and inclusive. She stated, “I try to bring in elements from different cultures in my lessons to make them more engaging and inclusive.” This approach aimed to ensure that students from diverse backgrounds could see their own cultures reflected in the classroom, fostering a sense of belonging and increasing engagement.

Observations noted the presence of books on students’ interests, a world map globe, and posters depicting different races. Piton elaborated:

If we’re talking about the weather in Mexico, then yes, because we’re going to be doing weather in science soon. I can incorporate that into our lesson. I’ll look up the current weather in Mexico City and say, ‘Let’s talk about it and make a graph of the weather.’

This way, I can spiral that content into our learning.

This example shows how Piton actively integrated real-world, culturally relevant content into her science lessons, helping students connect academic concepts to their own cultural and geographical experiences. These strategies not only enhanced engagement but also supported cross-cultural learning in the classroom.

### **Simon (7-5E)**

Simon used culturally relevant stories and visual aids to make lessons more relatable. She remarked, “Using culturally relevant materials helps students see themselves in the curriculum and feel valued.” This demonstrates her intention to create an inclusive environment where students feel acknowledged through the curriculum. Observations showed anchor charts and

vocabulary walls in both languages, supporting both native English speakers and MLs. Simon elaborated, “I included vocabulary words, visual aids, and videos that acknowledged and supported the language development needs of MLs. I also encouraged students to draw on their cultural backgrounds and experiences when discussing historical events and decisions.” By including these materials, Simon aimed to make learning accessible and meaningful, while encouraging students to connect personally with the lessons.

Observations noted that students had to come to a consensus and share their thinking. They demonstrated a solid understanding of the decision the historical leader chose to make but had to decide whether they agreed or disagreed, using their cultural backgrounds and schema to explain their reasoning. The standard was taught with fidelity, yet students still had the choice in the matter. Document analysis supported the integration of cultural backgrounds and schema in discussions, reinforcing the theme of cultural relevance and integration in the classroom.

### ***Data Overview***

In the initial interviews, several participants highlighted integrating culturally relevant materials into their instruction in their efforts to discuss the CSP instructional strategies they incorporate into their classrooms. Although the teachers often referred to culturally relevant strategies, these practices support the broader goal of CSP, which aims to sustain and grow students’ cultural identities. For instance, Etienne (2-3TL) mentioned using cultural artifacts and examples from students’ backgrounds to make lessons more relatable. She noted, “On the first day of school, we create norms that emphasize respect for each other. We ensure everyone has the opportunity to say what they think and know that their opinions are valued and contribute to the classroom.” This practice demonstrated her efforts to establish a respectful and inclusive

environment where students' voices and experiences are acknowledged, setting a foundation for meaningful engagement with culturally relevant content.

Similarly, Mareus (4-2TL) discussed how cultural mapping makes students' diverse backgrounds more visible and relatable, stating:

Learning becomes relatable to them. They don't have to lose perspective on who they are.

If you promote a lot of positive reinforcement, it comes with a positive image of themselves. So, I think there's a significant emotional component that comes with making culture a priority in their learning.

This comment emphasized the importance of reinforcing students' cultural identities, showing that cultural mapping fostered not only academic engagement but also emotional and social connections to learning. Through such strategies, teachers were able to integrate students' cultural backgrounds into the learning experience, aligning with CSP's core principles.

Classroom observations further underscored the use of culturally relevant materials and examples. For instance, Simon (7-5E) used culturally relevant stories and visual aids to make lessons more relatable. This approach enhanced student engagement and learning outcomes by making the content more meaningful and connected to students' lives. Observations in Andre's (1-2E) classroom noted a picture of Black students presented in an activator, with students participating in a turn-and-talk about the image. Students were kind to each other and focused on tasks, exemplified by a playful interaction where one student asked, "Why are you doing that crazy voice?" and the other responded, "Because I am crazy," leading to shared laughter. This lighthearted exchange demonstrated the positive classroom culture, where students felt comfortable interacting with one another while remaining engaged in their learning.

Document analysis supported the theme of integrating cultural relevance into instructional practices. Lesson plans and instructional materials often included references to various cultures. For example, Simon's (7-5E) lesson plans integrated cultural artifacts in social studies lessons, aligning with Gay's (2010) emphasis on culturally responsive teaching practices to promote academic success among diverse student populations. The document analysis highlighted high-level academic conversations and critical thinking, along with the integration of historical context and cultural relevance.

Follow-up interviews offered deeper insights into the impact of culturally relevant instruction. Simon (7-5E) remarked, "Using culturally relevant materials helps students see themselves in the curriculum and feel valued." Piton (6-1TL) added, "I try to bring in elements from different cultures in my lessons to make them more engaging and inclusive." Mareus (4-2TL) reflected on her ESOL endorsement training, stating, "I learned that a lot in my ESOL endorsement, like having those interviews with parents and asking them, 'Where are you from and what is important to you and your student?'" Mareus' reflection on her ESOL training emphasized the importance of understanding students' backgrounds and tailoring instruction to support their unique cultural and linguistic needs.

A consistent emphasis on incorporating cultural relevance into instructional practices was observed across all data sources. This approach enhanced student engagement and fostered an inclusive learning environment. However, some inconsistencies were observed in the extent to which different teachers implemented culturally relevant strategies. While Graham (3-2TL) and Mareus (4-2TL) regularly used such materials, others faced challenges in consistently integrating these elements into their lessons.

By embedding students' cultural backgrounds and knowledge into their teaching, DLI teachers not only enhanced student engagement but also promoted academic success and cultural competence. This practice aligned with the core principles of CSP, creating a more inclusive and effective learning environment.

#### **Theme 4: Challenges and Adaptations in Implementing CSP**

Implementing CSP in DLI classrooms involves several challenges that require adaptations by teachers. These challenges include time management, addressing diverse proficiency levels, and resource availability. Understanding these challenges and the strategies teachers use to navigate them is essential for enhancing the effectiveness of CSP in DLI settings.

##### ***Participant Insights and Practices***

###### **Andre (1-2E)**

Andre highlighted the challenge of time management in the classroom, particularly in balancing the inclusion of target language literacy with other subjects. She explained, "We have to fit the target language literacy into our schedule, so we have the same amount of time as other teachers to teach all the other subjects." This sentiment reflects the broader difficulty of effectively managing instructional time while incorporating culturally relevant materials. During an observation, it was noted that Andre often had to make real-time adjustments to accommodate diverse student needs. For example, students in Andre's class had four minutes to complete a task, but some expressed concerns about needing more time. When collecting work, several students mentioned they did not have enough time to finish. Andre reassured them by saying, "Turn it in anyway. You will have an opportunity to finish if you complete another task early or during bus call." Additionally, she used a timer to transition students to the carpet for the next subject, illustrating the constant need to balance instructional time with student needs.

**Etienne (2-3TL)**

Etienne highlighted the challenge of limited resources for teaching in the target language, which requires significant time for preparation. She noted:

One of the challenges for us is that we don't have as many resources as in English. A lot of the materials we use in the classroom are made by ourselves, which consumes a lot of our planning time and extra time.

She emphasized the necessity of creating, translating, and modifying materials, which adds to the workload. Etienne mentioned:

We need more resources. For example, Teachers Pay Teachers has a lot of materials that teachers can just buy and print, but we have to create, translate, and modify our materials.

Even finding appropriate pictures is a lot of work.

This reinforced the idea that while resources for English instruction are plentiful, those teaching in the target languages face additional hurdles in preparing materials that are linguistically and culturally appropriate.

Despite these challenges, she acknowledged improvements over time, with resources being more readily available than six years ago. She also noted that staying in the same grade level helps reduce the burden as teachers can reuse materials they have already created.

Observations in her classroom confirmed that she frequently adapted her lessons to meet the specific needs of her students, employing scaffolded activities and peer support. The document analysis revealed that Etienne built her lesson off a county lesson plan, which provided a starting point and reduced the need to create lessons from scratch. This approach illustrates how sharing resources within the county helps alleviate some of the preparation challenges, making it slightly easier for teachers.

**Graham (3-2TL)**

Graham talked about the challenge of addressing different proficiency levels in his classroom. He shared:

Something challenging is that in every single year I've taught, there's always been one class that is stronger academically or linguistically than the other. For example, one class might be stronger in Spanish but weaker in math and science. Often, these strengths and weaknesses don't align perfectly. So, you have to teach and cater to the different needs of both classes—balancing their strengths in one area and their weaknesses in another.

This highlighted the delicate balance required when teaching students with varying academic and linguistic abilities, which calls for flexibility and adaptive teaching strategies.

Graham emphasized the importance of being flexible in his teaching approach:

It's not about preparing two different lessons on paper but understanding that it will need to be taught in two different ways. I might be teaching the same content today, but I will have to approach it completely differently for each class. Even though all of my presentations, slides, and lesson plans were the same, you could see a visible difference in how I worked with the students. One class was much more hands-on than the other. It looked like two different classes, and I was two different teachers. You just have to anticipate and be willing to adapt. For example, if one class understands the material, we can do activities around it. But if the other class doesn't get it, I'll need to use more manipulatives and be more explicit in my teaching.

Graham's adaptability and differentiated instruction ensured all students could access the curriculum, despite their varied proficiency levels. His ability to adjust his approach based on the class's needs fostered a more inclusive and effective learning environment.

Observations and document analysis also highlighted the use of differentiated small group instruction in Graham's classroom. His lesson slides included pictures of bins labeled for each student group, which can be seen in Figure 11. These strategies helped manage the diverse needs within his classroom, ensuring that each student received the right level of instruction and support.

### **Mareus (4-2TL)**

Mareus discussed the challenge of balancing the focus between math and language development. She shared:

I feel like since our accountability piece is math, sometimes we tend to focus more on math. We need to remember that the more Spanish they learn, the better, and the more math they're going to be able to learn. They need to develop phonological awareness, phonics, and everything in their home language to access the language they are learning. So we need to stop thinking it's just about their capabilities in math and remember that they need the literacy and language components that we are supposed to teach.

This comment highlighted how interconnected language development and content learning are, particularly in dual-language classrooms. It reflects the idea that students' proficiency in their home language supports their ability to excel in other subjects, such as math

Classroom observations noted that her lesson plans included a literacy component and effectively integrated language into content, making learning more relevant and effective for students. By integrating language into math with a language objective and sentence stems, Mareus can save time while still achieving her instructional goals. This approach allowed her to balance the demands of both language and content instruction, ensuring that students were developing the skills necessary for long-term academic success.

**Paul (5-0TL)**

Paul highlighted the importance of flexibility in instructional practices. In a science lesson, Paul walked around during the independent task, supporting individual pairs of students as needed to address varying levels of student comprehension. She also emphasized the significance of creating a supportive environment, noting:

And I know that because at the beginning of the year they actually get frustrated, but with a kind and calm approach, we help them feel comfortable. At the end of the day, what's important is not the mistakes they make but the progress they achieve. If they make a mistake, I try not to reprimand them because I want them to feel comfortable and confident. It's their first year in a social setting, and the majority of my students didn't go to pre-K, so they are also learning social skills. It's hard for them, and we have to understand and be respectful of their backgrounds.

This approach not only encouraged language learning but also nurtured a positive emotional environment, which was essential for the development of students' confidence and willingness to take risks in their learning. Paul's emphasis on progress over perfection and respect for diverse backgrounds underscored the role of social and emotional learning, particularly for students who are new to structured educational settings.

Document analysis revealed potential challenges related to implementing CSP in a DLI setting, such as ensuring all students, especially MLs, fully understand and engage with the scientific content and discussions. To address these challenges, Paul's lesson plans suggested using visual aids and videos to support MLs and ensure they can participate effectively. This approach helps in managing the diverse proficiency levels within the classroom.

**Piton (6-1TL)**

When asked about a challenge, Piton mentioned supporting students with diverse needs, specifically newcomer MLs, stating, “They are not being pulled out, which I really wish they were. We used to have a pullout program for students who were brand new to the country, but we don’t have that anymore.” Her reflection highlights the importance of creating additional supports that acknowledge the unique strengths and needs of newcomers, ensuring they can fully engage in the classroom while continuing to develop their language skills.

Piton also discussed the importance of intentional grouping strategies, explaining, “We have to be very intentional with grouping strategies.” Grouping students strategically allows her to provide targeted support where it’s most needed. In the second interview, when asked how she chooses her student groups, she replied, “In the student-led small groups, students have roles and can work independently, which allows me to focus on the group that needs the most support.” This approach underscores how grouping not only fosters independent learning but also frees up the teacher’s time to focus on students with the greatest needs, maximizing the effectiveness of instruction.

**Simon (7-5E)**

Simon emphasized the role of differentiated instruction in addressing diverse proficiency levels. She noted:

One challenge is ensuring that all students, especially multilingual learners, fully understand and engage with the historical content and discussions. To address this, I use visual aids, vocabulary supports, and collaborative discussions to support multilingual learners and ensure they can participate effectively.

By using these strategies, Simon leverages students' diverse backgrounds and existing knowledge to help them connect with the content more deeply.

Observations in her classroom showed the use of anchor charts and vocabulary walls in both languages, supporting native English speakers and MLs. Additionally, Simon's lesson plans included sections that addressed the diverse learners in her classroom, incorporating strategies for differentiation such as scaffolded activities and peer support. Figure 15 highlights the differentiation strategies used in her lesson plans to accommodate the needs of various learners.

### Figure 15

#### *Differentiation Strategies in Simon's Lesson Plans*

<b>Accommodation(s)</b> (a change that helps a student overcome or work around the disability):	IEP- Students are given plenty of time to express his or her thoughts.
<b>Modification(s)</b> (a change in what is being taught or what is expected from the student):	ELLP- Vocabulary words and sentence stems are included in the station bin. Student is strategically assigned to Source 1 which includes more pictures and a video. Newcomer ML student will use a word bank/word to word dictionary.
<b>Differentiation</b> (tailoring instruction to meet individual needs; differentiating the content, process, and/or product):	504-Student will be given extended time and placed in the middle group towards the front of the class.

#### *Data Overview*

Initial interviews revealed several challenges faced by teachers in implementing CSP. Andre noted the significant challenge of time management in planning resources. Etienne and Graham highlighted the need for flexibility and differentiated instruction to address diverse proficiency levels. Graham explained:

A lot of it comes down to small groups. One class might only need one small group for a specific topic, while another class might need three small groups because all 15 kids need the support. So, you prepare for six groups instead of just three.

Graham's approach highlighted how differentiation becomes a balancing act, ensuring that students received targeted support while keeping the whole class on track.

Mareus discussed the difficulty of finding culturally relevant materials that meet curriculum standards. She emphasized:

So being aware of the students' needs is crucial. You have to understand what happened in previous years, talk to parents a lot, and talk to their previous teachers to understand why they do or don't have certain skills. Differentiating instruction is a big one for me.

Mareus' insights pointed to the importance of building strong connections with students' previous experiences to shape effective instruction. Understanding student backgrounds helped in crafting more culturally responsive and academically appropriate lessons. This need for relevant and differentiated materials added an additional layer of complexity to planning for diverse classrooms.

Classroom observations provided additional insights into these challenges. Teachers often struggled with time management and classroom management, particularly when trying to incorporate culturally relevant materials and activities. For example, during observations of Mareus's class, the teacher had to frequently adjust the lesson plan to accommodate varying levels of student proficiency. In Simon's lesson, students participated in an instructional conversation in social studies after a mini-lesson on the carpet. They discussed the idea of world leaders making difficult decisions that might be controversial at the moment but are viewed favorably in historical contexts.

In Paul's class, she selected students who might need additional support to model tasks, gathering additional data on students' needs. Students then rotated through math stations with the help of student teachers. In Etienne's class, students spent 20 minutes in stations where they had goal cards and communicated in both English and Spanish, mostly in Spanish. She called groups

to her back table for focused instruction. This aligned with the findings of Paris and Alim (2017), who emphasized the importance of flexibility and adaptability in implementing CSP.

Document analysis revealed several challenges teachers faced when implementing CSP. Although lesson plans and student activities frequently incorporated culturally relevant materials, teachers often struggled with ensuring student comprehension and addressing varying levels of language proficiency. For instance, Piton's (6-1TL) lesson plans emphasized the need for scaffolded learning activities to support students with different language proficiency levels. This finding aligned with Ladson-Billings (2014), who highlighted the significance of differentiated instruction in promoting equity and inclusion. By addressing the diverse needs of learners, differentiated instruction within the CSP framework ensures that all students can engage with and benefit from the curriculum.

