PROVIDING THE CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE INSTRUCTION THEY NEED: INVESTIGATING DIVERSE INSTRUCTION FOR ENGLISH LEARNERS IN RURAL SCHOOLS

A Dissertation

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AUTHORIZATION TO SUBMIT

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This dissertation of Jordan Shumway, submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy with a major in Educational Leadership and titled "Providing the Culturally Responsive Instruction They Need: Investigating Diverse Instruction for English Learners in Rural Schools," has been reviewed in final form. Permission, as indicated by the signatures and dates given below, is now granted to submit final copies.

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DEDICATION

This research study is dedicated to my Haitian daughters, who are English learners. I have promised to give them a better life, and this research goes a long way toward shaping the educational future for each of them and for all English learners.

ABSTRACT

English learners (ELs) are students in need of culturally responsive instruction in schools to help them obtain grade level standards and to prepare them to be college and career-ready beyond high school. The Theory of Linguistic Interdependence served as the theoretical framework for this study and provided context to the necessary culturally responsive instruction ELs need to become proficient in their acquired language (L2). Many educators feel unprepared to provide culturally responsive instruction for ELs within general education classrooms. Further challenges occur in rural school districts, where funding, professional development, and access to highly trained teachers are limited. This mixed methods research study utilizes the Culturally Responsive Teaching Self-Efficacy Scale (CRTSE) to evaluate the self-efficacy of general educators from rural schools when providing culturally responsive instruction for ELs. CRTSE scores were used to determine a high and low threshold of culturally responsive self-efficacy. Four participants from phase one participated in follow-up interviews to provide depth to the data gathered during the first phase. The most common culturally responsive teaching strategies used by rural educators are strategies that overlap with general teaching practices. Strategies requiring higher levels of culturally responsive expertise are implemented with much less frequency and elicit significantly lower self-efficacy scores from rural educators.

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Chapter I: Introduction

The U. S. education system is creating a dire inequity for students who do not have an appropriate grasp of the English language, and this inequity takes many forms (T. Gonzalez et al., 2021; Gunderson, 2021; Kangas, 2017b; Kanno, 2018; Robinson-Cimpian et al., 2016; Thurlow & Kopriva, 2015; Von Esch, 2018). These diverse students with non-English native languages must learn English to participate in school and society and are known as English learners (ELs) (Babinski et al., 2018; Kangas, 2014; Kanno, 2018; National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2022a). An alarming achievement gap exists between individuals who are not English proficient and their native English-speaking peers, and the gap continuously widens as students advance through the secondary grades (Cummins, 2021; Marsh, 2018; NCES, 2019; Nutta et al., 2020; Rivas, 2023; Waluyo & Panmei, 2021; Yamasaki & Luk, 2018). Confusion between educators, specialists, and school leaders exists regarding how ELs should receive services to promote English acquisition, and this confusion extends to who is ultimately responsible for providing necessary instruction (Becker & Deris, 2019; Perry, 2022; Villavicencio et al., 2021; Vintan & Gallagher, 2019; Von Esch, 2018).

Students in U.S. school systems who are learning English as a second language, or L2, are referred to by a variety of terms, including English learners (ELs) or English language learners (ELLs), dual language learners (DLLs), English as a second language students (ESLs), second language learners (SLLs), and bilingual learners or emerging bilinguals (Soto-Corominas et al., 2020; Yamasaki & Luk, 2018). Many terms suggest a somewhat negative view that students acquiring English are “deficient” due to their lack of ability to proficiently read, speak, and write in the English language, despite their proficiency in their native language (Umansky et al., 2020; Yamasaki & Luk, 2018). English learner, or EL, is the accepted term for this study, not

only because it is the official term used in related federal law but also because it highlights the skillsets addressed by culturally responsive instruction (National Center for Education Statistics, 2022a; Umansky et al., 2020).

Higher levels of English proficiency predict success at the collegiate level and can have a significant impact on future career success for EL students (Auslander, 2018; Ghenghesh, 2015; Kibler et al., 2018; Mancilla-Martinez et al., 2020; Rose et al., 2019; Waluyo & Panmei, 2021). Students identified as ELs are frequently placed on lower-level learning tracks than their non-EL peers or in courses with no credit, which impairs their college and career readiness (Cummins, 2021; Kanno, 2018; Mendoza, 2019; Umansky et al., 2020). ELs historically have lower graduation rates than their non-EL peers (Huang et al., 2016; Johnson, 2020; Villavicencio et al., 2021; Zhu et al., 2023). Even lower graduation rates exist for ELs with disabilities (Cooc, 2023; Migliarini & Stinson, 2020).

ELs face disproportionate representation in special education (Barrio, 2017; Fish, 2019; Kangas, 2014; Kangas & Cook, 2020; Karvonen et al., 2021; Morgan et al., 2015; Sinclair et al., 2018; Swanson et al., 2021; Umansky et al., 2017). They are frequently underidentified in the primary grades (Arias & Friberg, 2017; Kangas & Schissel, 2021; Umansky et al., 2017; Yamasaki & Luk, 2018). By intermediate or secondary grades, EL misrepresentation shifts to overidentification (Arias & Friberg, 2017; T. Gonzalez et al., 2021; Kangas & Schissel, 2021; Motamedi et al., 2016; Umansky et al., 2017; Yamasaki & Luk, 2018). Manifestations of English language proficiency deficits and intellectual disabilities are often similar, which makes it difficult for educators to address the needs of their young EL students, especially in the primary grades (Kangas, 2014; Ortiz et al., 2011; S. Park, 2019). Educators in the primary grades tend to

attribute academic difficulties to English language acquisition results, so they are less likely to refer struggling ELs for special education (Arias & Friberg, 2017; Jozwik & Douglas, 2017).

English-only assessments and incongruent or ineffective interventions often prevent ELs with learning disabilities from being identified (Jozwik & Douglas, 2017; Kangas, 2014). Misidentification or a lack of services can lead to high dropout rates, grade retention, and limited employment opportunities (Fish, 2019; Jozwik & Douglas, 2017). Disproportionality in special education can result in a lack of necessary services for underidentified ELs or in the provision of unnecessary services in place of critical core content and learning experiences for ELs who are overidentified (Griner & Stewart, 2013; Kangas, 2015; Motamedi et al., 2016; Umansky et al., 2017).

Over five million students are ELs, constituting approximately 14% of students in U.S. public schools (Kangas, 2018; Sinclair et al., 2018; K. J. Williams & Vaughn, 2020). ELs come from various regions of the world, form a wide variety of subgroups, and represent many different native languages (Garcia & Kleifgen, 2018; Jozwik et al., 2020; Marsh, 2018; Silva & Kucer, 2016; Umansky et al., 2020). Many ELs were born in the United States, but others are newcomers, who are non-U.S.-born individuals who arrive in their adolescence and have experienced varying degrees of education, political upheaval, or immigration status (Marsh, 2018; Proctor et al., 2017; Umansky et al., 2020). Students who have been identified as ELs and have received EL services for approximately five years or more become known as long-term English learners (LTELs) (Kangas & Schissel, 2021; Kibler et al., 2018; Motamedi et al., 2016; Uysal, 2022). As ELs meet English proficiency standards, they can be reclassified as English proficient and will no longer receive interventions (Reyes & Domina, 2019; K. D. Thompson, 2017; Uysal, 2022; White & Mavrogordato, 2019). Optimal reclassification timelines result in

English proficiency for ELs after four to seven years of services, with reclassification occurring between fourth and eighth grade (Soto-Corominas et al., 2020; K. D. Thompson, 2017; Umansky et al., 2017). However, reclassification policies vary between states and districts and often do not adequately address ELs' developmental and acquisitional needs (Chin, 2021; Kangas & Schissel, 2021; Schissel & Kangas, 2018). Regardless of background, all ELs need to be able to communicate academically by learning content through the English language, learning the English language in forms of oral language and literacy, and learning about the forms, structure, and rules of the English language (Cummins, 1979a, 1979b, 1981; Nutta et al., 2020).

To attain positive learning outcomes, ELs need culturally responsive instruction that integrates their unique, ethnically diverse backgrounds, prior experiences, and cultural knowledge to create relevant, effective learning encounters (Cruz et al., 2019; Cummins, 2021; Gay, 2010, 2018; Griner & Stewart, 2013; Muniz, 2019; Siwatu, 2007b). Most ELs, especially at the secondary level, spend the majority of their day in general education classrooms with teachers who are unprepared to see to their culturally diverse needs where instruction relies predominantly on English language proficiency (Gunderson et al., 2020; Kibler et al., 2018; Silva & Kucer, 2016; Umansky et al., 2020). Because of their unique backgrounds and experiences, ELs often have social and emotional needs in addition to academic ones (Auslander, 2018; Kibler et al., 2018; Umansky et al., 2020). Optimal services to address the holistic needs of ELs require collaborative efforts between educators and counselors (Auslander, 2018; Lu et al., 2022; Umansky et al., 2020). Collaboration teams must also be comprised of EL specialists, special education and other specialty teachers, and administrators (Hoover et al., 2019; Kangas, 2017b, 2018; Migliarini & Stinson, 2020; Przymus & Alvarado, 2019).