The data consistently indicated that teachers faced significant challenges in implementing CSP, particularly regarding time management, addressing diverse proficiency levels, and resource availability. Teachers employed various strategies to navigate these challenges effectively, including collaborative planning sessions, flexible instructional practices, and intentional grouping strategies. By addressing these challenges and employing these strategies, DLI teachers created more inclusive and effective learning environments that aligned with the principles of CSP. These adaptations not only enhanced student engagement and academic success but also promote cultural competence and inclusivity.

### **Theme 5: Teacher Collaboration Between Target and English Teachers**

Collaboration between target language teachers and English teachers emerged as a significant theme in the study. This collaboration is crucial for aligning instructional strategies, ensuring cohesive learning experiences, and supporting students' bilingual development.

Effective collaboration can enhance the implementation of CSP in DLI classrooms, promoting a more integrated and supportive educational environment.

### *Participant Insights and Practices*

#### **Andre (1-2E)**

Andre highlighted the importance of teachers working together to create lessons that were aligned with each other and reinforce key concepts. She mentioned, “We work closely together to ensure our lessons are aligned and reinforce each other.” This emphasis on collaboration reflects the belief that alignment between lessons helps reinforce concepts, making it easier for students to transfer knowledge across subjects. Andre’s experience with aligning lessons underscores how teamwork between teachers contributes to a cohesive learning experience for students.

Despite acknowledging the benefits, Andre also noted challenges in finding time for joint planning due to scheduling constraints. She elaborated, “My classroom mirrors my partner’s classroom. We sit down and make sure we have the same classroom routines and setup.” By mirroring classroom setups and routines, Andre and her partner ensured consistency for their students, helping them feel secure and familiar with their learning environments. However, as Andre mentioned, the time required to achieve this level of coordination can be difficult to find.

Because Andre was fluent in Spanish, she was able to create anchor charts for the target language side that supported her topic. In the follow-up interview, she said:

I do sit with my partner and collaborate. We talk about the students and what they need. We sit together and discuss how to support the Spanish side with the English content. For example, if I need to teach something in English, I will create an anchor chart to support the Spanish side.

This collaboration ensured consistency and reinforced students' learning in both languages. Despite the benefits, Andre acknowledged that finding time for joint planning could be challenging, but the effort was worthwhile for the positive impact on student learning.

### **Graham (3-2TL)**

Graham emphasized the value of collaboration between target language and English teachers in creating a cohesive learning environment for students. He stated, "A lot of the posters that I have made for my classroom are also in my English partner teacher's room. They can see them in both places." This approach ensured that students are continuously exposed to the same visual aids and learning tools, reinforcing their understanding and retention of the material. Graham explained that the posters are strategically placed in both classrooms, "smaller and placed in a similar section, but not right in front of them. However, they are visible throughout the day, not just when they are on my side of the classroom." This continuity between the two classrooms helped students to see the connections between the target language and English content, facilitating a more integrated learning experience. The collaboration between Graham and his English partner teacher involved regular communication and planning to ensure that instructional strategies and materials are aligned. This alignment not only supported students' bilingual development but also promoted a consistent and supportive educational environment, which is supported by research emphasizing the benefits of integrated and coordinated DLI programs (Collier & Thomas, 2017).

### **Etienne (4-2TL)**

Etienne described her collaboration with her partner, Andre, with a sense of joy and camaraderie. She shared a humorous example to illustrate the importance of consistent rules in both classes:

But they need to understand that the students know there is communication between the two of us. I'll give you a funny example. 'Andre' has little kids, so she banned Takis in her class. Like, 'You don't eat Takis in my classroom.' It's simple, and on my side, I'm like, 'Make sure 'Andre' doesn't see you eating those Takis.'

This anecdote was an example of how their teamwork creates a unified environment where students understood that expectations were the same, regardless of the classroom.

Etienne highlighted that their collaboration went beyond formal meetings; it was integrated into their daily routines. She said:

It becomes so natural, like second nature. If they ask me, 'Do you meet with Andre?' I mean, our meetings are in the morning. It's not like we have a strict protocol to follow.

We are so knowledgeable and committed to multilingual education that aligning our instruction is second nature to us.

This natural integration of collaboration reflected their shared commitment to providing a consistent and supportive learning experience for their students.

Their partnership not only enhanced instructional consistency but also reinforced the importance of bilingual education. By working closely together, they ensured that their teaching strategies and classroom management techniques were aligned, which helped students navigate between languages more seamlessly. This close collaboration was vital for the success of DLI programs, as it fostered a cohesive educational environment that supported bilingualism and biliteracy. This approach is consistent with research that highlights the benefits of collaborative teaching in promoting effective language learning and student achievement (Howard et al., 2018).

The strong partnership between Etienne and Andre served as a model of effective teacher collaboration, demonstrating how aligned teaching practices could significantly enhance the learning experience for students in DLI programs.

**Piton (6-1TL)**

Piton described the collaborative teaching approach in her school:

Oh, we're on a roller coaster model. We switch at 11:30. I teach in Spanish all day long because I'm the Spanish teacher. I have a partner teacher who teaches in English, and we switch students at 11:30. I get her students, and she gets mine. That's how the program works. I teach math, science, and literacy, while my partner teacher teaches language arts, writing, social studies, grammar, phonetics, and all that.

Piton's explanation highlighted the importance of this structured alternation in ensuring that students maintained steady progress in both languages across all content areas. The collaborative approach between partner teachers played a crucial role in maintaining consistency and alignment between subjects in the two languages.

The roller coaster model in DLI is a collaborative teaching approach where students alternate the language they start their day with. One week, students might begin their day with instruction in the target language (e.g., Spanish) and then switch to English after a designated time, while the next week, they start with English and switch to the target language. This ensures balanced exposure to both languages and subjects, with variations on whether the switching happens daily or weekly.

Piton emphasized the importance of consistency and mutual support within this model:

We support each other and try to mirror each other's teaching methods. Our classrooms don't look exactly the same, but we have the same behavior rules. If she's teaching

something, she supports me, and I support her. I incorporate her content into my lesson plans.

This alignment of teaching practices created a cohesive learning environment, enhancing stability and predictability for the students.

Despite differences in classroom setups, Piton and her partner maintained consistency: Our rooms look different, so we can't set them up in the exact same way, but the students are grouped at the same tables with the same partners. They also sit on the carpet in the same spots in both rooms.

This approach helped ensure that students experienced a seamless transition between the two languages and teaching styles, supporting their bilingual development effectively.

### **Simon (7-5E)**

Simon highlighted the importance of a strong relationship between partner teachers in DLI programs. She noted:

Partnership doesn't have to mean being friends, but it's really helpful when partners are friends. Besides being partner teachers, we do life together, and that relationship shines in the classroom. Our students know that the family atmosphere we try to create is genuine.

This close partnership fostered a supportive and cohesive learning environment for their students.

Simon also emphasized the crucial role of teacher collaboration in supporting bilingual development. She explained:

In a two-way immersion program, the relationship between teachers is crucial. We both have students in our classes who need support with either Spanish or English, or sometimes both. We integrate language into a lot of the content. Yes, my subjects are

literacy and social studies, but I did my best to support math and science, and I know she did the same for me in Spanish.

This reciprocal support ensured that students received consistent and integrated instruction across subjects and languages, enhancing their overall learning experience (Howard et al., 2018).

### ***Data Overview***

The theme of teacher collaboration between target language and English teachers was prominent in both the initial and follow-up interviews.

During the initial interviews, several participants emphasized the importance of collaboration. Simon remarked, “Partnership with partner teacher to make sure that we are meeting each other’s needs.” This highlights the necessity of mutual support in delivering a balanced curriculum across languages. Piton shared a specific example:

Right now there’s a bird unit going on in the English side. They’re doing birds, birds, birds in first grade. The students had to pick their favorite birds, so we did a tally. I asked every student what their favorite bird was out of those four choices. Then I asked specific questions about the birds, and they took out their whiteboards. The questions might have been, ‘How many students chose it?’ or ‘Which bird had the most votes?’ ‘Which bird had the least votes?’ ‘How many more votes did this bird have than that bird?’

This example illustrated how content from one language class was reinforced in another, supporting students’ learning across both languages.

Classroom observations provided additional insights into these collaborative practices. In the English classes visited, math anchor charts were observed, even though math was primarily taught on the target language side. This integration of visual aids across classrooms demonstrated the effort to maintain continuity in instruction.

In the follow-up interviews, Andre elaborated on the collaborative practices stating, “We do collaborate with our partner teacher. We have the same reward system, the same expectations, and the same rules. Yeah, the same routine. We have them all in place. So, I think that helps transfer between the languages.” This consistency in routines and expectations aids in creating a stable and predictable learning environment for students. Etienne added:

I try to learn and see what she’s doing, and even though I don’t attend their planning sessions, I can see it in her anchor charts. I can see what they’re learning, so I’m always very aware of what they’re working on with her. We have weekly conversations to discuss it. For example, let’s say we’re working on close reading. The good thing is that even though I’m not in every single planning session with the English language side, the experience I have, plus reading the book and going through what they are learning in English, helps me understand what they need, just like the other teachers.

This showed how ongoing communication and observation could bridge gaps in formal meeting times.

Piton emphasized the critical nature of communication in successful collaboration:

Teacher collaboration is super important because it allows me to find out what my partner teacher is doing and how she spirals the curriculum. We are always talking about our students, so communication is key. We discuss what’s going on in their personal lives, what’s happening in my classroom, and what’s happening in her classroom. We have to communicate, and that’s a really big deal.

By maintaining open communication, Piton and her partner teacher ensured that both instructional content and student progress remained aligned. This ongoing dialogue not only

helped reinforce curriculum continuity but also provided a deeper understanding of the students' needs, allowing for more responsive and supportive teaching practices.

The data consistently showed that teacher collaboration was a crucial element in the effective implementation of CSP in DLI classrooms. Participants reported that collaborative planning and co-teaching enhanced the alignment of instructional strategies and supported student learning. However, there were variations in the extent and nature of this collaboration. While some teachers like Simon and Piton reported regular and structured collaboration, others such as Andre mentioned challenges in finding time for joint planning due to scheduling constraints.

In summary, fostering strong collaboration between target language and English teachers in DLI programs was vital for providing a cohesive and supportive learning environment. This collaboration not only improved instructional quality but also supported students' bilingual development and cultural competence. Teachers' collaborative efforts ensured that instructional strategies were aligned, which promoted effective DLI practices and enhanced student outcomes.

### **Summary**

This chapter presented the findings and analysis of the data collected through in-depth interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis with DLI teachers at AMES. The primary aim of this study was to explore and describe the instructional practices of elementary immersion teachers from a CSP perspective (Paris & Alim, 2017). The data were organized thematically to align with the research questions, providing a comprehensive understanding of how CSP principles were implemented in a DLI setting, the challenges faced by teachers, and the perceived impacts on student outcomes.

The themes explored in this chapter included instructional practices supporting language development, collaborative learning and structured routines, cultural relevance and integration, challenges and adaptations in implementing CSP, and teacher collaboration between target language and English teachers. Teachers utilized various strategies such as visual aids, sentence stems, and structured routines to support language development, creating visually stimulating and predictable environments that facilitated language acquisition and academic achievement. Collaborative learning and Instructional Conversations were essential components in DLI classrooms, with strategies such as strategic grouping, Instructional Conversations, and peer support fostering interactive environments that promoted social-emotional development, cultural competence, and effective language learning (López & Iribarren, 2014).

Integrating cultural relevance into instructional practices was crucial for fostering inclusive learning environments. Teachers incorporated culturally relevant materials, artifacts, and examples to make content relatable and meaningful for students, supporting their cultural identities and academic success (Gay, 2010). However, teachers faced several challenges in implementing CSP, including time management, addressing diverse proficiency levels, and resource availability. Despite these challenges, they employed various strategies such as collaborative planning, flexible instructional practices, and intentional grouping to navigate these difficulties effectively (Ladson-Billings, 2014).

Collaboration between target language and English teachers emerged as a significant theme, highlighting the importance of aligning instructional strategies, ensuring cohesive learning experiences, and supporting students' bilingual development. Effective collaboration promoted a more integrated and supportive educational environment, enhancing the implementation of CSP in DLI classrooms (Howard et al., 2018).

The synthesis of findings integrated these themes and highlighted how they collectively addressed the research questions, revealing key patterns and consistencies. These findings provide a comprehensive understanding of the instructional practices in DLI classrooms, offering insights into effective strategies and areas for improvement. They also set the stage for the interpretation and discussion in the next chapter, where the implications of these findings will be explored in greater depth. In the following chapter, the results will be interpreted within the context of existing literature, and their implications for theory, practice, and future research will be discussed.

## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION

The purpose of the study was to explore and describe the instructional practices elementary immersion teachers used in Dual Language Immersion (DLI) classrooms at Alexander Matthew Elementary School (AMES) from a Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy (CSP) perspective. The focus was to discover effective strategies that promote bilingualism and biliteracy, increase academic achievement, and intercultural competence while identifying potential areas for improvement.

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. How do elementary immersion teachers in a DLI classroom employ instructional practices that support students' language development, academic achievement, and intercultural competence through a CSP lens?
  - a. In what ways do these instructional practices promote intercultural competence in students?
  - b. How do instructional practices integrate curriculum content of various disciplines with target language instruction that adheres to the principles of CSP?
2. What challenges do elementary immersion teachers face when implementing a CSP approach in a DLI classroom, and how do they address these challenges?

In this chapter, the results will be interpreted within the context of existing literature, and their implications for theory, practice, and future research will be discussed.

## **Summary of Key Findings**

Data was collected through interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis. The findings were organized thematically, highlighting key patterns and themes. The following is a summary of the key findings aligned with the principles of CSP.

### **Instructional Practices Supporting Language Development**

DLI teacher at AMES used a variety of strategies to support language development, including visual aids, sentence stems, hands-on activities, and structured routines. These strategies played an important role in creating visually rich classrooms (Cammarata & Tedick, 2012; Gay, 2010). They also aligned with CSP because teachers recognized and used students' cultural and linguistic assets as essential parts of the learning process, fostering an inclusive and supportive learning environment that respected and built on these diverse backgrounds (Paris & Alim, 2017).

### **Collaborative Learning and Instructional Conversations**

Teachers at AMES used collaborative learning and Instructional Conversation to support language development and academic achievement. They also used strategies like turn and talk, collaborative learning activities, and strategic grouping to help develop social-emotional skills and promote academic success. These practices reflected CSP principles by incorporating community languages, practices, and knowledge into classroom instruction, emphasizing student and community agency, historicizing content, and challenging deficit-based mindsets (Paris, 2012; Paris & Alim, 2017).

### **Cultural Relevance and Integration:**

Integrating cultural relevance into instruction was important for fostering an inclusive environment. Teachers incorporated students' diverse cultural backgrounds into their teaching,

which enhanced student engagement and learning outcomes (Fang et al., 2020; Paris, 2012; Paris & Alim, 2017). These practices aligned with CSP by sustaining and nurturing students' cultural and linguistic identities within the classroom, promoting mutual respect and understanding, and increasing student engagement and academic success (Gay, 2010).

### **Challenges and Adaptations in Implementing CSP**

Teachers faced several challenges in implementing CSP. These challenges included time management, addressing diverse proficiency levels, and the availability of culturally relevant resources. Strategies, such as differentiated instruction and peer support, were used to overcome these challenges (Cammarata & Tedick, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 2014). These strategies supported CSP principles by providing culturally and linguistically appropriate resources, fostering a more inclusive and engaging learning environment, and actively sustaining students' cultural and linguistic identities (Paris & Alim, 2017).

### **Teacher Collaboration Between Target Language and English Teachers**

The final theme highlights the importance of effective collaboration between target language and English teachers. Working together helped align instructional strategies and supported students' bilingual development. This collaboration aligned with CSP principles by making instructional practices consistent and culturally responsive, using students' cultural strengths to build a cohesive and supportive learning environment (Paris & Alim, 2017; Yoon, 2023). (Paris & Alim, 2017; Yoon, 2023).

The findings of this study provided valuable insights into the instructional practices of elementary immersion teachers in DLI classrooms from a CSP perspective. The remaining sections of this chapter will discuss these findings in detail, linking them to existing literature,

exploring their implications for theory and practice, identifying the limitations of the study, and suggesting directions for future research.