Culturally responsive instruction draws on ethnically diverse students' prior experiences, cultural knowledge, unique backgrounds, and frames of reference to create relevant, effective learning encounters for them (Cummins, 2021; Gay, 2018; Siwatu, 2011b; Will & Najarro, 2022). Using culturally responsive teaching leads to positive learning outcomes that help narrow the achievement gap between ELs and non-ELs (Auslander, 2018; Cummins, 2021; Griner & Stewart, 2013; Hadjioannou et al., 2016; Muniz, 2019). Culturally responsive instruction enhances instruction for ELs but takes intentional effort and a shift in beliefs to implement in schools effectively (Hadjioannou et al., 2016; Hoover et al., 2020; Kangas, 2014; Muniz, 2019, 2020; Will & Najarro, 2022). Many components are required to provide ELs with the culturally responsive educative experiences they need (Auslander, 2018; Hoover et al., 2019; Migliarini & Stinson, 2020; Motamedi et al., 2016; Orosco & Abdulrahim, 2017; S. Park, 2019; Przymus & Alvarado, 2019; Silva & Kucer, 2016). Increased training, resource allocation, and administrative support are necessary to provide ELs with culturally responsive experiences that allow them to thrive (Kangas, 2017a; Karvonen & Clark, 2019; Karvonen et al., 2021; Orosco & Abdulrahim, 2017; S. Park, 2019). As educators shift toward providing the culturally diverse environments necessary for ELs, their instruction will more accurately inform their interventions and direct necessary and accurate supports to students with unique needs (Motamedi et al., 2016; S. Park, 2019; Przymus & Alvarado, 2019).

Challenges for ELs are compounded for those attending rural schools (Arsen et al., 2021; Echazarra & Radinger, 2019; Lavalley, 2018; Showalter et al., 2019; Tieken & Montgomery, 2021). Federal funding initiatives based on the number of enrolled students are detrimental to rural school districts because they do not have the enrollment numbers of urban or suburban districts (Arsen et al., 2021; Echazarra & Radinger, 2019; Lavalley, 2018). Twenty-eight percent

of U.S. schools are in rural locales, and 19% of U.S. students attend rural schools (National Center for Education Statistics, 2023). Funding established on a per-student basis does not effectively cover the costs of curriculum, high-quality programs, or services in rural school districts (Echazarra & Radinger, 2019; Tieken & Montgomery, 2021). The lack of high student enrollment results in a lack of significant underfunding for rural public schools (Echazarra & Radinger, 2019; Lavalley, 2018; Tieken & Montgomery, 2021). The population of diverse students in rural schools has been increasing, as ELs currently make up 4% of students in rural schools, necessitating more resources for English language acquisition (Lavalley, 2018; Tieken & Montgomery, 2021). Furthermore, teacher recruitment and retention remain challenges for rural school districts due to lower salaries and limited hiring pools (Arsen et al., 2021; Lavalley, 2018; Showalter et al., 2019; Tieken & Montgomery, 2021). Rural schools are pressed to find funds to pay for professional development that will enhance the culturally responsive instruction for EL students, and as a result, professional development opportunities are seriously limited (Arsen et al., 2021; Echazarra & Radinger, 2019; Lavalley, 2018; Showalter et al., 2019; Tieken & Montgomery, 2021).

Statement of the Problem

The literature establishes the need for general educators to provide English learners with a culturally responsive education that recognizes their diverse instructional needs (Auslander, 2018; Hoover et al., 2019; Orosco & Abdulrahim, 2017; S. Park, 2019). General educators struggle to differentiate between the English acquisition needs and intellectual disabilities of ELs (Arias & Friberg, 2017; Motamedi et al., 2016; Umansky et al., 2017; Yamasaki & Luk, 2018). The inability of educators to appropriately address the learning needs of ELs results in the disproportionate representation of ELs in special education (Barrio, 2017; Fish, 2019; Kangas,

2014; Kangas & Cook, 2020; Karvonen et al., 2021; Morgan et al., 2015; Sinclair et al., 2018; Swanson et al., 2021; Umansky et al., 2017). The disproportionality of ELs in intermediate and secondary grades takes the form of overidentification (T. Gonzalez et al., 2021; Kangas & Schissel, 2021; Motamedi et al., 2016; Umansky et al., 2017; Yamasaki & Luk, 2018). Research-based, culturally responsive instruction allows educators to provide educational experiences sensitive to their ELs' culturally diverse needs that may circumvent inaccurate special education referrals (Auslander, 2018; Motamedi et al., 2016; S. Park, 2019; Przymus & Alvarado, 2019). The need to address this problem is clear:

> Every educator has an essential role and responsibility in supporting English learners' academic achievement and language development. The role of each type of educator of English learners should complement the roles of others, forming an interconnected, unified system of support… All English learners deserve educators who are informed, skilled, and capable of reaching them (Nutta et al., 2020, p. 4).

Once ELs are placed into special education programs, they often encounter policies where dual services are prohibited (T. Gonzalez et al., 2021; Kangas, 2107a, 2018; Kangas & Cook, 2020; S. Park, 2019). When service conflicts arise, ELs are frequently relegated to one set of services, resulting in the discontinuation of EL services to prioritize special education needs (Cioe-Pena, 2020; T. Gonzalez et al., 2021; Kangas, 2017b, 2017a, 2018; Kangas & Cook, 2020; Liu et al., 2017; Migliarini & Stinson, 2020). ELs with disabilities are five times less likely to be reclassified as English proficient than ELs without disabilities (Kangas & Schissel, 2021; K. D. Thompson, 2017). The overrepresentation of ELs in special education is concerning, especially during the secondary grades, because their unlikelihood of being reclassified limits them toward exclusionary tracks, preventing them from accessing higher-level courses (Carlson & Knowles,

2016; Johnson, 2020; Kangas & Cook, 2020; Reyes & Hwang, 2019). ELs who fail to meet reclassification criteria after seven years of services, including those with disabilities, face higher rates of harassment or other forms of negative peer interactions (Chin, 2021; Migliarini & Stinson, 2020). Career and college readiness opportunities are often unavailable or inaccessible to many ELs, diminishing their chances of attending four-year colleges (Johnson, 2020; Kanno, 2018; Mendoza, 2019).

This study will address the ability of general educators from rural school districts to utilize culturally responsive instruction to support the learning needs of their EL students. The self-efficacy beliefs of rural general educators regarding culturally responsive instruction are unknown. It is also unknown which culturally responsive instructional strategies are being used in rural general education classrooms. The purpose of this study is to close the existing gap in research by using the validated Culturally Responsive Teaching Self-Efficacy (CRTSE) scale to measure the self-efficacy levels of practicing rural general educators when implementing culturally responsive instruction and to identify the culturally responsive strategies they utilize. Follow-up interviews were used to provide depth to CRTSE scores and determine the general state of culturally responsive teaching in rural schools.

Background

While federal laws require educational agencies to create policies for identifying, reclassifying, and supporting the English acquisition of ELs, services differ from state to state and district to district, creating wildly diverse practices for students of this population across the country (Chin, 2021; Christensen et al., 2018; Hoover et al., 2019; Kangas, 2018; Robinson-Cimpian et al., 2016; Thurlow et al., 2017). Policies have developed over the years and changed the required services for ELs over time, including the requirements for identifying, monitoring,

and assessing ELs (Kangas, 2018; Klein, 2015; Menken, 2010). As education acts have evolved, they have become more inclusive of diverse populations (Callahan & Hopkins, 2017; Klein, 2015).

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) was initially passed by President Lyndon B. Johnson in 1965 (Carlson & Knowles, 2016; Thurlow et al., 2017; White & Mavrogordato, 2019). The highlight of the act was the Title I program, which was created to help school districts pay for services for disadvantaged students (Every Student Succeeds Act, 2015). In 1968, the ESEA expanded to include programs for migrant children, but caveats applied in 1970 ensured that federal funds would supplement the amount states were paying, not supplanting the costs (Kangas, 2021; Klein, 2015; White & Mavrogordato, 2019). President Bill Clinton renewed the ESEA through the Improving America's Schools Act in 1994, requiring schools to implement large-scale assessments for ELs at the district, state, and federal levels (Klein, 2015; Thurlow & Kopriva, 2015).

The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act expanded the testing requirements of the ESEA and demanded growth for all children, regardless of race, income, disability, or native language (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.; White & Mavrogordato, 2019). NCLB helped expose achievement gaps for students who had been historically underserved in public schools (Menken, 2010; U.S. Department of Education, n.d.; White & Mavrogordato, 2019*).* Standardizing the education goals for all students proved challenging for schools to implement successfully, so policymakers in the Obama administration opted for the creation of a new initiative to replace NCLB (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.).

President Obama signed the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) in 2015 and replaced NCLB (Karvonen et al., 2021; White & Mavrogordato, 2019). ESSA focuses on preparing

students for college and career success beyond high school and increasing families' access to high-quality preschools (Uysal, 2022; White & Mavrogordato, 2019). ESSA also ensured the availability of vital information regarding statewide assessments for educators, families, and students (Karvonen et al., 2021; White & Mavrogordato, 2019). Under ESSA mandates, schools that are consistently low-performing in regard to student achievement are subject to accountability measures that will encourage positive changes that will develop college and career readiness (Malin et al., 2017; U.S. Department of Education, n.d.).