### **Interpretation of Findings**

Interpreting the findings required a detailed analysis of how the results align, diverge, or extend existing literature on DLI and CSP aligned with qualitative research methods (Patton, 2015). This section provides a comparison of the themes identified in Chapter 4 with relevant research. By integrating qualitative data from interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis, the study's findings are placed in the broader context of educational research. This approach follows the guidelines of Creswell (2009) for qualitative data analysis. The implications of these findings for theory, practice, and policy are also discussed, offering practical recommendations for educators and administrators to enhance DLI programs. Each theme is examined in detail to provide a cohesive and thorough understanding of the study's contributions to the field.

#### **Theme 1: Instructional Practices Supporting Language Development**

Teachers in DLI classrooms at AMES used a variety of instructional practices to support language development. Using visual aids, sentence stems, hands-on activities, and structured routines helped language acquisition. These practices were essential in creating a visually rich and supportive learning environment, where students could effectively learn and use the target language.

Visual aids were especially critical in DLI classrooms, as they offered contextual cues that enhanced both comprehension and retention of new vocabulary and concepts. This practice aligned with Krashen's (1982) input hypothesis, which emphasized the importance of comprehensible input for language acquisition. Teachers like Andre (1-2E) said that their lessons

included “presentations with pictures and sentence stems” to help students learn and produce language. These visual strategies also reinforced the understanding of complex content, making learning more meaningful and memorable for students (Cammarata & Tedick, 2012).

Sentence stems were another valuable scaffolding tool, enabling students to construct complete sentences and participate in academic discourse with greater confidence. In alignment with Vygotsky’s (1978) scaffolding theory, these linguistic frameworks allowed students to build on their existing knowledge and practice language in context. Etienne (2-3TL) emphasized the importance of this structured support, noting that “sentence stems and visuals” significantly impacted students’ grasp of new concepts, especially during collaborative activities.

Hands-on activities, such as science experiments and math stations, provide experiential learning opportunities. These activities allow students to apply language in real-life scenarios, promoting deeper understanding and retention of both language and content (Lee & Stephens, 2020). By engaging in hands-on learning, students can practice and refine their language skills in meaningful and practical contexts, thereby enhancing their overall language development.

The use of structured routines, particularly the Gradual Release of Responsibility (GRR) model, provided consistency and predictability in classroom activities. Teachers like Mareus (4-2TL) emphasized the role of structured routines in creating a stable learning environment, allowing students to focus on language learning without unnecessary disruptions. The GRR model enabled students to gradually take ownership of their learning, aligning with both scaffolding principles and CSP, which celebrate students’ linguistic and cultural identities (Paris & Alim, 2017).

### *Visual Aids*

Visual aids contributed to supporting language development in DLI classrooms. Teachers used visual-rich lesson slides, anchor charts, and realia to enhance students' comprehension and engagement. Classroom observations showed that students frequently referred to anchor charts, which helped their understanding and retention of complex concepts. These visual tools not only supported language acquisition but also reinforced academic content, making learning more accessible and engaging for students.

A specific example of this can be seen in Andre's classroom, where a summarizing activity slide (see Figure 2) helped students examine the actions of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and other figures from the Civil Rights Movement. Andre's slide used visuals in a way that prompted students to discuss and summarize their observations, linking language production with historical content.

Andre also used an activating activity (see Figure 3) to encourage collaborative student discussions. The image from the Civil Rights Movement helped guide a "Turn and Talk" activity, allowing students to reflect on what they saw and how it related to broader social changes. According to Paris and Alim (2017), CSP encourages educators to use practices that sustain the cultural identities of students while promoting academic excellence. By incorporating an image from the Civil Rights Movement, Andre tapped into the cultural and historical background of students in her classroom, affirming their cultural heritage and fostering a deeper connection to the content

In other lessons, visual aids like videos and pictures activated students' thinking and provided context, making abstract concepts more concrete. These tools enhanced student engagement and deepened their understanding of complex content. For instance, math dialogue

anchor charts were designed to support math discourse by visually connecting key vocabulary words with images. Marcus (4-2TL) explained, “Using anchor charts and making sure that the anchor charts are like math dialogues—what I’m gonna say, how I’m saying it, how the student is going to remember step by step.” This practice helped students grasp complex mathematical concepts and enhanced their ability to engage in academic discussions. Charts illustrating mathematical operations with step-by-step visuals guided students through problem-solving processes, fostering both language and content mastery.

The use of visual aids in DLI classrooms aligned with existing literature on effective instructional practices for language development. Cammarata and Tedick (2012) highlighted the importance of visual supports in creating an engaging learning environment that aided language acquisition. Similarly, Gay (2010) advocated for the use of culturally relevant visual aids to make learning more relatable and meaningful for students from diverse backgrounds. Lee and Stephens (2020) emphasized the role of multimodal information, including visual aids, in supporting English learners in STEM subjects. These studies support the findings from this research, highlighting the effectiveness of visual aids in enhancing comprehension and retention of new vocabulary and concepts.

This study offered new insights into the specific types of visual aids that were most effective in a DLI context. The observations of visual-rich lesson slides and the active use of anchor charts, such as math dialogue charts, provided concrete examples of how visual aids could be integrated into daily instruction. Additionally, the emphasis on realia and multimodal information highlighted the practical applications of these strategies in fostering language development and academic achievement.

The findings supported Krashen's (1982) input hypothesis, which proposed that comprehensible input was essential for language acquisition. Visual aids provided contextual clues that made language input more accessible, facilitating the acquisition process. Practically, integrating visual aids such as lesson slides, anchor charts, and realia enhanced student engagement and comprehension, making learning more meaningful and effective. By incorporating culturally relevant visual elements, these practices aligned with CRP by affirming students' cultural backgrounds and making connections between academic content and their lived experiences (Ladson-Billings, 1995). However, the use of culturally relevant visual aids also extended beyond CRP into CSP. CSP aims not only to recognize but also to sustain students' cultural and linguistic practices in the classroom (Paris & Alim, 2017). The inclusion of these visual elements did more than connect to students' cultures—it actively encouraged students to engage with, preserve, and use their cultural identities as part of the learning process, thus supporting the CSP framework. In this way, learning became both linguistically and culturally sustaining, empowering students to see their identities as integral to their academic success.

### ***Sentence Stems***

Sentence stems emerged as a critical instructional strategy in supporting language development within DLI classrooms at AMES. Teachers frequently utilized sentence stems to scaffold students' language production, thereby enabling them to construct complete sentences and participate in academic discourse with greater confidence. This practice was observed to be particularly effective in promoting structured language use and aiding students in developing their academic language proficiency.

Sentence stems served as scaffolding tools that provided students with a linguistic framework to build on their existing knowledge. For example, during classroom observations, teachers would often start a discussion or writing activity by providing stems such as “I predict that... because...”, “The main idea of this text is...”, or “One example of this concept is...”. These stems not only helped students articulate their thoughts more clearly but also facilitated the use of academic vocabulary and complex sentence structures. The consistent use of sentence stems enabled students to engage more actively in classroom discussions and written tasks, fostering both their linguistic and cognitive development.

For instance, in Piton’s (6-1TL) math lesson, students used sentence stems to structure their discussion while ordering coins by value. The stems, such as “This coin is a \_\_\_ and it is worth \_\_\_ cents” (see Figure 7), supported students in framing their thoughts in complete sentences. This practice facilitated both content mastery and language development, as students engaged in academic conversations with the aid of these linguistic frameworks.

In Etienne’s (2-3TL) math lesson, sentence stems were used to guide students in comparing and contrasting fractions. By providing stems like “Son iguales \_\_\_, son diferentes \_\_\_,” Etienne ensured that students had the necessary linguistic tools to participate in academic discourse (see Figure 3). These stems allowed students to build on their existing knowledge, supporting the development of both mathematical understanding and language skills.

The consistent use of sentence stems across classrooms enabled students to engage more actively in both classroom discussions and written tasks, fostering their linguistic and cognitive development. By structuring the language, students gained confidence in articulating their thoughts, which promoted their academic language proficiency in a variety of subject areas.

The use of sentence stems aligned well with Vygotsky's (1978) theory of scaffolding, where providing linguistic frameworks allowed students to build on their existing knowledge and gradually enhance their language skills. This approach is supported by existing literature, which emphasized the importance of scaffolding in language acquisition. Cammarata and Tedick (2012) highlighted the role of structured linguistic support in aiding language learners to reach higher levels of language proficiency. Similarly, Probert (2024) discusses how structured sentence frames could support dual language skills and intercultural communication strategies in bilingual learning environments.

Moreover, Villabona and Cenoz (2021) stress the importance of integrating content and language learning through scaffolding techniques like sentence stems in Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) settings. Their research underscored the effectiveness of such strategies in fostering both language and academic content mastery, corroborating the findings from this study.

This study contributed new insights into the specific applications of sentence stems in a DLI context. The detailed observations of their use in fostering academic discourse and enhancing language proficiency provided concrete examples of how sentence stems were integrated into daily instruction. The connections to CSP in this context became evident when considering how teachers leveraged sentence stems to ensure that all students, regardless of their proficiency level, could participate in classroom discussions. While scaffolding language learning, sentence stems also encouraged students to draw on their own experiences and linguistic backgrounds, aligning with the principles of CSP.

The findings supported Vygotsky's (1978) theory of scaffolding by demonstrating how structured linguistic support facilitated language acquisition. Practically, the use of sentence

stems offers valuable recommendations for teachers. Integrating sentence stems into classroom activities can help students articulate their thoughts, engage in academic discourse, and develop their academic language proficiency. Teachers are encouraged to use sentence stems strategically to provide the necessary linguistic support that enables students to succeed in both language development and academic achievement.

### ***Hands-on Activities***

In the math observations at AMES, hands-on activities were integral to supporting language development and comprehension in DLI classrooms. Students had frequent opportunities to work in small group stations, which were either student-led or teacher-led. These stations featured manipulatives such as base ten blocks, clocks, counters, and other tangible objects that facilitated understanding of mathematical concepts. The use of these hands-on tools helped students to visually and physically interact with abstract ideas, thereby enhancing their grasp of the content and the associated language.

The use of hands-on activities in DLI classrooms is well-supported by existing literature on effective teaching strategies for language development and content comprehension. Research by Lee and Stephens (2020) emphasized the importance of experience-based learning, noting that hands-on activities enabled students to connect language with concrete experiences. This approach aligned with Vygotsky's (1978) theory of scaffolding, where hands-on activities provided the support necessary for students to achieve higher levels of understanding.

Probert (2024) discussed the benefits of project-based learning and interactive activities in bilingual education, emphasizing how these methods engage students in meaningful use of both languages while deepening their content knowledge. Similarly, Villabona and Cenoz (2021)

stressed the role of integrating content and language through practical applications, which helped students make connections between what they were learning and their real-world experiences.

This study contributed new insights into the specific implementation of hands-on activities in a DLI context. Observations of small group stations where students used manipulatives offer concrete examples of how such activities can be structured to support both language development and academic achievement. The detailed descriptions of math stations with base ten blocks, clocks, and counters provide a practical framework for other educators seeking to implement similar strategies in their classrooms.

The findings supported the notion that hands-on activities were crucial for providing comprehensible input and meaningful context, which are essential for language acquisition according to Krashen's (1982) input hypothesis. Practically, this study underscored the importance of incorporating manipulatives and interactive tasks into DLI classrooms. Teachers were encouraged to design small group stations that allowed students to explore and manipulate objects, thereby facilitating deeper understanding and retention of both language and content.

### ***Structured Routines Supporting Language Development***

Structured routines are critical in DLI classrooms as they provide consistency and predictability that are essential for language acquisition (Fu et al., 2021). At AMES, the Gradual Release of Responsibility (GRR) model was a prominent instructional strategy observed across various subjects, including math, science, and social studies. In the GRR model, teachers began by explicitly modeling the desired skill or strategy ("I do"), followed by guided practice where students and teachers work together ("We do"), and culminating in independent practice where students applied the skill on their own ("You do"). This structured approach was consistently implemented, creating a stable learning environment that allowed students to focus on language

learning rather than classroom logistics. As Andre highlighted, “Students know what to expect due to repetition and visual aids,” emphasizing how predictable routines helped students become familiar with the content and expectations.

The use of structured routines, particularly the GRR model, aligns with existing literature on effective instructional practices for language development. Research has shown that scaffolding techniques, such as providing explicit explanations, modeling, and feedback, effectively support the language and academic development of students in DLI classrooms (Genesee et al., 2006). McVee et al. (2019) highlight the effectiveness of the GRR model in gradually shifting the cognitive load from teacher to student, enabling learners to develop autonomy and confidence in using the target language. This emphasis on structured support was echoed by teachers like Graham, who shared, “I have a place to point to for anything you need to tell them. So, if a student comes up to me and doesn’t have enough Spanish language skills to say, ‘Can I go to the bathroom?’ I have a sign where I can just point and say, ‘Hey, look at that sign, you can figure it out.’” Such strategies empower students to navigate classroom routines independently, reinforcing their language development.

This study provided new insights into the specific application of the GRR model in a DLI context. The detailed observations of the GRR model across various subjects, including the use of manipulatives in math lessons, offered concrete examples of how structured routines could be effectively integrated into daily instruction. Etienne emphasized the impact of tangible supports stating, “Visuals and realia make a significant difference in students’ grasp of new vocabulary.” By incorporating these materials within the GRR framework, teachers enhanced students’ comprehension and engagement. Additionally, the emphasis on creating a consistent and predictable learning environment extended the existing literature by highlighting practical

applications that supported both language development and academic achievement. These findings contributed to a deeper understanding of how structured routines could be tailored to meet the needs of English learners in DLI programs.

The findings supported Vygotsky's (1978) scaffolding theory, which dictated that structured support was essential for student learning and development. The GRR model, through its systematic approach of gradually shifting responsibility, provides a robust framework for scaffolding language and content learning. This model aligns with the theoretical understanding that learners benefit from guided support that is gradually withdrawn as their competence increases, promoting both autonomy and confidence in using the target language (McVee et al., 2019). As Mareus explained, "You're following the same routine and using the same vocabulary, the same expressions, and they tie it to that context," highlighting the importance of consistency in facilitating student learning.

Practically, the implementation of the GRR model in DLI classrooms offers several key benefits. First, it creates a predictable learning environment where students can focus on language acquisition without the distraction of varying instructional methods. This consistency is crucial for English learners as it allows them to concentrate on language use within a familiar structure. Simon underscored this point stating, "Anchor charts in both languages provide visual support that helps students connect concepts across languages. Collaborative group activities, especially those structured around Instructional Conversations, promote peer learning and help students practice language skills in a meaningful context." The GRR model also facilitates differentiated instruction. Teachers can adjust the level of support based on individual student needs, thus accommodating diverse proficiency levels within the classroom.

### *Connection to Theoretical Framework of CSP*

The use of visual aids, sentence stems, hands-on activities, and structured routines in DLI classrooms at AMES is deeply aligned with the principles of CSP. CSP emphasizes the importance of recognizing and utilizing students' cultural and linguistic assets as integral components of the learning process (Paris & Alim, 2017). The observed instructional practices fostered an inclusive and supportive learning environment that respects and builds upon students' cultural backgrounds and linguistic resources.

Visual aids, such as images, charts, and multimedia presentations, provide contextual clues that enhance comprehension and retention of new vocabulary and concepts, thereby supporting language acquisition and academic content mastery. Sentence stems and structured routines offer linguistic scaffolds that enable students to participate fully in academic discourse, affirming their linguistic identities and promoting bilingual proficiency. Hands-on activities offer experiential learning opportunities that connect academic content with students' lived experiences, further supporting the CSP framework by engaging students in meaningful and authentic learning contexts (Lee & Stephens, 2020). Piton emphasized this approach: "There are tons of visuals in my room. When you walk in, you'll see visuals everywhere. There are visuals for math, science, and sentence frames. Everything is labeled." This abundance of visual and tactile resources allows students to interact with the material actively, making learning more accessible and relevant to their daily lives.

In addition, the GRR model exemplifies CSP in action by providing structured support that respects students' current linguistic abilities while gradually empowering them to take ownership of their learning. This model aligned with Vygotsky's (1978) scaffolding theory, which was foundational to CSP as it emphasized the dynamic interplay between student agency

and teacher support in the learning process. By moving from guided instruction to independent practice, teachers can create opportunities for students to engage deeply with content, using their cultural knowledge as a foundation for new learning (Paris & Alim, 2017). While the GRR model does not inherently guarantee alignment with CSP, it offers a framework that can support language development and culturally sustaining practices, provided it is implemented with intentionality and attention to students' cultural contexts.

### ***Connection to Research Questions***

The instructional practices observed at AMES, including the use of visual aids, sentence stems, hands-on activities, and structured routines, align closely with the research questions guiding this study. These practices support students' language development, academic achievement, and intercultural competence.

Question 1: How do elementary immersion teachers in a DLI classroom employ instructional practices that support students' language development, academic achievement, and intercultural competence through a CSP lens?

Teachers at AMES utilized various instructional strategies to enhance language development, academic achievement, and intercultural competence. The employment of visual aids, sentence stems, hands-on activities, and structured routines all align with CSP principles by leveraging students' cultural and linguistic resources (Paris & Alim, 2017). Visual aids, such as lesson slides and anchor charts, helped students comprehend and retain complex concepts (Cammarata & Tedick, 2012; Gay, 2010). Sentence stems provided scaffolding for academic discourse, enabling confident participation (Probert, 2024). Hands-on activities connected academic content with real-world experiences, making learning engaging and effective (Lee & Stephens, 2020). Structured routines, particularly the GRR model, provided a stable learning

environment that supported language development and academic achievement by gradually shifting responsibility to students (McVee et al., 2019).

Question 1A: In what ways do these instructional practices promote intercultural competence in students?

The instructional practices observed fostered intercultural competence by facilitating meaningful interactions among students from diverse linguistic backgrounds. Sentence stems and structured routines promoted mutual respect and understanding among students (Cammarata & Tedick, 2012). Hands-on activities, especially those involving collaborative group work, encouraged students to share their knowledge and experiences, enhancing their intercultural competence (Probert, 2024). These practices ensured that students not only learned academic content but also developed the skills to navigate and appreciate diverse cultural contexts (Paris & Alim, 2017).

Question 1B: How do instructional practices integrate curriculum content of various disciplines with target language instruction that adheres to the principles of CSP?

The instructional practices observed fostered intercultural competence by facilitating meaningful interactions among students from diverse linguistic backgrounds. Sentence stems and structured routines promoted mutual respect and understanding among students (Cammarata & Tedick, 2012). Hands-on activities, especially those involving collaborative group work, encouraged students to share their knowledge and experiences, enhancing their intercultural competence (Probert, 2024). These practices ensured that students not only learned academic content but also developed the skills to navigate and appreciate diverse cultural contexts (Paris & Alim, 2017).

## **Theme 2: Collaborative Learning and Instructional Conversations**

At AMES, collaborative learning and Instructional Conversations were integral components of the DLI classroom environment. These strategies played a crucial role in enhancing language development, academic achievement, and intercultural competence. Designed to foster interactive and engaging learning spaces, these instructional practices encourage student collaboration and active participation.

Collaborative learning involves students working together in groups to achieve common academic goals, which fosters a sense of community and mutual respect. This approach not only helps students develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills but also encourages them to use the target language in meaningful contexts. Techniques such as turn and talk, collaborative learning activities, and strategic grouping are widely used to support the development of social-emotional skills and academic success (López & Iribarren, 2014; Tomlinson, 2017).

At AMES, all classrooms included components of Instructional Conversations, reflecting a school-wide commitment to this pedagogical approach. In three of the observed classrooms, full Instructional Conversations were witnessed, two in math and one in social studies. These Instructional Conversations included essential components such as establishing norms, goal setting, the use of IC task cards, and sentence starters/stems. These elements ensured that the conversations were structured and focused, providing students with the necessary tools to engage deeply with the content and with each other.

By integrating these collaborative learning techniques and Instructional Conversations, teachers at AMES create dynamic and inclusive classroom environments that support all aspects of student development. These practices are particularly effective in DLI settings, where the goal is to develop bilingual proficiency, academic success, and intercultural competence.

### ***Collaborative Learning***

Collaborative learning emerged as a vital instructional strategy at AMES, playing a crucial role in enhancing both language development and academic achievement in DLI classrooms. Teachers frequently facilitated group activities and peer interactions, fostering a collaborative learning environment. For instance, observations indicated that teachers often used techniques like “turn and talk,” where students paired up to discuss a question or concept before sharing with the larger group. This strategy was seen in various subjects, including math, science, and social studies, thus promoting active engagement and deeper understanding of the material.

Andre (1-2E) emphasized the importance of collaborative learning by using strategies like strategic grouping and conversational partners to stimulate meaningful discussions. She shared, “It helps make sure that students are with the right partner to help stimulate conversation.” Observations in her classroom showed that students benefited from this approach, particularly when discussing social studies content, where students analyzed images related to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and engaged in discussions with their peers about what they observed. This interactive environment promoted deeper understanding and active participation among students.

Etienne (2-3TL) also noted the significance of collaboration, stating, “A lot of the activities is like collaboration. For math, we’ll try to have different grouping... I can force them to speak to each other.” In her math lessons, students worked together to compare fractions using number lines and fraction bars, discussing their observations with their partners and using sentence stems to articulate their thoughts. This combination of visual supports and structured

conversations fostered both language and content development, underscoring the effectiveness of peer interactions.

The study's findings aligned well with existing research on the benefits of collaborative learning for language learners. Collaborative learning has been widely recognized as an effective strategy for promoting language acquisition and social-emotional development. According to Vygotsky's (1978) social learning theory, learning is a socially mediated process, and collaborative interactions play a key role in cognitive development. This theory underpins the observed benefits of group activities and peer interactions in the classrooms at AMES.

Research by Lopez and Iribarren (2014) highlighted the importance of structured routines and collaborative learning activities in supporting language development and academic achievement. These authors emphasized that structured group activities could help students practice language skills in a meaningful context, reinforcing both linguistic and academic competencies. Similarly, Tomlinson (2017) noted that collaborative learning fostered a sense of community and mutual support among students, which was essential for their social-emotional growth.

The findings from this study supported Vygotsky's social learning theory, which stated that social interactions were fundamental to cognitive development. The collaborative learning activities observed at AMES exemplified how peer interactions and group work could facilitate language acquisition and academic achievement. By providing structured opportunities for students to engage in meaningful dialogue and collaborative problem-solving, teachers can enhance both linguistic and cognitive skills.

These findings contribute to the existing body of knowledge by demonstrating the effectiveness of combining collaborative learning with structured routines and scaffolding

techniques. The observed practices at AMES provide a fresh perspective on how to create a supportive and engaging learning environment that promotes both academic and language development.

The findings from this study supported Vygotsky's social learning theory, which states that social interactions are fundamental to cognitive development. The collaborative learning activities observed at AMES exemplify how peer interactions and group work can facilitate language acquisition and academic achievement. By providing structured opportunities for students to engage in meaningful dialogue and collaborative problem-solving, teachers can enhance both linguistic and cognitive skills.

Practically, this study offered valuable recommendations for educators seeking to implement collaborative learning strategies in their classrooms. Teachers are encouraged to incorporate structured routines, such as clear group roles and consistent expectations, to support effective collaboration. Piton (6-1TL) reinforced this approach by explaining her use of structured routines, stating, "I have them grouped by ability, and in each group, I have one model student. The leader is responsible for telling me what happened in the group and dealing with any problems the group may have." By assigning roles, Piton fostered independence and accountability, allowing students to take ownership of their learning while supporting their peers.

Utilizing scaffolding techniques, such as sentence stems and task cards, they help students articulate their thoughts and engage in higher-order thinking. Additionally, integrating hands-on activities and manipulatives into group work can provide concrete experiences that reinforce academic content and language skills. This was observed in Marcus' (4-2TL) classroom, where students worked in pairs to solve an elapsed time problem using a human-sized

timeline, engaging in collaborative learning that deepened their understanding of both math and language concepts.

By fostering a collaborative learning environment, educators can create a dynamic and inclusive classroom where students are empowered to learn from and with each other. This approach not only supports language development and academic achievement but also promotes intercultural competence by encouraging students to share their diverse perspectives and experiences.

### *Instructional Conversations*

At AMES, all classrooms incorporated elements of Instructional Conversations. Specific components observed include establishing norms for discussion, setting conversational goals, using Instructional Conversation task cards, and providing sentence starters and stems. In three classrooms, in-depth Instructional Conversations were witnessed: two in math and one in social studies. For example, in math, Instructional Conversations involved using task cards that guided students through problem-solving processes, allowing them to discuss their strategies and reasoning with peers. In social studies, the Instructional Conversations focused on discussing historical events, encouraging students to share perspectives and connect the content to their own experiences.

The study's findings align with existing research on the benefits of Instructional Conversations for language learners. Hendy and Cuevas (2020) found that Instructional Conversations significantly improved reading standardized test scores for English language learners (ELLs) and non-ELLs. This method emphasizes creating a safe, engaging environment where students feel comfortable practicing their language skills, which is crucial for their academic and social development. Additionally, research by Mellom et al. (2019) supported the

effectiveness of Instructional Conversations in fostering academic discussions that build both language and content knowledge.

This study provided new insights into the specific applications of Instructional Conversations in a DLI context. Detailed observations of how Instructional Conversations were implemented in math and social studies offer concrete examples of their effectiveness in enhancing student engagement and comprehension. The emphasis on using Instructional Conversation task cards and sentence stems extends existing literature by showcasing practical strategies that can be replicated in other classrooms. These findings highlight the potential of Instructional Conversations to support not only language development but also intercultural competence by encouraging students to share and respect diverse perspectives.

The findings support Vygotsky's (1978) theory of scaffolding, which emphasizes the importance of guided support in learning. Instructional Conversations provide a structured yet flexible framework for students to engage in academic discourse, promoting both linguistic and cognitive development. Practically, the implementation of Instructional Conversations offers valuable recommendations for educators. Teachers are encouraged to integrate Instructional Conversations into their daily instruction, using task cards and sentence stems to facilitate meaningful discussions. This approach not only enhances language skills but also fosters a collaborative and inclusive classroom environment.

### ***Connection to Theoretical Framework of CSP***

The collaborative learning and Instructional Conversations observed at AMES align closely with the principles of CSP. CSP emphasizes recognizing and utilizing students' cultural and linguistic assets as integral components of the learning process (Paris & Alim, 2017). At AMES, these instructional practices foster an inclusive and supportive environment that builds

upon students' cultural backgrounds and linguistic resources, which are vital for fostering both academic success and cultural identity.

A key element of CSP is the incorporation of community languages, practices, and knowledge into classroom instruction. The collaborative activities and Instructional Conversations at AMES were designed specifically to leverage these assets. For instance, teachers integrated culturally relevant topics into class discussions, encouraging students to draw on their personal and community experiences. This not only enhanced language development but also reinforced, extended, and sustained students' cultural identities, ensuring that their cultural and linguistic practices remained integral to the learning process (Paris, 2012).

In addition, CSP emphasizes student and community agency, encouraging ongoing dialogue between educators and the communities they serve. The collaborative learning practices and Instructional Conversations observed created structured opportunities for students to actively participate and contribute their own perspectives. Teachers set clear norms and goals and used tools like task cards and sentence starters to ensure students' voices were heard, valued, and respected, creating an atmosphere of mutual respect and cultural inclusivity (Mellom et al., 2019). This participatory approach echoes CSP's focus on empowering students to take ownership of their learning and educational experiences, promoting student agency and voice throughout the instructional process (Paris & Alim, 2017).

Furthermore, historicizing content and instruction is a critical aspect of CSP, which was reflected in Instructional Conversations in social studies at AMES. Teachers engaged students in discussions that connected classroom content to the histories and experiences of racial, ethnic, and linguistic communities. By linking historical events to students' lived realities, the classroom

contextualized academic material in a way that made learning both meaningful and culturally relevant (Hendy & Cuevas, 2020; Paris & Alim, 2017).

Finally, CSP seeks to challenge deficit narratives and internalized oppressions, shifting the focus from what students may lack to the value of their cultural and linguistic strengths. Collaborative learning and Instructional Conversations at AMES promoted a positive view of students' backgrounds by creating spaces where students could freely share their knowledge and experiences. These practices helped students develop a strong sense of self-worth, appreciation for their cultures, and empowered them both academically and socially (Paris, 2012; Paris & Alim, 2017). By cultivating environments that celebrated cultural and linguistic diversity, teachers at AMES worked within the CSP framework, helping students to not only succeed academically but also embrace and sustain their cultural identities.

### ***Connection to Research Questions***

The instructional practices at AMES, including collaborative learning and Instructional Conversations, align closely with the research questions guiding this study. These practices support students' language development, academic achievement, and intercultural competence.

Question 1: How do elementary immersion teachers in a DLI classroom employ instructional practices that support students' language development, academic achievement, and intercultural competence through a CSP lens?

Teachers at AMES employ various instructional strategies to enhance students' linguistic and academic competencies, often within a CSP framework. Collaborative learning activities, such as turn and talk and group problem-solving tasks, leverage students' cultural and linguistic resources, fostering an environment conducive to meaningful content discussions (Paris & Alim, 2017). These activities, coupled with Instructional Conversations, provide structured

opportunities for students to engage in academic discourse, which reinforces both language development and critical thinking (Hendy & Cuevas, 2020; Mellom et al., 2019). Furthermore, the practices observed align with the findings of López and Iribarren (2014), who emphasized the role of structured group interactions in enhancing language skills and fostering a sense of community.

In classrooms like those of Andre and Etienne, these practices were particularly noticeable in math and social studies lessons, where students worked collaboratively to solve problems and explore concepts, often supported by visual aids and sentence stems. These strategies were consistent with Tomlinson's (2017) assertion that collaborative learning fostered both cognitive and social-emotional growth, particularly in diverse classroom environments like DLI settings.

Question 1A: In what ways do these instructional practices promote intercultural competence in students?

Collaborative learning and Instructional Conversations observed at AMES promoted intercultural competence by facilitating meaningful peer interactions and cultural exchange. For instance, Simon's classroom incorporated discussions around historical events, prompting students to share their diverse perspectives and connect academic content to their own cultural backgrounds. This aligns with CSP's goal of utilizing students' cultural and linguistic resources to foster inclusive educational practices (Paris, 2012).

Moreover, as Gay (2010) pointed out, integrating culturally relevant topics into these discussions helps students develop a deeper appreciation for different cultures, which was exemplified in activities such as Paul's science lessons and Etienne's math discussions. Hendy and Cuevas (2020) also emphasized that structured academic dialogues, like Instructional

Conversations, helped students not only practice language skills but also build cultural awareness by sharing diverse viewpoints.

Question 1B: How do instructional practices integrate curriculum content of various disciplines with target language instruction that adheres to the principles of CSP?

The integration of curriculum content with target language instruction at AMES adheres to CSP principles by providing opportunities for students to engage in meaningful, culturally relevant academic discussions. In Etienne's classroom, for example, students were observed using manipulatives and sentence stems in math lessons to discuss fractions, seamlessly blending content and language instruction. Similarly, Paul's science lessons integrated culturally relevant content with collaborative discussions, encouraging students to relate the material to their own lived experiences (Gay, 2010). These practices not only enhance language development but also foster intercultural competence by creating connections between students' academic learning and their cultural identities (López & Iribarren, 2014).

Research by Mellom et al. (2019) further supported the notion that combining content with language instruction, particularly through collaborative learning and structured dialogues, can improve both academic performance and intercultural competence. In AMES's classrooms, this was achieved through the intentional scaffolding of lessons that prioritized both language learning and cultural relevance, illustrating how these practices could align with CSP when employed with a clear purpose.

### **Theme 3: Cultural Relevance and Integration**

The findings from the study revealed that teachers in DLI classrooms at AMES employed a variety of culturally relevant materials and practices to support language development, academic achievement, and intercultural competence. These practices included the use of

culturally relevant literature and the incorporation of students' cultural practices, which were pivotal in creating an inclusive and engaging learning environment. By integrating these elements into their teaching, educators at AMES ensured that students could connect their learning to their cultural identities and experiences, thereby enhancing their overall educational experience.

Teachers effectively utilized culturally relevant literature to reflect students' backgrounds and experiences. This included texts that showcased diverse cultural narratives, helping students see themselves in the curriculum. For example, Paul emphasized, "Incorporating stories and traditions from various cultures helps students see themselves in the curriculum." This approach allowed students to find personal relevance in the material, enhancing their sense of belonging and engagement with the content. Research by La Serna (2020) and Hyun et al. (2022) supported the use of culturally relevant texts in promoting engagement and comprehension.