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical underpinnings of this study follow the language interdependence theory created in 1979 by James Cummins, a renowned researcher of ELs' academic and linguistic development (Cummins, 1979a, 1979b, 1980, 1981, 2021). This theory established the reliance of all language functions, including acquired as well as native, on one central language core processing center that supports all communicative skills (Cummins, 1979a, 1979b, 1980, 1981,1999, 2021; Harsch, 2017; Otto & Cortina-Perez, 2023). Cummins's work is based on Piaget's theory that language abilities are determined by cognitive structures and are shaped by underlying logic and levels of operation (Bain, 1975; Ben-Zeev, 1972). In alignment with the theory of language interdependence is the necessity for students acquiring a second language (L2) to receive instruction that addresses cognitive skills and academic content through a balance of both native (L1) and learned languages until age-appropriate cognitive academic and language skills have been developed in the acquired language (Cummins, 1979a, 1979b, 1980, 1981, 1999, 2021; Sierens et al., 2019). Research supports the consistently significant relationship between L1 and L2 proficiency (Cummins, 1979a, 1979b, 2021; Daller & Ongun, 2018; National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine [NASEM], 2017; Relyea & Amendum,

2020). A child's L1 competence at the time of their initial exposure to L2 will mediate the competence level of L2 they might attain (Cummins, 1979a, 1981, 2000, 2001, 2021). Children with solid foundations of cognitive and academic functions in their L1 are in stronger positions to develop L2 proficiency than children with low L1 academic and cognitive proficiency (Cummins, 1981, 2021; Daller & Ongun, 2018).

The language interdependence theory opposed previous beliefs that individual language systems were formed for each native or acquired language and that the development of one could only be achieved at the expense of the other (Cummins, 1980; Downing, 1978; Kilpi-Jakonen & Alisaari, 2022; Macnamara, 1966; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 1953). The most commonly accepted idea of linguistic mismatch claimed that the disparity between the combination of a native language spoken at home and a different acquired language is spoken at school impeded reading and academic skill development (Cummins, 1979b, 2011; Downing, 1978; Kilpi-Jakonen & Alisaari, 2022). These beliefs, known as separate underlying language proficiency (SUP), directed learning institutions to instruct ELs using English-only techniques (Cummins, 1981, 2021). Cummins' framework established a common underlying language proficiency system that relies on a shared processing system that facilitates cognitive and metalinguistic abilities as well as conceptual and linguistic knowledge for L1 and L2 (Cummins, 1979a, 1980,1981, 2021; Daller & Ongun, 2018; Relyea & Amendum, 2020; Sierens et al., 2019).

Cummins identified the necessity of basic interpersonal communicative skills (BICS) and cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) development for students acquiring a language (Cummins, 1979a, 1979b, 1981, 1999, 2008, 2021; Sibanda, 2017). Both BICS and CALP are necessitated through social interaction, and ELs' L2 CALP is interdependent on their L1 CALP

(Cummins, 1999, 2008; Sibanda, 2017). Optimal language development happens when ELs are able to maximize their literacy and academic content by utilizing their L1 and L2, when background knowledge, language, and culture are engaged in learning, and when they are provided with sociocultural validation (Cummins, 2001, 2021).

When placed in school settings where English is the predominant language of instruction, ELs' lack of English proficiency may be incorrectly interpreted as the presence of a learning disability when the reality is that ELs lack the culturally responsive instruction to link their L1 with L2 CALP (Cummins, 1979b, 1999, 2021; Sibanda, 2017). Academic difficulties during L2 acquisition should be examined for sociocultural factors and instructional variables instead of being accredited to linguistic factors or a lack of intellectual abilities (Cummins, 1979b, 1980). Societal factors, including unintentional power dynamics between diverse populations, can prevent students from properly acquiring L2 by lowering expectations, withholding interventions, or reducing the status of a child's L1 and discouraging them from continuing to develop it (Cummins, 1979b, 1980, 2021). School program factors, such as submersion or immersion models, must also be considered when evaluating student L2 gains (Cummins, 1979b, 1980, 1983, 2021). Students in submersion programs, a typical setting for ELs in U.S. public schools, receive instruction solely in L2 in environments where they are intermixed with and compared to English-speaking students who are academically engaged in a setting based on their L1 (Cummins, 1979b, 1980, 1983, 2021). The contrast of ELs trying to catch up to the proficiency level of English-speaking students engaging in their L1 leads to discrepancies mistaken for intellectual disabilities (Cummins, 1979b, 1983).

Cummins' research disproves misguided beliefs that the use of L1 during school or at home prevents or impedes student attempts to develop L2 proficiency, a theory supported by

schools that utilize submersion models of bilingual education (Cummins, 1979a, 2021; NASEM, 2017). Instead, combinations of L1 and L2, such as translanguaging- the ability of multilingual students to communicate by intermixing known languages- are a way to optimize scaffolding between L1 and L2 to lead to greater cognitive and academic proficiency in both languages (Cummins, 2021; Proctor et al., 2017; Przymus & Alvarado, 2019; Silva & Kucer, 2016). School programs must be geared toward fulfilling individual ELs' needs, especially for ELs of low socioeconomic status, who depend more on the school to develop prerequisite literacy skills (Cummins, 1979b, 1981, 2021). Educators can address the unique needs of their ELs by utilizing students' L1 and L2 by maximizing exposure to literacy, engaging their multilingual repertoires and background experiences, using the cultural knowledge and abilities they bring to school, and empowering them through affirmation and expansion of their identities (Cummins, 1979b, 2011, 2021).

ELs' motivation to learn L2 is tied to their attitude toward L2 speakers (Cummins, 1979a, 1979b, 1981, 2011). Students who wish to fit in with their L2 peers have high motivation levels (Cummins, 1979b, 1981). Alternatively, students who resent the L2 culture will resist developing their L2 skills, while students who feel ashamed of their L1 will lose motivation to use and develop their L1 further (Cummins, 1979b, 1981, 2021). Culturally responsive teaching strategies help overcome barriers that keep ELs from developing their L2 and encourage multilingual students to embrace their L1 to provide the optimal development of L2 (Cummins, 1979b, 1980, 1981, 1983, 2011, 2021).

Research Questions

The intent of this study was to determine the self-efficacy levels of rural general educators when implementing culturally responsive instruction and to identify the culturally

responsive strategies currently being used in rural general education classrooms. ELs face overrepresentation in special education from the intermediate grades throughout high school (T. Gonzalez et al., 2021; Kangas & Schissel, 2021; Motamedi et al., 2016; Umansky et al., 2017; Yamasaki & Luk, 2018). U.S. public schools need prepared teachers to address their students' culturally diverse needs (Auslander, 2018; Hoover et al., 2019; Orosco & Abdulrahim, 2017; S. Park, 2019). Disproportionality occurs when teachers lack the knowledge to address their ELs' culturally diverse needs and the dearth of culturally responsive instructional techniques in their classrooms (Arias & Friberg, 2017; Motamedi et al., 2016; Umansky et al., 2017; Yamasaki & Luk, 2018). The following research questions guide this mixed methods study:

RQ1: What culturally responsive instructional techniques are being used in rural general education classrooms?

RQ2: How confident are general educators from rural schools in their ability to provide culturally responsive instruction for students who are English learners?

Description of Terms

Defining the useful terms and working language for proposed research projects is an essential step in a research study. Readers need a clear understanding of terms that are outside of the common language to fully understand the research. Precision in the language and terms used enhances accuracy when communicating the findings and ideas of a research study (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The following terms and definitions were used operationally throughout this study:

Achievement gap. Statistically significant differences between groups of students are known as achievement gaps. Achievement gaps are usually explored for different races, ethnicities, and genders (NCES, 2019).

Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills (BICS). Basic interpersonal communicative skills (BICS) are the skills that are developed for conversational fluency. ELs acquire BICS more rapidly than academic language, taking approximately one to three years to develop (Cummins, 1999; Mohamed, 2023).

Bilingualism. Bilingualism is the ability of culturally and linguistically diverse students to develop a language in addition to their native language (Przymus & Alvarado, 2019). Bilingualism can be a support tool for developing English by using a student's native language as scaffolding for English acquisition in preparation for mainstream content courses (Marsh, 2018).

Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP). Cognitive academic language proficiency is the development of academic literacy and vocabulary knowledge through oral and written skills. Interpersonal communicative skills are more cognitively demanding than basic skills and take five to ten years to develop (Cummins, 1999; Mohamed, 2023).

Co-teaching. Co-teaching is an increasingly common practice where two or more educators work together in a single classroom to provide specialized instruction for students with diverse or special needs (Crary, 2023; Friend, 2015).

Culturally responsive. Culturally responsive means diverse populations are engaged through their unique backgrounds, cultural knowledge, prior experiences, and integrated knowledge specific to their home and community (Cooper, 2023).

Culturally responsive instruction. Culturally responsive instruction draws on ethnically diverse students' prior experiences, cultural knowledge, unique backgrounds, and frames of reference to create relevant, effective learning encounters (Gay, 2018). Using culturally

responsive instruction leads to higher persistence, attendance, and positive learning outcomes for ELs (Muniz, 2019).

English learner (EL). An English learner, or EL, is any individual who has difficulty speaking, reading, writing, or understanding the English language and who lives in a place where English is the dominant language and proficient acquisition is necessary to participate in society fully. ELs traditionally are not born in the United States, speak a native language other than English, or come from an environment where English is not the dominant language or a non-English language significantly impacts their ability to speak proficient English (NCES, 2022a).

English as a Second Language (ESL): English as a Second Language (ESL) is a common model for teaching English to ELs. ESL programs are typically slower-paced than general education classrooms, so they can focus on acquisition development but lack English-proficient peers (Marsh, 2018).

Intellectual disability. Intellectual disability is a cognitive disorder that significantly limits intellectual and adaptive functions in conceptual, social, and practical skills while inhibiting motor skills and spatial-temporal orientation (Schalock et al., 2021).

L1. A student's native or first learned language is their L1. (Cummins, 1979a, 1999; Nadzir & Halim, 2022).

L2. When a student acquires a second language, the acquired language is known as their L2 (Cummins, 1979a, 1999; Nadzir & Halim, 2022).

Linguistic Interdependence. ELs' L1 and L2 academic skills are manifestations of a common underlying proficiency, thus establishing the interdependence between L1 and L2 CALP. As instruction in L1 increases L1 proficiency, L2 proficiency will develop if ELs are

motivated to learn and given adequate exposure to their L2 (Cummins, 1983; Nadzir & Halim, 2022).

Long-term English Learner (LTEL). Students identified as English learners who have received EL services for five years or more are known as long-term English learners or LTELs. LTELs are often viewed as academically and linguistically deficient, a stigma that influences their limited opportunities to engage in higher levels of learning and college and career readiness courses (Kangas & Schissel, 2021).

Multi-tiered System of Supports (MTSS). Multi-tiered system of supports focuses on providing equitable services and resources for every student in response to instruction and intervention. MTSS strategically analyses data to direct high-quality instruction and intervention and to promote collaboration for learner success (Idaho Department of Education, 2021).

Newcomer. Newcomer ELs are immigrant students who recently arrived in the United States (Umansky et al., 2020). Newcomers often have histories of trauma and difficulties relating to their immigration, causing them to have unique social-emotional needs in addition to cultural and linguistic needs upon entering U.S. schools (Umansky et al., 2020).

Overidentification. Overidentification is a type of disproportional representation that occurs when more students from a particular subgroup are identified for special education services when fewer students genuinely need services. Overidentification affects educational opportunities, especially in secondary grades (Umansky et al., 2017).

Reclassification. As ELs progress through EL services, they are assessed for criteria that signify appropriate English language acquisition. The process of transitioning from an English learner to one who is proficient in English is known as reclassification (K. D. Thompson, 2017).

Reclassified ELs. Reclassified ELs are ELs who receive services until they are determined to be proficient. Reclassified ELs receive mainstream services in general education classrooms with no language supports, where they are monitored for two years before achieving long-term proficiency status and removed from monitoring (Reyes & Hwang, 2019).

Self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is the belief a person has in their ability to correctly and effectively use acquired skills and knowledge (Siwatu et al., 2023).

Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL). Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) are experts who serve as the primary instructors in ESL classrooms. ESL teachers bear most of the responsibility for ELs' academic and language development, and they provide support to general educators (Marsh, 2018).

Translanguaging. Students acquiring a language do not have separate language systems for understanding; instead, they operate from a single language system made up of their native language and any acquired languages. Translanguaging is using students' full linguistic repertoire when communicating, which means students may combine components of more than one language when expressing themselves. Translanguaging provides a more accurate depiction of students' knowledge and abilities than monolingual assessments (Przymus & Alvarado, 2019).

Underidentification. Underidentification is a disproportional representation where fewer students from a particular subgroup are identified to receive special education services when more students from that subgroup are in need of special education services. Underidentification limits students' access to critical educational supports (Umansky et al., 2017).

Significance of the Study

The population of English learners in the United States has been steadily increasing for the past several years and is projected to continue growing, but the quality of their education needs improvement (Becker & Deris, 2019; Liu et al., 2017; Reyes & Domina, 2019; Umansky et al., 2020). Additional obstacles to providing adequate services for ELs exist in rural schools where funding is limited, professional development opportunities are limited, and teacher recruitment and retention remain a struggle (Hoover & Erickson, 2015; Hoover et al., 2015; Hoover & Soltero-Gonzalez, 2018; Hoover et al., 2020; Newell & Looser, 2017). With the existing achievement gap between ELs and non-ELs, there is a need for further research that examines and establishes the use of culturally responsive instruction in rural general education classrooms (Hoover et al., 2020; Marsh, 2018; Nutta et al., 2020; Spencer & Wagner, 2017; Waluyo & Panmei, 2021).

Among ESL and bilingual programs across the U.S., a closer look at teacher competency and skill level is warranted. A myriad of disadvantages for ELs have been noted, including disproportionate representation in special education (Barrio, 2017; Fish, 2019; Kangas, 2014; Kangas & Cook, 2020; Karvonen et al., 2021; Morgan et al., 2015; Sinclair et al., 2018; Swanson et al., 2021; Umansky et al., 2017). Research shows that disproportionate representation in special education leads to defunct reclassification policies and limited opportunities for college and career readiness for ELs (Chin, 2021; Kangas & Schissel, 2021; Schissel & Kangas, 2018; K. D. Thompson, 2017). When educators are properly trained in the use of culturally responsive instruction, the accuracy of appropriate services for ELs increases, and more optimal learning outcomes are achieved (Gay, 2018; Przymus & Alvarado, 2019). The failure of educators to provide culturally responsive instruction for ELs can negatively affect ELs' learning experiences

by lowering the expected learning outcomes, initiating disciplinary actions for culturally relevant behaviors viewed as inappropriate when not viewed through a cultural lens, and misidentifying students for special education services (Cruz et al., 2019; Siwatu et al., 2016, 2017).

The increasing demand for college and career-ready students by the end of high school necessitates a shift in the quality of education ELs currently receive in school (Geide-Stevenson, 2018; Johnson, 2020; Kanno, 2018; Malo-Juvera et al., 2018; Mendoza, 2019). Culturally responsive instruction involves providing scaffolding and supports for students, building on their unique cultural knowledge, and promoting equality through intentional critical consciousness of relational power (Cruz et al., 2019; Gay, 2010; Mensah, 2021). Teachers who believe in the importance of culturally responsive instruction and who possess high levels of self-efficacy enhance the academic and cognitive outcomes of their EL students (Gay, 2015; Malo-Juvera et al., 2018; Siwatu et al., 2016). In contrast, teachers with low self-efficacy and limited beliefs regarding culturally responsive instruction can negatively influence EL academic and cognitive outcomes (Gay, 2015; Karatas, 2020; Siwatu et al., 2016). Deficiencies in the implementation of culturally responsive instruction exist in rural schools and contribute to the achievement gap between ELs and non-ELs (Cummins, 2021; Debnam et al., 2023; Gay, 2015; Hoover & Soltero-Gonzalez, 2018; Hoover et al., 2020; Malo-Juvera et al., 2018).

Investigating the current practices of rural educators will contribute to professional knowledge regarding culturally responsive instruction and the quality of education for ELs in rural schools. Policymakers and state education departments will benefit from this study by recognizing areas in need of service and resource allocation. Appropriate professional development resources and Title III funds may be redirected to improve schools in currently overlooked locales. District leaders, administrators, and educators will benefit from this study by

gaining an awareness of the current state of EL education, which will positively impact the learning outcomes for ELs by enhancing their educational opportunities. School and district leaders will benefit by facilitating professional development that will lead to positive learning outcomes for EL students, a population that commonly underperforms academically. Shifting the focus of education stakeholders toward the current state of EL education will significantly impact teacher preparation programs and professional development courses. The results will lead to more accurate determinations of service allocations and more appropriate supports in general education settings for ELs. This study will set the stage for future studies regarding the knowledge of rural educators when implementing intentional culturally responsive teaching.

Overview of Research Methods

This study used a mixed methods sequential explanatory design to measure the ability of general educators in rural schools to deliver culturally responsive instruction to English learners and determine the needs that may exist for increasing teacher self-efficacy. Mixed method approaches utilize quantitative and qualitative data to offset each other's weaknesses and develop a robust research study (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Ivankova et al., 2006; L. A. Thompson, 2020). Sequential explanatory designs are a popular mixed-method research method (Almeida, 2018; Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Ivankova et al., 2006). Single researchers find sequential explanatory research methods preferable to other methods because data collection is split into two manageable phases (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Quantitative data is collected in the first phase and then analyzed in preparation for the second phase, the qualitative portion of data collection (Almeida, 2018; Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Ivankova et al., 2006).

To effectively answer the proposed research questions of this mixed methods sequential explanatory study, quantitative data were collected using the valid and reliable Culturally

Responsive Instruction Self-Efficacy (CRTSE) Scale using the 41-question Likert-type scores to produce descriptive statistics from the responses of 38 rural educators. Four participants were selected from the pool of survey participants who had indicated on the survey that they were willing to participate in a post-survey virtual interview. Purposeful sampling was used to select two participants with high levels of culturally responsive self-efficacy and two with low levels of self-efficacy as determined by a median split. Semi-structured interviews were held by electronic video conference, as they provided depth and background to self-efficacy survey responses (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Creswell & Guetterman, 2018; Marshall et al., 2022).

Requests for research study participants were posted on rural educator group pages on Facebook. The use of social media platforms for research participant recruitment can link populations with similar characteristics, such as a shared status of rural educators, in a reasonable amount of time (Bhutta, 2012; Dusek et al., 2015). Outreach through Facebook also yields higher response rates than traditional data collection methods (Dusek et al., 2015; Trungtreechart, 2022). Requests included an electronic CRTSE survey link with an embedded informed consent form. The survey link was open until January 2024. Four respondents were selected for interviews after the survey window ended, and interviews were conducted in January of 2024. Data were analyzed, and results were disseminated for the dissertation between January and March 2024.