Teachers also incorporated students' cultural practices and knowledge into the curriculum, creating a more inclusive and engaging learning environment. Etienne noted, "When they relate the content to their lives, I think they learn better." She connected lessons to students' experiences by asking them to think about their own countries or states when discussing habitats in science. This included strategies such as cultural mapping and integrating cultural artifacts into lessons, which helped students feel valued and connected to the curriculum. The integration of students' cultural backgrounds into teaching aligns with CSP principles and enhances student engagement and academic success.

These practices not only support language development and academic achievement but also foster intercultural competence by encouraging students to share their diverse perspectives

and experiences. The observed practices at AMES provided a fresh perspective on how to create a supportive and engaging learning environment that aligned with CSP principles.

### *Culturally Relevant Literature*

The findings from the study revealed that teachers at AMES effectively utilized culturally relevant literature to reflect students' backgrounds and experiences. Specific examples of this practice were observed in multiple classrooms. For instance, Simon (7-5E) integrated culturally relevant stories and word problems into her lessons, allowing students to see themselves in the curriculum and relate personally to the material. This practice helped students connect with the content on a deeper level, enhancing their engagement and comprehension.

Graham (3-2TL) also emphasized the importance of understanding students' cultural exposures by asking questions about their backgrounds. This approach guided the selection of texts that resonated with students' lived experiences. For example, books that highlighted stories from different cultures, such as "Esperanza Rising" by Pam Muñoz Ryan and "The Name Jar" by Yangsook Choi, were used to engage students and reflect their diverse cultural backgrounds.

The use of culturally relevant literature aligns well with existing research on effective DLI instructional practices. Studies have shown that incorporating texts that reflect students' cultural backgrounds can significantly enhance engagement and comprehension. La Serna (2020) found that culturally relevant pedagogy in two-way immersion classrooms helps bridge the gap between students' home and school experiences, fostering a more inclusive and supportive learning environment.

Hyun et al. (2022) also highlighted the positive impact of critical multilingual multiliteracies projects on student engagement and academic outcomes. By using literature that

reflects students' cultural backgrounds, teachers can create a more relatable and meaningful learning experience, which supports both language development and academic achievement.

This study provides new insights into the specific applications of culturally relevant literature in a DLI context. The detailed observations of how teachers at AMES integrated culturally relevant texts into their daily instruction offer practical examples of effective strategies. For instance, the use of culturally relevant word problems in math lessons and the integration of diverse cultural stories in reading sessions highlight innovative approaches to making the curriculum more inclusive.

These findings contribute to the existing body of knowledge by showcasing the tangible benefits of culturally relevant literature in enhancing student engagement and comprehension. The emphasis on reflecting students' backgrounds in the curriculum underscores the importance of validating students' cultural identities in the classroom.

The findings from this study support the educational theory of funds of knowledge (FoK). FoK refer to the culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills that are essential for household or individual functioning and well-being (Moll, 2019). By integrating culturally relevant literature, teachers tap into students' existing knowledge bases, making learning more relevant and meaningful.

Practically, teachers are encouraged to select literature that reflects the diverse backgrounds of their students. This includes choosing texts that represent various cultures, languages, and experiences, and integrating these texts into the curriculum in meaningful ways. Professional development opportunities focused on identifying and using culturally relevant literature can further support teachers in implementing these strategies effectively.

### *Incorporating Students' Cultural Practices*

DLI teachers at AMES employed various strategies to incorporate students' cultural practices and knowledge into the curriculum, fostering an inclusive and engaging learning environment. Teachers used contexts and examples that students could relate to, making the learning experience more relevant and meaningful. Etienne shared how she connects content to students' lives:

For example, in science, we're currently talking about habitats. Today, we started with a map of Georgia. I asked them to think about their country or the state they were born in, like Texas or New York. I asked if they think the habitats there are the same as here.

They bring all that experience to their learning, and I think that enriches what they are learning.

This is an example of how incorporating students' cultural practices can increase student engagement.

Similarly, Graham integrated cultural relevance by understanding students' cultural exposures and incorporating them into lessons. He explained, "I ask questions about their backgrounds to understand their cultural exposures better. For example, Christmas is different around the world, and we can talk about different traditions." This method showed how Graham facilitated culturally relevant conversations that allowed students to share their experiences, making lessons more engaging and personally meaningful.

In math lessons, teachers contextualized problems using scenarios familiar to students' everyday lives. This approach helped students connect mathematical concepts to their own experiences, making abstract ideas more concrete and understandable. In science classes, teachers utilized videos and multimedia resources that depicted scientific concepts in real-world

contexts familiar to the students. This not only engaged students more effectively but also helped them see the practical applications of their learning.

In social studies, teachers encouraged students to delve deeper into historical contexts and understand the decisions behind historical events. For example, students were prompted to explore the cultural and social implications of historical decisions, promoting critical thinking and a deeper understanding of the content. This approach allowed students to draw parallels between historical events and their own cultural backgrounds, fostering a more profound connection to the material.

The strategies observed at AMES align with existing research on culturally responsive teaching practices. Studies emphasize the importance of making learning relevant to students' lives by incorporating their cultural practices and experiences. According to Gay (2010), culturally responsive teaching involves using the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students as conduits for teaching them more effectively. This approach enhances student engagement by making learning more relevant and meaningful.

Research by Yoon (2023) supported the integration of students' cultural practices into the curriculum, highlighting that culturally and linguistically responsive teaching sought to accommodate students' cultural and linguistic experiences to promote equitable learning opportunities (Yoon, 2023). This aligned with the practices observed at AMES, where teachers actively integrated students' cultural knowledge into their lessons. Similarly, de Oliveira (2021) underscored the significance of CSP in supporting multilingual learners (MLs), advocating for approaches that sustained students' cultural and linguistic identities while expanding their academic repertoires (de Oliveira, 2021).

While both culturally responsive pedagogy and culturally relevant pedagogy focus on using students' cultural experiences as assets for learning, CSP goes further by emphasizing the need to sustain these cultural and linguistic practices. CSP is not only about making the curriculum relevant but also about ensuring that students' cultural and linguistic identities are continuously valued and maintained within the classroom and beyond. Paris and Alim (2017) argued that CSP aimed to resist the erasure or assimilation of students' cultural identities, positioning them as dynamic resources to be nurtured over time. This aligned with de Oliveira's (2021) point about supporting multilingual learners by fostering an educational environment that sustains rather than simply responds to their linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

In practice, this means that DLI teachers at AMES are not only integrating culturally relevant contexts into their lessons but are also promoting long-term cultural and linguistic sustainability. For example, when teachers use culturally relevant word problems or incorporate community-based experiences into discussions, they are making the curriculum relatable for students in the moment, a core aspect of culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Similarly, culturally responsive pedagogy focuses on tailoring teaching methods to students' cultural experiences to make learning more effective (Gay, 2010). However, CSP goes further by emphasizing the importance of sustaining students' cultural and linguistic practices over time (Paris, 2012).

While culturally relevant pedagogy and culturally responsive pedagogy primarily aim to make learning more accessible and relevant by acknowledging students' cultural backgrounds, CSP not only makes connections between students' lives and the curriculum but also ensures that these cultural practices are nurtured and preserved as integral parts of their educational experience (Paris & Alim, 2017). This focus on long-term sustainability of students' cultural

identities is what sets CSP apart. Where culturally relevant pedagogy and culturally responsive pedagogy focus on immediate relevance and responsiveness in instruction, CSP ensures that students' cultural and linguistic assets are maintained and uplifted throughout their educational journey, fostering a deeper sense of cultural empowerment and identity (Paris, 2012; Paris & Alim, 2017).

This study provides new insights into specific strategies used by teachers to incorporate students' cultural practices in a DLI context. The detailed observations of contextualizing math problems, using videos in science, and exploring historical decisions in social studies offer practical examples of how these strategies can be implemented in daily instruction. These findings contribute to the existing body of knowledge by highlighting the importance of using contexts familiar to students to enhance engagement and comprehension.

Furthermore, the emphasis on connecting content to students' cultural backgrounds and experiences extends existing literature by showcasing innovative approaches to culturally responsive teaching. These strategies not only enhance student engagement but also promote intercultural competence by encouraging students to share and respect diverse perspectives. For instance, the use of culturally relevant word problems and visual aids in math lessons, as well as the inclusion of cultural books and artwork in social studies classrooms, demonstrate practical ways to integrate cultural relevance into the curriculum.

The findings from this study support the educational theories of culturally responsive teaching and FoK. At AMES, teachers actively draw on students' culturally developed knowledge and experiences to inform instructional practices, allowing for a more meaningful integration of students' home and community practices into the curriculum. By utilizing students' FoK in lessons, such as contextualizing math problems with real-life experiences or

exploring historical contexts through culturally relevant perspectives, teachers make learning more relatable and applicable to students' lives. These practices ensure that students' existing knowledge bases are acknowledged and valued, promoting both academic engagement and a deeper connection to the material. This approach aligns with the broader goal of CSP, which aims to preserve and uplift students' cultural identities throughout their educational journey (Paris, 2012).

Practically, teachers are encouraged to actively seek out and integrate students' cultural practices and knowledge into their teaching. This can be achieved through contextualizing problems and examples, using multimedia resources that reflect students' real-world experiences, and exploring historical contexts and decisions. Professional development opportunities focused on culturally responsive teaching can further support teachers in implementing these strategies effectively.

By embedding students' cultural backgrounds and knowledge into their teaching, DLI teachers can create more inclusive and engaging learning environments. This approach not only enhances student engagement and academic success but also promotes cultural competence and inclusivity, aligning with the core principles of culturally responsive pedagogy.

### ***Connection to Theoretical Framework of CSP***

The instructional practices observed at AMES for Theme 3: Cultural Relevance and Integration aligned closely with the principles of CSP. CSP emphasizes the importance of sustaining and nurturing students' cultural and linguistic identities within the educational context. At AMES, the incorporation of culturally relevant literature and the integration of students' cultural practices into the curriculum are prime examples of CSP in action.

By selecting literature that reflects the diverse cultural backgrounds of the students, teachers at AMES ensure that the students see their own experiences and identities represented in the classroom. This not only enhances engagement and comprehension but also validates and affirms the students' cultural identities. The literature chosen often includes stories and characters that the students can relate to, making learning more meaningful and fostering a deeper connection to the material (Paris, 2012).

Additionally, the integration of students' cultural practices into classroom activities further supports the principles of CSP. Teachers encourage students to share their cultural backgrounds and personal experiences, which enriches the learning environment and promotes mutual respect and understanding among peers. For example, Piton explained, "I try to bring in elements from different cultures in my lessons to make them more engaging and inclusive." This practice helps students appreciate the value of their cultural heritage and resist any negative stereotypes or perceptions. By doing so, teachers at AMES created a classroom culture that valued diversity and promotes a sense of belonging (Gay, 2010).

While both culturally relevant pedagogy and culturally responsive pedagogy center on making curriculum relevant to students' immediate experiences, CSP goes further by promoting a long-term approach to cultural and linguistic sustainability. For example, CSP requires schools to maintain an ongoing commitment to fostering and preserving students' identities beyond surface-level inclusion. The goal of CSP is not just to adapt curriculum to students' cultural experiences, but to institutionalize these cultural practices, ensuring they are embedded in the school's pedagogy and that they evolve along with students' growth and experiences (Paris & Alim, 2017). This perspective shifts the focus from short-term engagement strategies to creating long-term cultural and linguistic practices that sustain students' identities over time.

In practice, this approach at AMES is seen not just in the selection of culturally relevant literature but in how students are consistently encouraged to bring their cultural knowledge into every aspect of learning. For example, during social studies lessons, students are given the opportunity to connect historical content with their own cultural narratives. This practice not only builds understanding of the material but also allows students to see their cultural histories as part of the broader curriculum, thus fostering a deeper sense of ownership in their learning journey (Paris & Alim, 2017).

CSP in the classroom promotes the idea of cultural continuity where students' cultural backgrounds are not simply acknowledged but also integrated into the ongoing narrative of their academic and social development (de Oliveira, 2021). This helps prevent cultural erosion or assimilation, ensuring that students feel empowered to maintain their cultural identities in the school setting. Teachers at AMES actively support this by creating classroom spaces where students can express their cultures freely and continuously, making their cultural practices central to the academic environment rather than peripheral. This long-term commitment to cultural sustainability is what ultimately distinguishes CSP from other frameworks.

Overall, the instructional practices at AMES exemplify the principles of CSP by creating an inclusive and supportive learning environment that sustains students' cultural and linguistic identities. These practices not only enhance student engagement and academic success but also promote cultural competence and inclusivity, aligning with the core tenets of CSP (Paris, 2012; Paris & Alim, 2017). By fostering both immediate and long-term connections between students' cultures and their education, these practices at AMES demonstrate how key components of CSP can be meaningfully integrated into diverse educational settings.

### *Connection to Research Questions*

The instructional practices observed at AMES, specifically the use of culturally relevant literature and the integration of students' cultural practices, align closely with the research questions guiding this study. These practices were pivotal in supporting students' language development, academic achievement, and intercultural competence, while adhering to CSP's long-term focus on sustaining students' identities.

Question 1: How do elementary immersion teachers in a DLI classroom employ instructional practices that support students' language development, academic achievement, and intercultural competence through a CSP lens?

Teachers at AMES employed various instructional strategies to enhance language development, academic achievement, and intercultural competence. The incorporation of culturally relevant literature allows students to engage with texts that reflect their cultural backgrounds, making learning more relatable and meaningful. For instance, Graham (3-2TL) used culturally relevant stories, such as "The Tooth Fairy versus El Ratón Pérez," which encouraged students to connect their cultural narratives to the lesson. This approach made the curriculum more accessible and directly linked to the students' lived experiences, enhancing engagement and understanding.

Moreover, teachers at AMES integrated students' cultural practices into daily instruction, using cultural and linguistic resources that align with CSP principles (Paris & Alim, 2017). Math teachers incorporated culturally diverse names and scenarios into math problems, making abstract concepts more relatable and grounded in students' real-world contexts. These strategies not only facilitated academic learning but also validated students' cultural identities, ensuring that learning reflected their personal and community experiences.

Through discussions and collaborative activities, teachers encouraged students to share their cultural traditions and experiences, further reinforcing their cultural identities and supporting language development (Gay, 2010). Simon (7-5E) utilized visual aids and word problems tied to students' cultural experiences, which made lessons more engaging and supported students' ability to draw connections between their academic work and their cultural backgrounds. By creating a space where students could share their backgrounds during discussions, teachers at AMES supported the development of a rich, culturally sustaining environment.

These practices reflect the core principles of CSP by ensuring that students' cultural and linguistic identities are maintained and leveraged as assets for their academic success. Through the integration of culturally relevant literature, visual aids, and collaborative discourse, teachers at AMES not only addressed students' immediate academic needs but also nurtured their cultural identities in a way that promotes long-term cultural sustainability.

Question 1A: In what ways do these instructional practices promote intercultural competence in students?

The practices observed promote intercultural competence by facilitating meaningful interactions and cultural exchange among students. By incorporating culturally relevant literature and integrating students' cultural practices, teachers create opportunities for students to learn about and appreciate diverse cultural perspectives. This approach fosters mutual respect and understanding, as students are encouraged to share their own cultural backgrounds and listen to their peers' experiences (Hendy & Cuevas, 2020; Paris & Alim, 2017). For example, during social studies lessons, discussions about historical events were enriched by connecting them to

the students' own cultural histories, promoting a deeper understanding and appreciation of different cultures (Gay, 2010).

Question 1B: How do instructional practices integrate curriculum content of various disciplines with target language instruction that adheres to the principles of CSP?

The instructional practices observed fostered intercultural competence by facilitating meaningful interactions among students from diverse linguistic backgrounds. Sentence stems and structured routines promoted mutual respect and understanding among students (Cammarata & Tedick, 2012). Hands-on activities, especially those involving collaborative group work, encouraged students to share their knowledge and experiences, enhancing their intercultural competence (Probert, 2024). These practices ensured that students not only learned academic content but also developed the skills to navigate and appreciate diverse cultural contexts (Paris & Alim, 2017).