Conclusion

Chapter I provides an overview of the core components of the study. The growing number of ELs in the United States calls for more teachers prepared to provide culturally responsive instruction to meet their diverse needs (Becker & Deris, 2019; Liu et al., 2017; Reyes & Domina, 2019; Umansky et al., 2020). The achievement gap between ELs and non-ELs is

widening, proving a significant need for instruction that meets their diverse needs (Debnam et al., 2023; Hoover et al., 2020; Marsh, 2018; Nutta et al., 2020; Waluyo & Panmei, 2021). Despite the challenges rural schools face regarding limited funding, professional development, and access to highly qualified personnel, culturally diverse populations in rural areas are increasing, which calls for more teachers with culturally responsive expertise in rural areas (Hoover & Soltero-Gonzalez, 2018; Hoover et al., 2020; Newell & Looser, 2017).

Chapter II will present a review of current research on the unique needs of ELs in U.S. public schools, the challenges faced by rural school districts, and the importance of high teacher self-efficacy when instructing diverse populations. Chapter III will describe the methodology, research design, and procedures used to carry out this research study. Chapter IV details how the data was analyzed and provides a written and graphic summary of the results. Chapter V is an interpretation and discussion of the results as they relate to the existing body of research relevant to the quality of culturally responsive instruction ELs receive in rural schools.

Chapter II: Review of Literature

Among the challenges that exist in the current educational landscape are the state of services, learning tracks, and policies that guide the decision-making processes for students who are English learners (Carlson & Knowles, 2016; Johnson, 2020; Kanno, 2018; Mendoza, 2019; Umansky et al., 2020; Uysal, 2022; White & Mavrogordato, 2019). Culturally responsive instructional strategies have been recognized by researchers as critical to providing educational experiences that incorporate the diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds of ELs through systematic collaboration between educators at all levels, both within and beyond the general education classroom (Cavazos et al., 2018; Griner & Stewart, 2013; Hadjioannou et al., 2016; Hoover et al., 2015; Hoover & Soltero-Gonzalez, 2018; Perry, 2022; Robertson et al., 2017; Wilcox et al., 2017). Educators' development of effective culturally responsive instructional strategies for ELs will lead to informed decision-making at the state, district, and school levels while also addressing the issues of misidentifying ELs for special education services and directing them toward exclusionary learning tracks (Auslander, 2018; Bacon, 2018; Chin, 2021; Civitillo et al., 2019; Hoover et al., 2019, 2020; Jozwik et al., 2020; Kangas, 2014; Motamedi et al., 2016; Orosco & Abdulrahim, 2017; Silva & Kucer, 2016; Vintan & Gallagher, 2019).

While most educators have some degree of awareness regarding school or district ESL programs, common misconceptions exist concerning who should shoulder the responsibility for closing the achievement gap between ELs and non-ELs (Becker & Deris, 2019; Orosco & Abdulrahim, 2017; Villavicencio et al., 2021; Von Esch, 2018). Barriers to culturally responsive education for ELs are further compounded in rural school districts where limited resources, funding, and teacher retention often prevent ELs from receiving a full range of necessary support (Hoover & Erickson, 2015; Hoover et al., 2015; Hoover & Soltero-Gonzalez, 2018; Hoover et

al., 2020; Newell & Looser, 2017). Teachers need a comprehensive understanding of culturally responsive teaching strategies to use with ELs placed in their general education classrooms for any duration of the school day (Auslander, 2018; Bacon, 2018; Hoover et al., 2019, 2020; Jozwik et al., 2020; Motamedi et al., 2016; Orosco & Abdulrahim, 2017; Vintan & Gallagher, 2019).

Collaborative systems of instruction and support must be established and supported by school and district leaders as all educators share the responsibility for ensuring high-quality learning experiences and outcomes for ELs (Auslander, 2018; Babinski et al., 2018; Hoover et al., 2019; Jozwik et al., 2020; Kangas, 2017b; Perry, 2022; Villavicencio et al., 2021). This calls for a restructured focus on professional development practices to increase teacher capacity and efficacy, allowing educators to make informed decisions regarding EL intervention needs, special education referrals, and resource allocation (Arias & Friberg, 2017; Babinski et al., 2018; Cavazos et al., 2018; Hadjioannou et al., 2016; Hoover et al., 2020; Kangas, 2014; Vintan & Gallagher, 2019; Von Esch, 2018). By applying research-based instructional techniques to attune to their unique cultural and linguistic needs, ELs can avoid exclusionary learning tracks that prevent them from accessing valuable content and coursework that promotes their college and career readiness (Carlson & Knowles, 2016; Johnson, 2020; Kangas & Cook, 2020; Kanno, 2018; Mendoza, 2019).

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical underpinnings of this study follow James Cummins, a researcher dedicated to identifying the learning structures and skills necessary for ELs' academic and linguistic development, and his theory of linguistic interdependence (Cummins, 1979a, 1979b, 1980, 1981, 2021). The theory of linguistic interdependence asserts that the human brain has a single cognitive academic language processing center for all language functions, and all basic

communicative skills for any language use this processing center as a basis for development (Cummins, 1979a, 1979b, 1980, 1981, 1983, 1999, 2021). Linguistic foundations are housed in this shared language development area, allowing for the transfer of literacy-related knowledge and content between a person's native language (L1) and an acquired language (L2) (Cummins, 1979a, 1979b, 1980, 2021; Proctor et al., 2017; Sibanda, 2017).

Higher levels of L1 proficiency at the time a child begins to develop L2 indicate greater success for L2 development (Cummins, 1981, 2000, 2001, 2021). Piaget's theory that language abilities are determined by cognitive structures and shaped by underlying logic and levels of operation provides the foundation for Cummins's work (Bain, 1975; Ben-Zeev, 1972). Cummins also establishes the separate entities of basic interpersonal skills (BICS) and cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) (Cummins, 1979a, 1979b, 1980, 1999, 2008, 2021). The linguistic interdependence theory also pairs with the belief that ELs with a high threshold of L1 cognitive and linguistic proficiency will experience academic advantages when developing L2 (Cummins, 1981, 2000, 2001, 2021; Daller & Ongun, 2018).

BICS and CALP

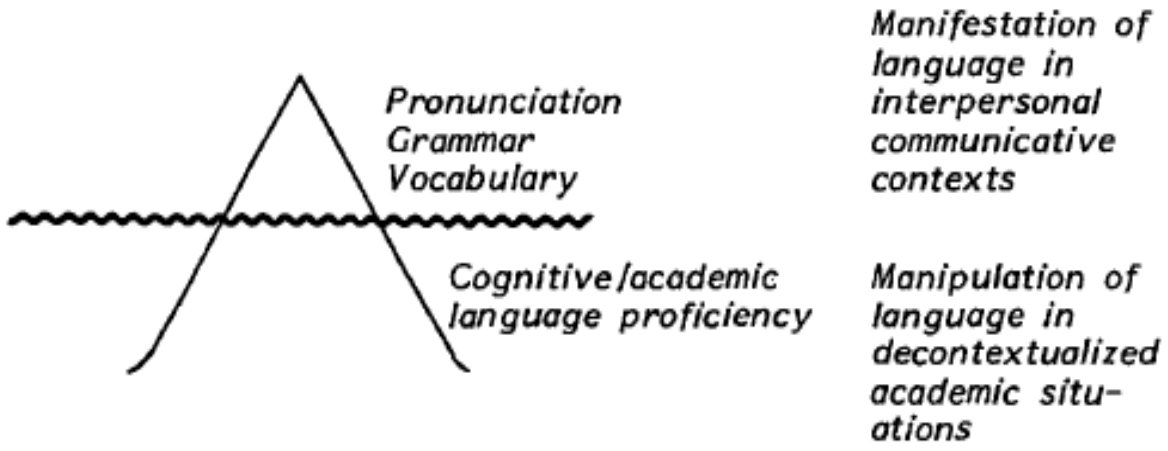
Many ELs are assessed or measured in school according to their ability to engage in L2 conversations with their grade-level peers fluently, but this conversational fluency is only a partial manifestation of their language proficiency (Cummins, 1979a, 1999, 2021). BICS are surface-level skills, such as pronunciation, oral fluency, accents, phonology, and listening comprehension skills, that are easy to observe and easier to develop than cognitive academic language (Cummins, 1979a, 1980, 2008, 2021; Silva & Kucer, 2016). All children, except those with severe intellectual impairments, develop BICS in their first language as they regularly interact through day-to-day communications that often involve face-to-face contexts such as

gestures, body language, and visual cues (Cummins, 1980, 1981, 2008, 2021). L2 BICS can be developed in two to five years of exposure before these skills plateau (Cummins, 1979a, 1980, 1999, 2021).

Children also possess a different skillset composed of cognitive academic language proficiencies (CALP), which are separate from interpersonal language skills and involve higher-order thinking, such as vocabulary development, knowledge of complex syntax, comprehension, transforming knowledge, and utilizing information (Cummins, 1979a, 1980, 1981, 1999, 2021; Daller & Ongun, 2018). Although L2 CALP can be acquired in five to ten years, it has the ability to grow continuously throughout an EL's lifetime (Cummins, 1979a, 1980, 2021). CALP is a register of necessary content-specific low-frequency vocabulary students acquire as they progress through grade levels and includes vocabulary words that would not be used in most regular social contexts (Cummins, 1980, 1981, 2000, 2008, 2021). As shown in Figure 1, BICS represent the tip of the language iceberg because they are surface-level and easily viewed, while CALP provides the necessary, broad foundation to BICS but is not as visible (Cummins, 1979a, 1979b, 1980, 1981, 1999, 2021; Downing, 1978; Macnamara, 1966).

Figure 1

The Iceberg Representation of BICS and CALP



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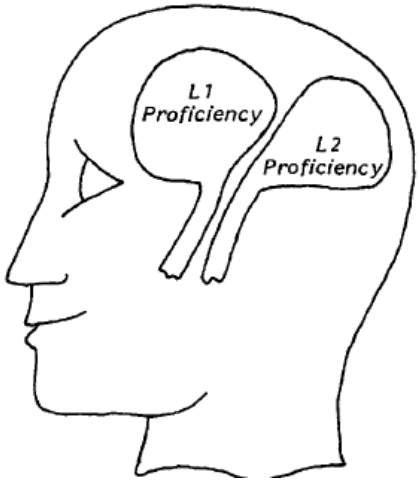
Interdependence of L1 and L2

In 1976, Tove Skutnabb-Kangas and Pertti Toukomaa prepared a UNESCO report on a study they performed to investigate the performance of Finnish children in third grade who were learning Swedish after migrating to Sweden (Cummins, 2021; Skutnabb-Kangas & Toukomaa, 1976). The results of this study revealed that students with proficient conversation skills in Swedish (L2) demonstrated lower than grade-level equivalent proficiency on academic language assessments. However, a correlation evolved, showing that students with high L1 proficiency had developed higher levels of L2 proficiency (Cummins, 2021; Skutnabb-Kangas & Toukomaa, 1976). This study prompted further research to establish the differences between BICS and CALP and decipher the relationship between L1 and L2 proficiency (Cummins, 1980, 2021).

Common theories of bilingual learning believed that L1 and L2 were not related and that L1 exposure would hinder the acquisition of L2 academic development (Cummins, 1979b, 1980; Downing, 1978; Macnamara, 1966; UNESCO, 1953). Bilingual education was vehemently opposed in the 1970s and 1980s due to the belief that the brain held separate underlying proficiencies for languages and that maximum exposure was necessary to develop L2 proficiency, leaving no room for L1 proficiency or exposure (Cummins, 1980, 1981, 2011, 2021). This misconception about language development prompted many schools to discourage students and families from speaking in their native tongue at home (Cioe-Pena, 2020; Cummins, 1980, 2021; Prevoo et al., 2015). Figure 2 is a visual representation of the Separate Underlying Proficiency model.

Figure 2

Separate Underlying Language Proficiency



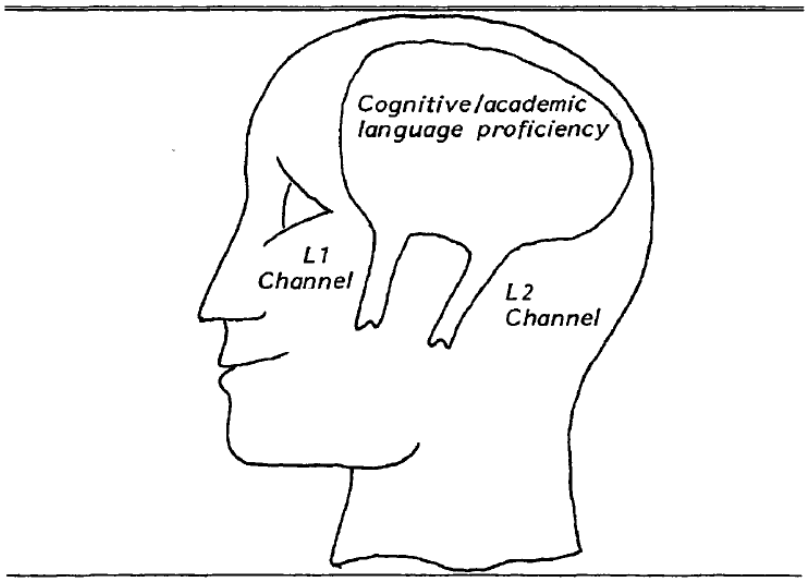
Note. From Cummins (1980, p. 91). Copyright 1980 by Georgetown University Press. Reprinted with permission. See Appendix G.

Research establishing the consistent positive correlation between L1 and L2 posits the existence of a single language center where native and acquired language knowledge is stored,

and the input of L1 or L2 can be transferred to strengthen the foundational skills of both languages (Cummins, 1979a, 1980, 2021; Daller & Ongun, 2018; NASEM, 2017; Proctor et al., 2017; Relyea & Amendum, 2020; Sibanda, 2017). Figure 3 depicts the Common Underlying Language Proficiency theory by visualizing separate input channels for L1 and L2 but one source area for all CALP (Cummins, 1980).

Figure 3

Common Underlying Language Proficiency



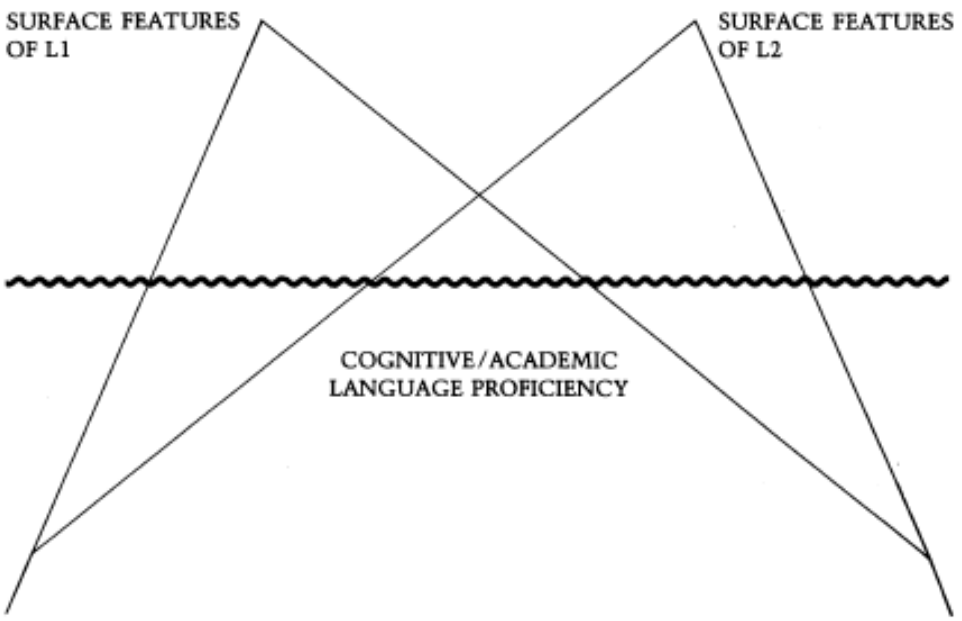
Note. From Cummins (1980, p. 95). Copyright 1980 by Georgetown University Press. Reprinted with permission. See Appendix G.

Linguistic interdependence asserts the critical and unavoidable overlap of an EL's first and acquired language CALP as a basis for L1 and L2 proficiency (Cummins, 1979a, 1979b, 1980, 1981, 1999, 2021; Daller & Ongun, 2018). ELs' L1 and L2 academic speaking and writing abilities are manifestations of their CALP interdependence, also known as the Common Underlying Proficiency (CUP) model (Cummins, 1979a, 1980, 1983, 2021). This means that when ELs receive instruction in their L1, they experience an increase in their L1 skills that will

transfer to their acquired language proficiency as they are adequately exposed to their L2 and maintain a motivation to learn (Cummins, 1979a, 1980, 1981, 1983, 2000, 2001, 2021; Daller & Ongun, 2018; NASEM, 2017; Relyea & Amendum, 2020). The transfer between languages is not limited to L1 inputs, so CALP development in L2 can also positively affect L1 CALP (Cummins, 1980, 1981, 2021). Because of the interdependent nature of L1 and L2, beliefs that academic instruction should be limited to L2 are unfounded and can, in fact, hinder L2 development (Cummins, 1979b, 1981, 2000, 2001, 2011; Daller & Ongun, 2018). Furthermore, practices that limit the L1 of ELs communicate the belief that languages other than English have a lower status and will demotivate ELs' motivation to continue using and developing their L1 (Cummins, 2000, 2021). Figure 4 depicts the interdependent nature of language abilities as an iceberg, with the easily observable BICS traits for each language existing as surface-level language features supported by the more extensive and interconnected system of L1 and L2 CALP (Cummins, 1980, 1981, 2021).

Figure 4

The Dual-Iceberg Representation of Common Underlying Language Proficiency



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There are many implications of the linguistic interdependence theory. Despite what some educators and policymakers believe, the strong promotion of ELs' L1 reading and writing skills in the primary grades in place of English language arts has no adverse effects on their development of L2 CALP as long as they still have adequate exposure to their L2 (Cummins, 1979a, 1980, 2000; Daller & Ongun, 2018; NASEM, 2017). By keeping the interdependent relationship of L1 and L2 CALP at the forefront of ESL decision-making processes, policies and interventions can be structured to address EL needs by including cognitively challenging instruction, integrated content, and opportunities to engage in projects that investigate the use, practices, and assumptions of their L1 and L2 (Cummins, 1979a, 1999, 2000; Wanzek et al.,

2016). Effective culturally responsive instruction will engage the background knowledge and culture of diverse learners, maximize literacy and academic content in ELs' L1 and L2, and provide sociocultural validation (Cummins, 2001, 2021). Culturally responsive teaching practices are necessary for embracing the knowledge and experiences of ELs and helping them make the cognitive and academic growth necessary to become fully proficient English speakers (Cummins, 1979a, 1979b, 1980, 1981, 1983, 1999).