#### **Theme 4: Challenges and Adaptations in Implementing CSP**

Implementing CSP in DLI classrooms involves several challenges that require significant adaptations by teachers. These challenges include time management, addressing diverse proficiency levels, and ensuring the availability of resources. Understanding these challenges and the strategies teachers use to navigate them is essential for enhancing the effectiveness of CSP in DLI settings.

Teachers at AMES identified these key challenges through initial interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis. The complexity of managing instructional time while integrating CSP principles, differentiating instruction to cater to diverse proficiency levels, and sourcing adequate resources were recurrent themes. Addressing these challenges requires innovative adaptations and a commitment to the core principles of CSP, which emphasize

sustaining students' cultural and linguistic identities while promoting academic success and intercultural competence.

This theme explores the specific challenges faced by teachers in implementing CSP and the adaptations they employ to overcome these barriers. By drawing on both the findings from this study and existing literature, the practical implications of CSP can be better understood, and strategies can be developed to support teachers in their efforts to provide culturally sustaining education.

### *Time Constraints*

Teachers consistently reported that time constraints were a significant challenge in planning and implementing effective instructional strategies. Despite having the same amount of instructional time as traditional classrooms, DLI teachers have the added responsibility of teaching literacy in the target language alongside other subjects. Andre highlighted this challenge stating, "We have to fit the target language literacy into our schedule, so we have the same amount of time as other teachers to teach all the other subjects." This necessitates meticulous planning and time management to ensure all curricular requirements are met.

Classroom observations and document analysis further highlighted these time constraints. For example, during an observation of Andre's (1-2TE) class, the teacher had to make an in-the-moment decision when transitioning from teaching literacy to social studies. Some students had not finished their literacy assignments, but the teacher decided to proceed with the social studies lesson and assured the students they would have time to finish their assignments later. This exemplifies the constant balancing act teachers face in managing instructional time effectively.

The challenge of time constraints is well-documented in existing literature. Research indicates that teachers often struggle to find adequate time to develop and implement effective

instructional strategies due to their already heavy workloads (Gay, 2010). The additional time required to identify and incorporate culturally relevant materials and activities can be a significant burden for teachers. According to Paris and Alim (2017), the time required to adapt and create materials that were both linguistically and culturally appropriate was also a common barrier to implementing CSP effectively. This is particularly true because CSP often demands more extensive and in-depth explorations of students' cultural identities, languages, and experiences. Unlike traditional methods, CSP requires teachers to go beyond surface-level inclusion and instead engage students in meaningful and sustained ways that celebrate and extend their cultural practices. As a result, teachers must dedicate more time to designing materials, activities, and assessments that are not only academically rigorous but also culturally sustaining, further complicating time management in an already demanding profession.

To address the challenge of time constraints, teachers have adopted collaborative planning sessions as an effective strategy. Etienne emphasized the importance of collaboration, noting that while they might not have formal meetings, "We have weekly conversations to discuss it... aligning our instruction is second nature to us." This approach not only maximizes the use of their limited time but also provides opportunities for professional growth and peer support.

In addition to collaborative planning, flexibility in instructional practices is another crucial adaptation. Teachers at AMES often make real-time adjustments to their lesson plans to accommodate the varying needs and proficiency levels of their students. This flexibility allows teachers to maintain the flow of the classroom while ensuring that all students are supported.

This study highlights the practical adaptations teachers make to address time constraints through collaborative planning and flexibility. By working together and remaining adaptable,

teachers can pool their knowledge and resources, reducing the individual burden and fostering a more cohesive and supportive teaching environment. This collaborative and flexible approach not only addresses time constraints but also enhances the overall quality of instruction.

Collaborative planning and flexibility align with the principles of CSP by promoting a collective and adaptable approach to developing culturally sustaining curricula. Practically, schools should facilitate regular collaborative planning sessions and provide dedicated time for teachers to engage in these activities. Additionally, promoting a culture of flexibility within the classroom can help teachers manage time constraints more effectively. These approaches not only address the challenge of time constraints but also enhance the overall quality of instruction by leveraging the collective expertise and adaptability of the teaching staff.

By embedding collaborative planning and flexibility into the professional practices at AMES, teachers can better manage their time while ensuring that their instructional strategies align with CSP principles. These adaptations highlight the importance of creating structured opportunities for teachers to collaborate and share best practices, ultimately leading to more effective and inclusive teaching environments.

### ***Addressing Diverse Proficiency Levels***

To manage diverse proficiency levels, teachers at AMES employ differentiated small group instruction. During observations, it was noted that all the math classrooms utilized this approach. Teachers delivered the main lesson to the whole class and then broke students into small groups based on their proficiency levels. Most groups were student-led, promoting peer-to-peer learning, while the teacher focused on leading a group with targeted support, addressing specific needs and providing additional help where necessary.

In practical terms, differentiated instruction at AMES involved breaking down lessons into manageable segments and providing various entry points for students based on their proficiency levels. Teachers also incorporated visual aids, bilingual resources, and interactive activities that cater to different learning styles and language abilities. Graham explained why this strategy was needed, “You have to teach and cater to the different needs of both classes, balancing their strengths in one area and their weaknesses in another.”

This approach aligned with the findings of Fang (2020), who emphasized the importance of responsive teaching in addressing linguistic challenges within content learning. Fang’s research highlighted the need for instructional strategies that were informed by students’ linguistic needs and embedded within meaningful disciplinary experiences. Similarly, the work of Busse et al. (2021) highlighted the effectiveness of differentiated instruction in managing diverse proficiency levels, particularly in early language learning contexts. Tomlinson (2017) and García and Kleifgen (2018) also supported the use of differentiated small group instruction as a means to increase engagement and comprehension by providing tailored support that meets students at their respective proficiency levels.

This study offered new insights into the specific applications of differentiated small group instruction within a DLI context. The detailed observations of how teachers at AMES structured their lessons to accommodate diverse proficiency levels provide practical examples of effective strategies. These findings contributed to the existing body of knowledge by showcasing the tangible benefits of differentiated instruction in enhancing student engagement and comprehension. Piton highlighted the importance of intentional grouping strategies: “We have to be very intentional with grouping strategies.” She explained that in student-led small groups, “students have roles and can work independently, which allows me to focus on the group that

needs the most support.” This approach not only fosters independent learning but also allows teachers to provide targeted assistance where it’s most needed.

The findings from this study supported the educational theories of differentiated instruction and responsive pedagogy. Differentiated instruction involves tailoring teaching environments and practices to create different paths to learning that are based on students’ needs (Tomlinson, 2017). By incorporating differentiated small group instruction, teachers can provide more personalized support, enhancing student learning outcomes and fostering a more inclusive classroom environment.

Practically, teachers are encouraged to implement small group instruction as a regular part of their teaching practice. This can be achieved by assessing students’ proficiency levels and grouping them accordingly for targeted instruction. Professional development opportunities focused on differentiated instruction can further support teachers in implementing these strategies effectively, ensuring all students receive the support they need to succeed.

### ***Resource Availability***

A significant challenge identified in the study was the limited availability of resources that were culturally and linguistically appropriate for DLI classrooms. Teachers frequently mentioned the difficulty in finding materials that not only matched the curriculum but also reflected the diverse cultural backgrounds of their students. Additionally, DLI teachers at AMES are responsible for teaching the Georgia Standards of Excellence. This makes it difficult to find materials, especially in the target language. Etienne noted, “One of the challenges for us is that we don’t have as many resources as in English. A lot of the materials we use in the classroom are made by ourselves, which consumes a lot of our planning time and extra time.” She emphasized the necessity of creating, translating, and modifying materials, adding, “Even finding appropriate

pictures is a lot of work.” Target language teachers spend years creating resources specific to their students’ needs. They also create resources to support parents in helping their students at home.

To address the challenge of resource availability, teachers at AMES have adopted a proactive approach by creating their own materials and collaborating with colleagues to share resources. This collaborative effort allows teachers to pool their expertise and create a repository of culturally and linguistically appropriate materials that can be used across classrooms.

For instance, teachers at AMES frequently collaborated during planning sessions to develop lesson plans and instructional materials that reflect the cultural backgrounds of their students. This not only alleviates the individual burden on teachers but also ensures that the resources are diverse and comprehensive. Teachers also create resources to support parents in helping their students at home, ensuring that learning extends beyond the classroom.

The county also hired curators from the pool of DLI teachers over the summer to create resources and maintain a database from which teachers can choose materials. As the program grows, more resources become available each year, enhancing the pool of materials that teachers can access and use in their classrooms.

The challenge of resource availability is well-documented in the broader literature on DLI and CSP. Howard et al. (2018) emphasized the importance of providing core instructional materials and supplemental resources in the target language, tailored to the specific program model and grade level. This includes authentic literature and multimedia resources that support both language development and cultural competence. Additionally, Bell’Aver and Rabelo (2020) highlighted the need for balanced instructional materials that address both content and language objectives in DLI programs. Their study underscores the positive impact of well-curated

resources on student engagement and academic outcomes, particularly when these resources are culturally relevant and linguistically appropriate.

Busse et al. (2021) further explored the impact of resource availability on teaching effectiveness. Their research indicated that diverse and culturally sensitive materials could significantly enhance word acquisition and overall language proficiency in early language learning, underscoring the critical need for such resources in DLI classrooms.

This study provided new insights into the practical strategies that DLI teachers employed to overcome resource challenges. The detailed examples of resource creation and collaborative efforts among teachers highlighted the innovative approaches being used to ensure the availability of culturally relevant materials. These findings contributed to the existing body of knowledge by emphasizing the importance of teacher collaboration in resource development for DLI programs.

The findings from this study reinforced the need for systemic support in providing culturally and linguistically appropriate resources for DLI classrooms. Schools and districts should invest in resource development and procurement to ensure teachers have access to materials that reflected the diverse cultural backgrounds of their students. Professional development programs should also focus on equipping teachers with the skills to adapt and create culturally relevant materials efficiently.

Practically, schools can facilitate resource-sharing platforms where teachers can upload and access materials created by their colleagues. This not only promotes a culture of collaboration but also helps ensure that all students have access to high-quality, culturally relevant resources.

By addressing the challenge of resource availability, teachers can better support the principles of CSP by ensuring that their instructional materials reflect the cultural and linguistic diversity of their students. This alignment with CSP goals fosters a more inclusive and engaging learning environment.

### ***Connection to Theoretical Framework of CSP***

The strategies for overcoming resource challenges directly supported the principles of CSP. By ensuring the availability of culturally and linguistically appropriate resources, teachers created a more inclusive and engaging learning environment that respected and reflected the diverse cultural backgrounds of their students. CSP emphasized the importance of maintaining and valuing students' cultural and linguistic assets, rather than viewing them as deficits (Paris & Alim, 2017).

By creating and sharing culturally relevant materials, teachers actively worked to sustain the cultural and linguistic identities of their students. This approach aligned with the goals of CSP, which advocated for educational practices that sustained linguistic and cultural pluralism as part of the democratic project of schooling (Paris, 2012).

Additionally, the collaborative efforts among teachers at AMES to develop and share resources resonated with the community-focused aspect of CSP. According to Paris (2012), effective CSP involved not only recognizing the cultural backgrounds of students but also leveraging these backgrounds to enhance the learning experience. By pooling resources and expertise, teachers were able to provide more comprehensive and inclusive educational experiences for their students.

### *Connection to Research Questions*

The challenges and adaptations identified in the study are closely connected to the research questions guiding this investigation. By examining how teachers manage time constraints, address diverse proficiency levels, and ensure resource availability, we gain insights into how these challenges impact the implementation of CSP in DLI classrooms. The strategies employed by teachers to overcome these challenges provide a practical understanding of how instructional practices can support students' language development, academic achievement, and intercultural competence through a CSP lens.

Question 1: How do elementary immersion teachers in a DLI classroom employ instructional practices that support students' language development, academic achievement, and intercultural competence through a CSP lens?

The proactive approach to resource creation and collaboration at AMES illustrated how teachers employed instructional practices that aligned with CSP principles. By developing culturally relevant materials, teachers helped ensure that their instructional resources reflected the diverse cultural backgrounds of their students, thereby enhancing language development and academic achievement. Piton emphasized the importance of communication: "We have to communicate, and that's a really big deal." This approach fostered an inclusive learning environment that promoted intercultural competence by validating students' cultural identities and incorporating their cultural knowledge into the curriculum (Howard et al., 2018; Paris & Alim, 2017).

Teachers' use of differentiated small group instruction also supported students' language development and academic achievement by providing tailored support based on students' proficiency levels. This method allowed teachers to address individual learning needs, thereby

fostering a more inclusive and effective learning environment (Busse et al., 2021; Tomlinson, 2017).

Question 2: What challenges do elementary immersion teachers face when implementing a CSP approach in a DLI classroom, and how do they address these challenges?

One of the primary challenges faced by teachers is the limited availability of culturally and linguistically appropriate resources. To address this, teachers at AMES create their own materials and collaborate with colleagues to share resources. This adaptation not only alleviates the individual burden on teachers but also ensures that students have access to high-quality, culturally relevant resources. This collaborative approach is crucial for sustaining CSP in the classroom, as it allows teachers to pool their expertise and create a comprehensive repository of instructional materials (Howard et al., 2018; Paris, 2012).

Additionally, the challenge of managing diverse proficiency levels is addressed through differentiated instruction and small group activities. By grouping students based on their proficiency levels and providing targeted support, teachers can effectively address individual learning needs and promote equitable learning opportunities. As Graham explained, “You have to teach and cater to the different needs of both classes—balancing their strengths in one area and their weaknesses in another.” This approach aligns with CSP by ensuring that all students receive the support they need to succeed, regardless of their language proficiency (Busse et al., 2021; Fang, 2020).

### **Theme 5: Teacher Collaboration Between Target Language and English Teachers**

Collaboration between target language teachers and English teachers emerged as a significant theme in the study. This collaboration was crucial for aligning instructional strategies, ensuring cohesive learning experiences, and supporting students’ bilingual development.

Effective collaboration can enhance the implementation of CSP in DLI classrooms, promoting a more integrated and supportive educational environment.

Teacher collaboration was consistently emphasized by participants as essential for creating cohesive and aligned instruction. Andre noted, “My classroom mirrors my partner’s classroom. We sit down and make sure we have the same classroom routines and setup.”

Teachers worked closely to ensure that lessons were synchronized and reinforced across both languages, contributing to a unified educational approach. Observations revealed mirrored classrooms where teachers shared similar rules, norms, and expectations, facilitating seamless transitions for students between English and target language instruction. This consistency helped reinforce students’ understanding and adherence to classroom expectations.

Lesson plans and instructional materials often reflected joint planning, with coordinated activities designed to complement instruction in both languages. Piton explained, “We support each other and try to mirror each other’s teaching methods... If she’s teaching something, she supports me, and I support her. I incorporate her content into my lesson plans.” This alignment is consistent with research on effective DLI practices (Collier & Thomas, 2017; Howard et al., 2018). Follow-up interviews further highlighted the benefits of shared resources and collaborative planning, which enhanced the quality of instruction and supported student learning.

The findings aligned with existing research on the importance of teacher collaboration in DLI settings. Yoon (2023) emphasized that effective teacher collaboration involved regular communication, shared goals, and joint planning, which were essential for creating a cohesive learning experience for students. Similarly, Soto et al. (2023) highlighted the significance of collaborative practices in promoting MLs’ success by ensuring that instructional strategies were aligned and supportive across different classrooms. Howard et al. (2018) and Collier and Thomas

(2017) also stressed the benefits of joint planning and integrated instructional strategies, which were critical for effective dual language programs.

The collaboration observed at AMES aligned with the principles outlined by these researchers, demonstrating that when teachers planned together and shared resources, the quality of instruction and student outcomes improved significantly. As Graham shared, “A lot of the posters that I have made for my classroom are also in my English partner teacher’s room. They can see them in both places,” reinforcing students’ understanding and retention of the material across languages. This consistency across various studies highlighted the importance of collaboration in achieving the goals of CSP and supporting bilingual development.

The findings supported the theoretical framework of CSP, which emphasizes leveraging students’ cultural and linguistic backgrounds to enhance learning. Teacher collaboration plays a crucial role in creating cohesive and culturally responsive instructional practices, aligning with the principles of CSP (Paris & Alim, 2017). By working together, teachers can ensure that instructional practices are not only consistent but also reflective of the diverse cultural backgrounds of their students, thereby fostering a more inclusive learning environment.