Challenges for English Learners

Many ELs remain at academic risk throughout their tenure in K-12 schools (Mancilla-Martinez & Lesaux, 2017; Office of English Language Acquisition, 2017). Several roadblocks stand in the way of providing fluid, consistent services for ELs, including barriers that prevent the delivery of culturally responsive instruction and impede the accurate identification of ELs with disabilities (Becker & Deris, 2019; Hoover et al., 2015; Hoover & Soltero-Gonzalez, 2018; Jozwik & Douglas, 2017; Karvonen & Clark, 2019; Karvonen et al., 2021; Ortiz et al., 2011; Yamasaki & Luk, 2018). One of the most glaring setbacks is the lack of teacher capacity for English acquisition instruction (Auslander, 2018; Becker & Deris, 2019; Civitillo et al., 2019; Cummins, 1979a, 1979b, 1980, 1981; Hoover et al., 2019; Kangas, 2018; Migliarini & Stinson, 2020; Motamedi et al., 2016; S. Park, 2019; Silva & Kucer, 2016; Yamasaki & Luk, 2018). Educators face challenges identifying ELs' needs and academic levels with disabilities because many standardized assessments require proficiency in the English language (Christensen et al., 2018; Cummins, 2021; Kangas, 2017a; Liu et al., 2017; Marinova-Todd et al., 2016; Uysal, 2022). In addition, EL specialists, special education teachers, and general education teachers need opportunities to collaborate (Arias & Friberg, 2017; Babinski et al., 2018; Cavazos et al., 2018; Friend, 2015; Jozwik et al., 2020; Kangas, 2018; Perry, 2022; Villavicencio et al., 2021;

Vintan & Gallagher, 2019; Wilcox et al., 2017). Limited funding and resources in schools result in a lack of trained specialists and further limit the ability to add instructional support (Echazarra & Radinger, 2019; Hoover et al., 2020; Kangas, 2017a; Lavalley, 2018; Uysal, 2022). In many instances, general education teachers and EL specialists are not provided with appropriate culturally responsive curriculum and supports, which lessens their ability to teach ELs (Fish, 2019; S. Park, 2019; Umansky et al., 2020).

Educators realize that many ELs lack access to appropriate language services, but they respond neutrally to policies preventing dual services or appropriate interventions (T. Gonzalez et al., 2021; Kangas, 2017b, 2017a, 2018; Marinova-Todd et al., 2016; S. Park, 2019). The danger in remaining neutral regarding EL education is that educators' beliefs significantly influence their engagement (or disengagement) with policy (Kangas, 2017b, 2018). The deficiencies for ELs with disabilities in the U.S. educational system do not allow for proper identification or services for ELs with disabilities when educators cannot ensure the application of appropriate culturally responsive interventions to resolutely prove that struggling ELs were provided the opportunity to learn English (Hoover et al., 2020; Kangas, 2014; S. Park, 2019; Sinclair et al., 2018; Wilcox et al., 2017). Inconsistent referral criteria for younger learners prevent them from being referred for special education services (Hoover & Erickson, 2015; Hoover & Soltero-Gonzalez, 2018; Ortiz et al., 2011; S. Park, 2019).

EL students are frequently pulled out of their general education classrooms during content area instruction to focus on language and reading acquisition despite deficiencies in academic content skills (Babinski et al., 2018; Hwang & Duke, 2020; Kangas, 2017a; Swanson et al., 2021; Vintan & Gallagher, 2019). Doing so deprives them of opportunities to develop their lack of comprehension skills, yet this practice becomes even more prevalent with ELs in

intermediate and secondary grades (Hwang & Duke, 2020; Kangas, 2017a; Swanson et al., 2021; Vintan & Gallagher, 2019). In addition to struggling with reading skills such as fluency, comprehension, and spelling, ELs struggle in math content areas such as computation and problem-solving (Haager & Osipova, 2017; Swanson et al., 2021; K. J. Williams & Vaughn, 2020).

ELs are less likely to be referred for special education services before third grade, even if they show significant phonological deficits or processing deficiencies, resulting in the underrepresentation of ELs in special education in the primary grades (Swanson et al., 2021; Umansky et al., 2017; Yamasaki & Luk, 2018). Schools without adequate services for ELs in the primary grades prevent ELs from being identified as at-risk until the intermediate grades, where they are already underperforming compared to non-ELs their age (Becker & Deris, 2019; Cummins, 1980). Struggling ELs in grades K-3 continue to progress without being referred to special education because younger EL students lack the English proficiency needed to complete diagnostic assessments (T. Gonzalez et al., 2021; Yamasaki & Luk, 2018). Stronger emphasis should be placed on establishing basic reading skills in the primary grades so ELs and ELs with disabilities do not miss out on content-rich comprehension development once they reach the intermediate and secondary grades (Becker & Deris, 2019; Hwang & Duke, 2020; K. J. Williams & Vaughn, 2020).

ELs often struggle to fit into their learning environments as they try to balance their cultural identities and heritage with the pressure to fit in with their peers, which leads to the overlooked risk of their susceptibility to depression and suicide (Aseltine & DeMartino, 2004; Rishel & Miller, 2017). The cognitive load may shock ELs adjusting to the differing expectations of U.S. public school systems, and they struggle with these feelings while navigating their

unique cultural and social burdens (Aseltine & DeMartino, 2004; Rishel & Miller, 2017). Sensitivity from educators regarding the unique learning needs and appreciation for ELs' cultural diversity can help to alleviate the pressures ELs face (Aseltine & DeMartino, 2004; Rishel & Miller, 2017). As ELs find validation and appreciation for their L1 knowledge and background experiences, they will more confidently develop the L1 skills that will positively transfer to their L1 proficiency (Cummins, 2000, 2021).

Reclassification

The reclassification of ELs occurs when students transition from their status as ELs to students who are English proficient (Chin, 2021; Kangas & Schissel, 2021; Schissel & Kangas, 2018; K. D. Thompson, 2017; Uysal, 2022). The focus of reclassification is English language proficiency, and ELs must demonstrate their proficiency through academic achievement in English (Cummins, 1979a, 1979b, 1980, 1981; Garcia & Kleifgen, 2018). Reclassification policies, while necessary, create inconsistent monitoring capabilities as students exit or enter EL status as they progress through grades creating an unstable, constantly shifting population (Motamedi et al., 2016; Umansky et al., 2017). Furthermore, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requires each state to develop language proficiency standards, assessment-based reclassification policies, and instruments to determine English proficiency (Garcia & Kleifgen, 2018; Kangas & Schissel, 2021; Schissel & Kangas, 2018).

EL identification is meant to be temporary, as ELs are expected to be reclassified as they progress through the school system (Johnson, 2020; K. D. Thompson, 2017; Umansky et al., 2017; Uysal, 2022). Federal laws require that a determination be made within thirty days of entering a new school district regarding whether or not a new student qualifies as an English learner (Umansky et al., 2017). National and statewide legislation detailing services for ELs with

disabilities are open to interpretation by local educational agencies, resulting in widely varied service and reclassification policies across districts (Kangas, 2017a; Kangas & Cook, 2020; K. D. Thompson, 2017; Umansky et al., 2017).

Students receiving EL services can be classified as long-term English learners (LTELs) if they have received EL services for five or more years (Motamedi et al., 2016; Schissel & Kangas, 2018). Reclassified students are known for their first two years of English proficiency as recently proficient and are required by ESSA to be monitored for two to four years upon exiting EL status (Johnson, 2020; Kangas & Schissel, 2021; Kibler et al., 2018; Motamedi et al., 2016). ELs are deemed eligible for reclassification as English proficient when they move beyond the more rapidly developing BICS and demonstrate the more challenging skill of L2 CALP in oral and written academic language (Cummins, 1979a, 1979b, 1980, 1981, 1999; Soto-Corominas et al., 2020).

The role of state and district assessments are prominent when determining whether or not students may be reclassified (Carlson & Knowles, 2016; Chin, 2021; Reyes & Domina, 2019; Schissel & Kangas, 2018; White & Mavrogordato, 2019). The reliance on standardized assessments presents LTELs with many disadvantages (Carlson & Knowles, 2016; Chin, 2021; Schissel & Kangas, 2018). ELs with disabilities are frequently unable to achieve proficiency on standardized assessments, rendering them ineligible for reclassification (Kangas, 2018; Schissel & Kangas, 2018; Umansky et al., 2017). As ELs continue to be identified with learning disabilities, few ELs with disabilities can exit EL services, a phenomenon recognized as the "reclassification bottleneck" (Umansky et al., 2017, p. 92). State and district standardized assessments are at the heart of reclassification policies despite their detrimental effect on the

ability of ELs with disabilities and LTELs to be reclassified (Johnson, 2020; Migliarini & Stinson, 2020; Schissel & Kangas, 2018; Uysal, 2022).

Reclassification can occur in as few as three years, but most research suggests that second language learners require between four and seven years from when they begin school to acquire proficiency in their acquired language (Garcia & Kleifgen, 2018; Soto-Corominas et al., 2020; K. D. Thompson, 2017). As ELs enroll in U.S. school systems after kindergarten (newcomer ELs), these proficiency timelines become altered (Motamedi et al., 2016; K. D. Thompson, 2017). ELs who have not been reclassified after seven years are unlikely to achieve reclassification and are at higher risk for special education referrals in intermediate grades, sometimes even when a student does not have underlying requirements for special education (Hwang & Duke, 2020; Mancilla-Martinez & Lesaux, 2017; Swanson et al., 2021).