Practically, the findings highlighted the need for structured collaboration time within school schedules to facilitate joint planning and coordination between target language and English teachers. Professional development focused on aligning instructional approaches is also essential to ensure consistency and coherence in DLI programs. Schools should consider integrating structured collaboration periods into the school schedule to facilitate joint planning and ensure cohesive instructional practices. Additionally, creating opportunities for teachers to share resources and strategies can significantly enhance the effectiveness of DLI programs.

### *Connection to Theoretical Framework of CSP*

The emphasis on teacher collaboration aligned closely with the principles of CSP. Effective CSP required that teachers worked together to integrate students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds into their instruction. Etienne described how this collaboration "becomes so natural, like second nature... We are so knowledgeable and committed to multilingual education that aligning our instruction is second nature to us." By fostering collaboration, schools ensured that instructional practices were consistent and culturally responsive, thereby supporting students' bilingual development and cultural competence (Paris & Alim, 2017).

Paris and Alim (2017) highlighted the importance of collaboration in culturally sustaining practices. They argued that creating and maintaining these practices required shared responsibility among educators. By working together, teachers ensured that CSP was strengthened, as this collective approach helped maintain students' cultural and linguistic identities across classrooms and subjects. The collaborative efforts at AMES supported this by providing teachers with opportunities to jointly plan and align their instructional strategies. Yoon (2023) also noted that effective teacher collaboration could enhance the implementation of CSP, promoting a more integrated and supportive educational environment for students. By pooling their knowledge and resources, teachers at AMES better leveraged students' cultural assets, creating a cohesive learning environment that reflected and valued students' identities. This shared responsibility helped ensure that students' cultural and linguistic practices were not just acknowledged in isolated instances but sustained across the curriculum and throughout their educational journey.

### *Connection to Research Questions*

The findings from this theme provided insights into how teacher collaboration supported the implementation of CSP in DLI classrooms, addressing both instructional practices and challenges faced by teachers.

Question 1: How do elementary immersion teachers in a DLI classroom employ instructional practices that support students' language development, academic achievement, and intercultural competence through a CSP lens?

Teacher collaboration at AMES involved joint planning and shared instructional strategies, which supported students' bilingual development and academic achievement. Piton emphasized, "We have to communicate, and that's a really big deal." By aligning lessons and reinforcing each other's instruction, teachers created a cohesive learning experience that promoted language development and academic success. This collaborative approach ensured that students received consistent support in both languages, enhancing their language development and intercultural competence. The integration of shared norms, rules, and expectations also helped in maintaining a stable and supportive learning environment, crucial for the holistic development of students.

Question 2: What challenges do elementary immersion teachers face when implementing a CSP approach in a DLI classroom, and how do they address these challenges?

One of the primary challenges faced by teachers is finding time for joint planning and collaboration. Despite scheduling constraints, teachers at AMES have developed strategies to overcome this challenge. Etienne explained, "We have weekly conversations to discuss it... even though I'm not in every single planning session with the English language side, the experience I have, plus reading the book and going through what they are learning in English, helps me

understand what they need.” By aligning their classroom rules, norms, and expectations, and utilizing shared resources, teachers ensure that instructional practices are aligned and culturally responsive, supporting the diverse needs of students. Implementing structured collaboration periods and professional development sessions focused on collaborative planning can further support teachers in overcoming these challenges and enhancing the effectiveness of CSP in DLI classrooms.

Figure 16

*Integrating Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy into Dual Language Immersion: Alignment of Themes and Strategies with Critical Elements of CSP*



*Note.* This chart shows the alignment of instructional practices observed in DLI classrooms with the key elements of CSP. Each theme reflects strategies that support language development, academic achievement, and intercultural competence within a culturally sustaining framework.

### Implications for Effective Practice

The findings from this study provided essential insights into how DLI programs can be strengthened through effective practices and program-level improvements. Many of the teachers

at AMES demonstrated key strategies that enhanced language development, cultural sustainability, and academic achievement in their classrooms. The following recommendations are drawn from these key findings and geared toward both teachers and schools, providing strategies to enhance instructional practices, collaborative planning, and the overall educational experience for multilingual learners.

### **Effective Teaching Practices in DLI Classrooms**

Based on the findings from this study, several recommendations are provided for teachers working within DLI programs. These suggestions aim to strengthen instructional strategies, create a culturally inclusive environment, and support consistent practices that facilitate both language development and academic progress. While DLI teachers frequently employ scaffolding techniques like sentence stems and visual aids, aligning these practices more intentionally with CSP could provide deeper connections to students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds, fostering a richer learning experience (García & Schleppegrell, 2021; Paris & Alim, 2017). Research shows that CSP-aligned practices support student engagement and promote academic success by valuing students' cultural identities and integrating these into the classroom environment (Paris, 2012), making it essential for teachers in DLI settings to implement these principles where possible (Bonanno, 2022).

### ***Consistency in Routines and Structures Across Grades***

One of the standout practices observed was the consistency of instructional strategies across grade levels. Teachers employed similar structures, such as GRR, from kindergarten through fifth grade. This consistency provided students with a stable framework for learning and allowed them to build on skills year after year. By the time students reached higher grades, they were more independent and confident in their use of these tools. This vertical alignment is

critical for language development, as it scaffolds students' abilities to engage in academic discourse and comprehend complex content over time (Cammarata & Tedick, 2012; Lindholm-Leary, 2021). Therefore, teachers should maintain consistency in their instructional approaches across grade levels to help students become more accustomed to these routines, enabling them to take more ownership of their learning as they progress (Aguirre-Muñoz et al., 2023).

### ***Utilizing Sentence Stems and Visual Aids for Scaffolding***

Teachers at AMES also frequently employed sentence stems and visual aids to scaffold students' language production. This practice allowed students to participate in academic discussions with greater ease, giving them the linguistic tools to construct more complex sentences and engage with academic content. For instance, visual aids helped contextualize abstract concepts, and sentence stems provided the language framework necessary for students to express their ideas clearly and confidently. Research supports these strategies, emphasizing the role of scaffolding in language acquisition by providing learners with structured frameworks that they can gradually build upon (Cammarata & Tedick, 2012; Vygotsky, 1978). This instructional scaffolding has been pivotal in helping students at AMES engage more actively in both language and content learning. Teachers should continue to incorporate these tools consistently across all lessons to support language development.

### ***Promoting Collaborative Learning and Academic Discourse***

Another key positive practice observed was the integration of collaborative learning activities and Instructional Conversations. Teachers used techniques such as turn-and-talk, group work, and strategic student pairings to encourage dialogue between students. These activities fostered both language development and social-emotional learning, as students worked together to solve problems and discuss content. Collaborative learning also reflects the core principles of

CSP by creating space for students to engage with the material through their own linguistic and cultural lenses (García & Schleppegrell, 2021; Paris & Alim, 2017). Teachers should continue using these strategies to help students develop critical thinking and interpersonal communication skills alongside academic content (Bonanno, 2022).

### ***Incorporating CSP Materials***

A key strength of the observed classrooms was the use of culturally sustaining materials. Teachers intentionally selected resources that reflected the students' diverse backgrounds, helping to validate students' cultural identities within the academic setting. The use of literature, visual aids, and manipulatives that connected academic content to students' lived experiences allowed for more meaningful engagement and aligned with CSP's goal of sustaining students' cultural identities through education (Paris & Alim, 2017). Teachers should continue prioritizing the selection of culturally relevant materials to create inclusive environments where students see themselves reflected in the curriculum. This approach not only enhances student engagement but also promotes a deeper connection between students' home cultures and school learning, fostering both academic success and cultural competence (Bonanno, 2022; García & Schleppegrell, 2021).

### **Recommendations for Schools**

Based on the findings from this study, several recommendations are proposed for schools implementing or refining DLI programs. These recommendations emphasize the need for comprehensive support structures, professional development, and strategic planning to ensure that CSP-aligned practices are effectively integrated into instruction. While research has highlighted the potential benefits of DLI programs, the alignment with CSP is still an evolving

area, and more work is needed to fully understand and implement these principles in bilingual settings (Bonanno, 2022).

### ***Comprehensive Training on CSP and Ongoing Professional Development***

For schools looking to implement or improve DLI programs, investing in comprehensive and ongoing professional development around CSP is essential. As CSP is still a relatively new framework, many teachers are unfamiliar with how to implement it effectively in their classrooms. Schools should ensure that professional development on CSP is ongoing rather than a one-time event. Instructional coaches can provide ongoing support to teachers, helping them align CSP practices with classroom instruction in meaningful and practical ways (Paris & Alim, 2017). Professional development should include workshops on culturally responsive pedagogy, strategies for integrating CSP into content lessons, and examples of successful CSP implementation in bilingual or multilingual settings.

Schools could also create dedicated time for teachers to experiment with CSP strategies in their lessons, allowing them to reflect on and refine their approaches. Establishing a community of practice where teachers share strategies and challenges related to CSP implementation would further promote professional growth and alignment with these principles. Research by Paris and Alim (2017) highlighted the importance of ongoing reflection and collaboration in embedding CSP practices into daily instruction. Collaborative spaces where educators engage in reflective practices and share culturally sustaining strategies are key to fostering an inclusive learning environment that honors the cultural identities of all students (Bonanno, 2022). Moreover, the presence of instructional coaches who are well-versed in CSP can help guide teachers as they refine their practices, offering feedback, resources, and support throughout the year (Aguirre-Muñoz et al., 2023).

### ***Setting Expectations for Vertical and Collaborative Planning Time***

A second recommendation is for schools to provide dedicated time for vertical planning across grade levels, as well as collaborative planning between partner teachers. Vertical planning ensures that strategies and routines are consistent from one grade to the next, supporting students' language and content learning throughout their time in the program. Collaborative planning, on the other hand, allows target language and English teachers to align their instructional practices, ensuring that students receive cohesive support in both languages. Time for such planning should be built into the school schedule, with regular opportunities for teachers to meet, share resources, and adjust instruction to meet student needs (Howard et al., 2018; Lindholm-Leary, 2021). Vertical and collaborative planning are critical for reinforcing consistent routines across classrooms and aligning instructional strategies, particularly in bilingual settings where language and content are taught concurrently.

### ***Investing in Culturally Relevant Resources***

Schools should also commit to investing in culturally sustaining resources that teachers can use to create engaging, inclusive lessons. Providing access to CSP materials, such as culturally inclusive books, visual aids, and manipulatives is critical for creating inclusive and engaging lessons. This investment is particularly important in DLI programs, where integrating culture with language learning is essential for fostering both academic achievement and cultural identity (Gay, 2010; Paris & Alim, 2017). Schools should allocate funding for the acquisition of these resources and ensure that teachers have access to professional development on how to effectively use them in their classrooms. By doing so, schools can create learning environments where all students feel seen and valued, which directly contributes to their engagement and academic success.

### ***Fostering a School-Wide Culture of Inclusivity***

Lastly, schools should foster an overall culture of inclusivity that permeates not just the classrooms but the entire school environment. This involves integrating CSP principles into the school's mission and vision, ensuring that staff, students, and families are actively engaged in creating an inclusive, supportive community. Schools should promote cultural events, language celebrations, and opportunities for families to participate in the school's cultural life, helping to build connections between students' home cultures and the school environment. In doing so, schools can align with the broader goals of CSP, ensuring that students' cultural and linguistic identities are not only respected but celebrated (Paris & Alim, 2017). Schools should work to create a community that recognizes and nurtures the cultural wealth that students and their families bring to the educational setting, which is essential for fostering both student well-being and academic achievement.

### **Implications for State Standards**

While implementation at the classroom and school levels is crucial, there's an even greater need to integrate CSP directly into state education standards. Right now, the use of CSP often depends on individual teachers who choose to go beyond the mandated curriculum to make learning more connected to their students' cultural identities. This reliance on exceptional educators can lead to inconsistencies, as not all teachers may have the training or awareness to incorporate CSP effectively—especially those who have not had to consider how their own cultural backgrounds influence their teaching because they align with the mainstream narratives already embedded in existing standards (Ladson-Billings, 2014; Paris & Alim, 2017).

By embedding CSP principles into state standards, all educators would be guided to consistently include culturally sustaining practices in their instruction. For example, a history

standard on World War II could be expanded to encourage students to connect the historical content to their own cultural backgrounds or family histories. This approach ensures that lessons are not just about transmitting knowledge but also about validating and sustaining students' cultural identities within the academic context (García & Kleifgen, 2018). Such standards would prompt teachers to facilitate discussions and projects that allow students to explore and share their diverse perspectives, enriching the learning experience for everyone in the classroom.

Incorporating CSP into state standards also addresses systemic inequities by acknowledging that mainstream cultural narratives have traditionally dominated educational content, often sidelining the experiences and histories of minority groups (Ladson-Billings, 2014). By requiring all students to engage with the curriculum through the lens of their own cultures, state standards would promote a more inclusive and equitable educational environment. This shift would support teachers who may lack extensive training in CSP by providing clear guidelines and expectations, making culturally sustaining practices a fundamental aspect of instruction rather than an optional enhancement (Gay, 2010; Paris & Alim, 2017).

Ultimately, including CSP in state standards represents a commitment to educational equity and excellence. It empowers students to draw meaningful connections between their lives and their learning, boosting engagement, critical thinking, and academic achievement (Bonanno, 2022; Paris & Alim, 2017). As education continues to evolve to meet the needs of a diverse student population, state education agencies need to revise standards to explicitly incorporate CSP principles. This integration will ensure that all students can see their cultures reflected in their education, fostering a more inclusive, understanding, and dynamic society.

## Limitations

While this study provided valuable insights into the instructional practices of elementary immersion teachers in DLI classrooms through a CSP lens, several limitations must be considered. According to Creswell (2009), limitations were potential weaknesses or problems identified by the researcher that could affect the study's results or their applicability to other situations.

One limitation of this study was the sample size, restricted to AMES. The unique characteristics of this school, including its demographics and available resources, may not represent other schools in different contexts. As a result, the findings might not be fully generalizable to other settings or programs.

Another important limitation involves the level of familiarity teachers had with CSP. Despite the potential of CSP to enhance instruction, many teachers lacked the training necessary to implement it fully in their classrooms. During the study, it became evident that several teachers were unfamiliar with the core principles of CSP until they were introduced by the researcher. The researcher had to provide examples and guidance to help participants connect CSP principles to their current practices, which may have limited how comprehensively CSP could be integrated into instruction. This gap underscores the need for ongoing professional development to support teachers in understanding and applying CSP more effectively.

The study primarily used qualitative data from interviews, observations, and document analysis. While steps were taken to ensure objectivity, qualitative research inherently involves the researcher's interpretation of the data. Despite efforts to minimize bias, the findings may still reflect the researcher's perspectives (Creswell, 2009).

Moreover, the study's focus on teachers' perspectives may have overlooked the experiences and insights of other key stakeholders such as students, administrators, and district staff. Including these perspectives could have provided a more comprehensive understanding of the DLI program's implementation and impact.

Lastly, the study faced logistical challenges in conducting follow-up interviews. Due to scheduling conflicts and increased workload towards the end of the school year, only four of the original seven participants were able to complete the second round of interviews. This reduction in participant numbers may have limited the diversity of perspectives and the comprehensiveness of the follow-up data. To mitigate this issue in future research, it is recommended to begin initial interviews earlier in the academic year, around October or November, to allow for more thorough data collection and analysis before the busy end-of-year period. This adjusted timeline would help ensure a more balanced and comprehensive follow-up process.

These limitations help contextualize the findings and provide transparency regarding the study's scope and the framework within which the findings should be interpreted.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

Future research can build on the insights from this study to deepen the understanding of DLI programs through the lens of CSP. One important area for further exploration is how large school districts initiate and support DLI programs. This could include examining the policies, resources, and professional development opportunities that districts provide to facilitate the successful implementation of DLI programs that are aligned with CSP principles. Investigating how CSP can be woven into district-wide strategies for DLI could further highlight the role of culturally sustaining practices in supporting diverse student populations.

Another valuable area of research could compare the academic and language development outcomes of newcomer MLs in DLI programs versus traditional English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) programs. This comparison could provide insights into how DLI programs infused with CSP principles impact student outcomes differently from more traditional models, offering a deeper understanding of which practices best support language development, academic growth, and cultural sustainability for MLs.

Despite the emerging recognition of translanguaging as a critical approach in multilingual classrooms (García & Kleyn, 2016; Wei, 2017), its presence was minimal in the classrooms observed in this study. While students occasionally engaged in informal use of both English and Spanish, teachers remained strictly within their designated languages during instruction. Classroom displays, too, were monolingual, with materials reflecting only the target language of the classroom. This monolingual approach contrasts with the principles of CSP (Paris & Alim, 2017), which emphasize the importance of validating and leveraging students' full linguistic and cultural resources.

Given this, future research could examine the potential benefits of integrating translanguaging practices more deliberately in DLI settings. Research has shown that translanguaging not only enhances language learning but also aligns with CSP by affirming students' cultural identities and fostering a more inclusive classroom environment (García & Kleyn, 2016; Paris, 2012). Investigating how teachers can be trained and supported to utilize students' full linguistic repertoires could offer insights into fostering a more inclusive and dynamic approach to language instruction. Additionally, exploring the role of translanguaging in facilitating cultural and linguistic identity development in students could further contribute to the

understanding of best practices in DLI education that align with CSP (Palmer et al., 2014; Paris & Alim, 2017).

Additionally, examining the role of instructional coaches in supporting DLI teachers could reveal best practices and strategies that contribute to effective teaching and learning in DLI settings. Understanding how instructional coaches help teachers integrate CSP principles into their instruction could further enhance the quality and impact of DLI programs. Research in this area would shed light on how CSP-aligned instructional coaching can support teachers in maintaining culturally and linguistically responsive classrooms.

Given that CSP is still a relatively new framework, and many teachers may not yet have the resources or expertise to implement it consistently, future research could also take a quantitative approach to assess how intentional and systematic implementation of CSP impacts student outcomes. A study could examine the performance of students whose teachers have received comprehensive CSP training and are supported to apply it deliberately in their classrooms. Tracking academic and social outcomes over time in such classrooms would offer valuable data on the effectiveness of CSP as a structured instructional approach for diverse learners. This would also provide a clearer understanding of how consistent use of CSP strategies can transform student engagement, identity development, and academic success.

Finally, exploring the long-term academic and social outcomes for students who have participated in DLI programs through a CSP lens could provide valuable information on the lasting benefits of these programs. This research could consider various factors such as college readiness, career opportunities, and intercultural competence, offering a comprehensive view of how DLI education grounded in CSP principles influences students beyond their K-12 experiences.

By addressing these areas, future research can continue to expand the knowledge base on DLI programs and contribute to the development of more effective and inclusive educational practices for MLs, with a particular focus on sustaining students' cultural and linguistic identities through CSP.

### **Conclusion**

This study explored the instructional practices of elementary immersion teachers in DLI classrooms at AMES through the lens of CSP. The findings provide valuable insights into how these practices support students' bilingual proficiency, academic success, and intercultural competence.

The research revealed that teachers employed a variety of strategies to support language development, including visual aids, sentence stems, hands-on activities, and structured routines. These practices were crucial in creating an engaging and supportive learning environment that facilitated language acquisition and academic achievement.

Collaborative learning and Instructional Conversations were also found to be integral components of effective DLI instruction. Techniques such as turn and talk, strategic grouping, and structured dialogue opportunities fostered meaningful student interactions, enhancing both language proficiency and content understanding.

The integration of culturally relevant literature and students' cultural practices into the curriculum was another key finding. By reflecting students' backgrounds and experiences in the classroom, teachers promoted an inclusive environment that validated and affirmed students' cultural identities, aligning with CSP principles.

Despite these successes, teachers faced significant challenges in implementing CSP, including time management, addressing diverse proficiency levels, and ensuring resource

availability. Adaptations such as collaborative planning, flexibility in instructional practices, and differentiated instruction were crucial in overcoming these barriers and ensuring effective CSP implementation.

The study also highlighted the importance of collaboration between target language and English teachers. Joint planning and shared resources were essential for aligning instructional strategies and supporting students' bilingual development, further promoting the goals of CSP.

The significance of this study lies in its contribution to the understanding of effective DLI instructional practices and their alignment with CSP. By providing detailed insights into the strategies used by teachers and the challenges they face, this research informs the development of teacher preparation and professional development programs. Additionally, the findings support the design and implementation of more effective and inclusive DLI programs that enhance students' language development, academic achievement, and intercultural competence.

In conclusion, this study highlights the importance of culturally sustaining instructional practices in DLI settings. By continuing to explore and refine these practices, educators can create more inclusive and supportive learning environments that promote the success of MLs. The insights gained from this research contribute to the ongoing efforts to improve educational outcomes for all students, particularly those in diverse and linguistically rich contexts.

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**Appendix A**

**Invitation to Participate Email Template**

**Subject:** Invitation to Participate in DLI and CSP Research Study

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

I hope this email finds you well. My name is Sherley Harris, and I am conducting a research study on the experiences and instructional practices of DLI teachers at AMES, with a particular focus on the implementation of Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy (CSP). Your insights will be invaluable in shedding light on this area, contributing to a richer understanding and advancement of educational practices in DLI settings.

**Study Overview:**

1. Two separate 90-minute interviews, scheduled approximately a month apart, providing ample opportunity for reflection. These interviews will explore various themes related to your experiences and practices in a DLI setting, challenges, the role of CSP, and your perceptions of the impact of your practices on student outcomes.
2. Classroom observations to focus on instructional strategies, student-teacher interactions, and the implementation of CSP.
3. Document analysis of lesson plans, teacher reflections, and other instructional documents related to the observed lessons.

**Your Participation:**

Your participation will be voluntary and confidential. All information shared will be used strictly for research purposes, ensuring your privacy and rights are maintained throughout the study. You will have the opportunity to review all findings related to your input to ensure accuracy and comfort with the data used in the study.

**Next Steps:**

Should you be willing to participate in this study, please respond to this email by [specific date], allowing ample time to schedule and plan the interview and observation sessions. In the event of non-response, a follow-up email will be sent as a gentle reminder of the invitation to participate in this meaningful research.

Thank you for considering participating in this study. Your contribution is essential in promoting effective and culturally relevant instructional practices in DLI settings, benefiting educators and students alike.

Warm regards,

Sherley Harris

**Appendix B**

**Interview Protocol for Dual Language Immersion Teachers**

## **1. Teachers' Experiences in a DLI Setting**

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. The purpose of this first interview is to understand your experiences as a Dual Language Immersion teacher. This session is expected to last about 60-90 minutes. Your responses will be kept confidential and anonymous.

- a. Can you describe your experiences teaching in a DLI setting? (RQ2)
- b. What have been some of the most significant highlights and challenges of teaching in a DLI environment? (RQ2)

## **2. Instructional Strategies Used in DLI Classrooms**

- a. Can you explain the instructional strategies you commonly use in your DLI classroom? (RQ1, RQ1b)
- b. Could you provide a specific example of a lesson or activity and explain how you implement these strategies? (RQ1, RQ1b)

## **3. Challenges Faced in DLI Context and Role of CSP in Instructional Decisions**

- a. What are some of the unique challenges you've encountered teaching in a DLI context? (RQ2)
  - i. How have you addressed these challenges? (RQ2)
- b. How does CSP inform your instructional decisions in the DLI classroom?
  - i. Can you provide examples where CSP has significantly influenced your teaching methods or approaches? (RQ1, RQ1b)
- c. What impacts, both positive and negative, do you believe your instructional practices have on student outcomes? (RQ1a)
  - i. Can you share any specific instances that illustrate these impacts? (RQ1a)

Thank the participant for their time and insights. Remind them that their responses will be kept confidential and inform them of the next steps.

\* Please note: These are suggested guiding questions, and the interview may evolve more conversationally. Be prepared to adapt dynamically to the flow of the conversation.

### **Follow-Up Interview**

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this second interview. This session is intended to build on the insights from our first conversation, classroom observations, and initial data analysis.

Your responses will continue to be kept confidential and anonymous. This interview is expected to last about 60 minutes.

#### **1. Reflections on the Classroom Observations and First Interview**

- a. Reflecting on our first interview and the classroom observation that took place afterward, were there any moments that stood out to you? (RQ1, RQ1a, RQ1b, RQ2)
- b. How have these experiences impacted your perspective on your teaching practice and the use of CSP in your DLI classroom? (RQ1, RQ1b, RQ2)

The rest of the interview will primarily consist of questions informed by the initial data analysis and observations. Below are some example prompts.

#### **Examples:**

1. During the classroom observation, we \_\_\_\_\_ . Could you share your thoughts on this and discuss its impact on your instructional practice and students' learning experience? (RQ1, RQ1a, RQ1b)

2. Based on the initial data analysis, we found\_\_\_\_\_. How do you see this reflected in your classroom, and what are your thoughts on its implications for your practice and your students? (RQ1, RQ1a, RQ1b, RQ2)
3. Since our last conversation, have you noticed further examples or have additional thoughts on how your instructional strategies are contributing to the development of intercultural strategies are contributing to the development of intercultural competence among your students? (RQ1a)
4. Have any new challenges emerged in employing a CSP approach in your DLI classroom, and how are you navigating these? Are the strategies discussed in our last meeting proving to be effective, or have modifications been made? (RQ2)

Thank you for your time and insights. Your thoughtful responses significantly contribute to this research study. We will keep in touch regarding the next steps of the study.

**Appendix C**

**Research Statement (Interview – recorded)**

You are being asked to participate in an interview as part of a research study entitled “Instructional Practices in Dual Language Immersion Classrooms: A Case Study from a Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy Perspective”, which is being conducted by Sherley Harris, a student at Valdosta State University. The purpose of the study is to explore and describe the instructional practices that elementary immersion teachers use in a Dual Language Immersion classroom to support students in developing proficiency in English and the target language while ensuring both academic achievement and intercultural competence.

You will receive no direct benefits from participating in this research study. However, your responses may help us learn more about the effective instructional strategies used in DLI classrooms and how they contribute to linguistic and academic development while nurturing the cultural heritage of diverse student populations. There are no foreseeable risks involved in participating in this study other than those encountered in day-to-day life. Participation should take approximately 90 minutes.

The interviews will be audio taped in order to accurately capture your concerns, opinions, and ideas. Once the recordings have been transcribed, the tapes will be destroyed. No one, including the researcher, will be able to associate your responses with your identity. Your participation is voluntary. You may choose not to participate, to stop responding at any time, or to skip any questions that you do not want to answer. You must be at least 18 years of age to participate in this study. Your participation in the interview will serve as your voluntary agreement to participate in this research project and your certification that you are 18 years of age or older.

Questions regarding the purpose or procedures of the research should be directed to Sherley Harris at [schampe@valdosta.edu](mailto:schampe@valdosta.edu). This study has been exempted from Institutional Review Board (IRB) review in accordance with Federal regulations. The IRB, a university committee established by Federal law, is responsible for protecting the rights and welfare of research participants. If you have concerns or questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the IRB Administrator at 229-253-2947 or [irb@valdosta.edu](mailto:irb@valdosta.edu).

**Appendix D**

**Observation Protocol for Dual Language Immersion Classrooms**

**Teacher's Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Time:** \_\_\_\_\_

**1. Classroom Environment:**

- a. Does the classroom environment support bilingualism and biliteracy (e.g., bilingual labels, posters, books)? (RQ1b)
- b. Are there visible signs of students' diverse cultures (e.g., cultural artifacts, pictures)? (RQ1b)

**2. Instructional Strategies & Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies (CSP):**

- a. What instructional strategies are used by the teacher to promote students' bilingual proficiency, academic success, and intercultural competence? (RQ1, RQ1b)
- b. How are the principles of CSP integrated into these instructional strategies? (RQ1, RQ1b)
- c. How are the students' cultural backgrounds and home languages incorporated into classroom instruction? (RQ1b)
- d. How does the instruction foster students' language development and academic achievement? (RQ1, RQ1b)

**3. Student Interactions:**

- a. How do students interact with each other and with the teacher during instruction? (RQ1a)
- b. How are these interactions fostering students' intercultural competence? (RQ1a)
- c. What language(s) are students using during their interactions? (RQ1b)

**4. Challenges & Solutions:**

- a. What challenges related to the implementation of CSP are observed during the instruction? (RQ2)
- b. How does the teacher address these challenges? (RQ2)

**5. General Observations:**

- a. Other observations relevant to the research objectives and questions. (RQ1, RQ1a, RQ1b, RQ2)

**Appendix E**  
**Document Analysis Protocol**

**Document Details:****Document Name:****Document Type:****Author/Source:****1. Content Overview:**

- a. What are the main themes/topics covered in the document? (RQ1, RQ2)
- b. How are these themes/topics structured and organized to integrate content and language instruction? (RQ1b)

**2. Language Development:**

- a. How is language use planned for and addressed in the document to support students' language development? (RQ1, RQ1b)
- b. Are there specific strategies mentioned for promoting bilingual proficiency? (RQ1)

**3. Instructional Strategies and Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies**

- a. What instructional strategies are outlined in the document to promote students' bilingual proficiency, academic success, and intercultural competence? (RQ1, RQ1b)
- b. How do these instructional strategies integrate content and language instruction while adhering to the principles of CSP? (RQ1b)
- c. How are students' cultural backgrounds and home languages considered in the planning process to promote intercultural competence? (RQ1a, RQ1b)

**4. Expected Learning Outcomes**

- a. What are the stated or implied learning outcomes in the document related to language development, academic achievement, and intercultural competence?  
(RQ1, RQ1a, RQ1b)
  - b. How are these outcomes linked with the instructional strategies and CSP? (RQ1, RQ1b)
- 5. Challenges and Solutions**
- a. Are any potential challenges or obstacles mentioned in the document related to the implementation of CSP in a DLI setting? (RQ2)
  - b. How does the document suggest these challenges should be addressed? (RQ2)
- 6. General Observations:**
- a. Are there any other observations or notes relevant to the research objectives and questions? (RQ1, RQ1a, RQ1b, RQ2)

**Appendix F**

**IRB Research Proposal Cover Sheet**

**Title of Research Project:** Instructional Practices in Dual Language Immersion Classrooms: A Case Study from a Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy Perspective

**Principal Investigator:** Sherley Harris

**Email:** Schampe@valdosta.edu

**Mailing Address:** 2031 Little River Drive, Suwanee, GA 30024

**I think this research proposal is eligible for the following IRB review status:**

Exempt

Full

Expedited

**Anticipated Date to Begin Research:**

**Anticipated Date of Completion:**

**Principal Investigator Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix G**

**Valdosta State University IRB Approval**



**Institutional Review Board (IRB)  
for the Protection of Human Research Participants**

**PROTOCOL EXEMPTION REPORT**

**Protocol Number:** 04484-2023

**Responsible Researcher:** Sherley Champe Harris

**Supervising Faculty:** Drs. Kelly Davidson & Taralynn Hartsell    **Co-Investigator:** n/a

**Project Title:** *Instructional Practices in Dual Language Immersion Classrooms: A Case Study from a Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy Perspective.*

**INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD DETERMINATION:**

This research protocol is **exempt** from Institutional Review Board (IRB) oversight under 45 CFR 46.101(b) of the federal regulations, **category 2**. If the nature of the research changes such that exemption criteria no longer apply, please consult with the IRB Administrator ([irb@valdosta.edu](mailto:irb@valdosta.edu)) before continuing your research study.

**ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:**

- *Exempt protocol guidelines **permit** the recording of interview sessions provided recordings are made to create an accurate transcript. Exempt guidelines **prohibit** the collection, storage, and/or sharing of recordings. Upon creation of the transcript, the recorded interview session must be deleted from each recording and storage devices used.*
- *In keeping with established consent guidelines, recordings must include the researcher reading aloud the interview consent statement, confirming participant understanding, and establishing their willingness to take part in the interview. Participants must be provided with a copy of the research statement.*
- *To ensure confidentiality of participants, pseudonym lists must be kept in a separate secure file from corresponding name lists, email addresses, etc.*
- *Upon completion of the research study all data (e.g. data, pseudonym list, email lists, transcript, etc.) must be securely maintained (e.g. locked file cabinet, password protected computer, etc.) and accessible only by the researcher for a minimum of 3 years. At the end of the required time, collected data must be permanently destroyed.*

**Please submit any documents you revise to the IRB Administrator at [tmwright@valdosta.edu](mailto:tmwright@valdosta.edu) to ensure an updated record of your exemption.**

*Elizabeth W. Olphie*

Elizabeth W. Olphie, IRB Administrator

*12.18.2023*

Date

*Thank you for submitting an IRB application.*

*Please direct questions to [irb@valdosta.edu](mailto:irb@valdosta.edu) or 229-259-5045.*