ELs with disabilities are 35% less likely to be reclassified as English proficient during their education (K. D. Thompson, 2017; Umansky et al., 2017). ELs with disabilities are likely to become LTELs by the secondary grades and have a lower chance of being reclassified because LTELs frequently struggle with standardized assessments that qualify them for reclassification (Kangas, 2021; Motamedi et al., 2016). The optimal window for reclassification is by the end of fifth grade- before students leave elementary school but before they begin secondary grades, as ELs who have not been reclassified by fifth grade become less likely to achieve reclassification and are more likely to qualify for special education in the secondary grades (Johnson, 2020; Reyes & Domina, 2019; K. D. Thompson, 2017).

College and Career (un)Readiness

Nearly half of all ELs in the United States do not attend post-secondary programs or four-year colleges (Johnson, 2020; Kanno, 2018; Mendoza, 2019; White & Mavrogordato, 2019).

They typically apply to community colleges more predominantly than four-year institutions when pursuing higher education (Johnson, 2020; Kanno, 2018). The decision of ELs to apply for community colleges over more typically more rigorous four-year colleges is influenced by the implicit and explicit messages expressed by high school staff about the type of institutions that would best fit their academic abilities (Kanno, 2018; Mendoza, 2019). Students with disabilities and ELs are directed toward exclusionary tracks, which prevents them from accessing higher-level courses in secondary grades (Johnson, 2020; Kangas & Cook, 2020). Successful completion of EL-sheltered courses frequently results in a transition to different remedial-level classes in the same subject area instead of transference to more rigorous, age-appropriate courses (Kangas & Cook, 2020; Kanno, 2018). EL-sheltered or low-track courses are for struggling learners and emphasize behavior management (Kangas, 2021; K. J. Williams & Vaughn, 2020). Such exclusionary tracks expose students to courses that require lower-order thinking skills and fewer opportunities for social interactions than they would be exposed to on a general learning track (Kangas, 2021; Kangas & Cook, 2020). College readiness courses and campus visits often occur during EL classes (Kanno, 2018; Mendoza, 2019). ELs are frequently excluded from higher learning preparation opportunities as counselors determine that avoiding interference with EL courses outweighs the potential benefits of college and career opportunities (Carlson & Knowles, 2016; Johnson, 2020; Mendoza, 2019).

Many high schools offer college and career options and information to students who seek opportunities on their own and have the option to explore these opportunities with their families (Kanno, 2018; Mendoza, 2019). The limited exposure does not adequately prepare ELs or ELs with disabilities who do not know how to pursue such information or lack the parental support to seek opportunities outside of school (Carlson & Knowles, 2016; Kanno, 2018; Mendoza, 2019).

Furthermore, most ELs do not have access to college and career readiness programs due to their English acquisition deficits (Kanno, 2018; Mendoza, 2019). They are educated on exclusionary tracks, excluding them from post-secondary preparation (Johnson, 2020; Kanno, 2018). ELs in secondary grades have language and learning deficits from a lack of bilingual scaffolding, resulting in the oppression of non-English speakers and the prevention of upward mobility (Cioe-Pena, 2020; Mendoza, 2019).

Services for ELs with Disabilities

ELs with disabilities struggle to access necessary and promised educational supports through inaccurate identification practices (Becker & Deris, 2019; Kangas & Schissel, 2021; Karvonen et al., 2021; Przymus & Alvarado, 2019; Swanson et al., 2021; Umansky et al., 2017; Yamasaki & Luk, 2018). Differing views on policy understanding and implementation cause further roadblocks that prevent ELs from receiving the diverse instruction they require (Christensen et al., 2018; Kangas, 2017a, 2017b, 2018; Migliarini & Stinson, 2020; Orosco & Abdulrahim, 2017; S. Park, 2019; White & Mavrogordato, 2019). Inconsistent state or district-mandated reclassification policies that do not adequately assess English proficiency confine ELs to ESL services they may not need (Kangas & Schissel, 2021; Reyes & Domina, 2019; Reyes & Hwang, 2019; Robinson-Cimpian et al., 2016; K. D. Thompson, 2017).

Students may not be referred for special education because of factors directly related to language proficiency (Kangas, 2014; Motamedi et al., 2016; Ortiz et al., 2011). However, their cultural and linguistic diversity (CLD) must be considered during the creation of IEPs for ELs once a disability is determined (Hoover et al., 2019; Orosco & Abdulrahim, 2017; S. Park, 2019; Thurlow et al., 2017). Individual Education Programs (IEPs), when written for ELs, should incorporate language and content development goals that are culturally and linguistically

responsive (CLR) (Hoover et al., 2019; Karvonen et al., 2021). Accessibility modifications and accommodations for ELs with disabilities should be written into their IEPs, 504 plans, and EL plans (Hoover et al., 2019; Karvonen et al., 2021; Thurlow et al., 2020). In addition to assessment accommodations, IEPs for ELs should focus on cognitive, academic, and language acquisition goals (Hoover et al., 2019; Karvonen et al., 2021).

ELs with disabilities are more likely to drop out of school and are less likely to graduate than non-EL students with disabilities (Jozwik & Douglas, 2017; Office of English Language Acquisition, 2017). Those ELs with disabilities possess significantly lower abilities in fluency and comprehension as they exhibit weak performance in executive processing skills such as working memory, adaptable thinking, and self-control (Cummins, 1979a; Swanson et al., 2021). In the intermediate and secondary grades, adolescent ELs with disabilities struggle with sight word recognition and decoding, resulting in a lack of automaticity before attending to higher-order thinking skills such as comprehension (Jozwik et al., 2020; K. J. Williams & Vaughn, 2020).

Compounded with the potential issues arising when IEPs for ELs lack language supports is the view that disability needs take priority over and replace any language acquisition needs ELs have as developing English speakers (Cioe-Pena, 2020; Kangas, 2017a; Migliarini & Stinson, 2020). Practitioners are faced with the challenge of creating IEPs that contain quality targets through clear, authentic goals that are meaningful and measurable (Hoover et al., 2019; Jozwik et al., 2018; Karvonen et al., 2021). The comprehensive nature of an IEP for an EL must include a collaborative team that recognizes the cultural and linguistic nature of the diverse learner and incorporates goals that fit these unique needs (Hoover et al., 2019; Jozwik et al.,

2018; Jozwik & Douglas, 2017). Including collaborators creates an environment of support for the student to provide all necessary services (Hoover et al., 2019; Jozwik et al., 2018).

Many educators believe that a student's special education needs, as laid out by IEPs, supersede any other academic obligations or needs a student might have (Hoover et al., 2019; Kangas, 2017a; Migliarini & Stinson, 2020). Such beliefs filter down from state to district levels, influencing school leaders and teachers (T. Gonzalez et al., 2021; Kangas, 2014, 2017a, 2018; S. Park, 2019). As a result, ELs with disabilities receive little to no English acquisition support as the disability is prioritized (Kangas, 2014, 2017a, 2018). National education laws are specific regarding disability services in public schools, while EL mandates are vague, open to interpretation, and have few clear legal implications (Kangas, 2017a, 2018).

Federal guidelines require schools to provide students with disabilities services related to their disabilities and students developing English proficiency services to assist with their English language acquisition (Hoover et al., 2019; Karvonen & Clark, 2019). When identified with a disability and as an EL, many districts enforce policies prohibiting dual EL and special education services for students by either refusing to allow dual identification or by providing services that prioritize and treat the special education needs over the English acquisition needs (T. Gonzalez et al., 2021; Kangas, 2017a; Liu et al., 2017; S. Park, 2019). Denial of dual support services violates civil rights laws but is common among U.S. public schools (Kangas & Cook, 2020; Migliarini & Stinson, 2020).

Many ELs with and without disabilities are placed in English-only environments with little regard for student and parent preferences (Cioe-Pena, 2020; S. Park, 2019). English-only settings can harm ELs' communication skills and negatively affect communication with family members who are used to speaking in their native language (Cioe-Pena, 2020; Cummins, 2000,

2021; Marinova-Todd et al., 2016). Current practices for promoting English acquisition and mastery over other languages are oppressive to non-native English speakers and discriminate against ELs with disabilities by denying their right to bilingual services as special education services are prioritized (Cioe-Pena, 2020; T. Gonzalez et al., 2021; Marinova-Todd et al., 2016; S. Park, 2019). Bilingualism is a trait commonly viewed as a disadvantage when teaching ELs but is a trait that should be celebrated and valued in schools (Becker & Deris, 2019; Cioe-Pena, 2020). Research-based, culturally responsive practices, such as the incorporation of word walls in native and acquired languages, activation of background knowledge and cultural connections, native language incorporated into instruction, and the use of RTI and MTSS are necessary to enhance learning opportunities for ELs (Hoover et al., 2020; Kangas, 2014; S. Park, 2019).

Disproportionality in Special Education

Disproportionality in special education occurs when students within a subgroup are unequally represented compared to Caucasian students (Barrio, 2017; Morgan et al., 2015). Disproportionality poses a threat by either underidentifying students and thus not providing services for students in need and allowing them to fall through the cracks or overidentifying students and applying inaccurate institutional labels that result in inappropriate services (Griner & Stewart, 2013; Kangas, 2014, 2015; Yamasaki & Luk, 2018). Despite claims that ELs maintain adequate representation in special education, more recent research shows that ELs have disproportionate representation in special education nationwide (Barrio, 2017; T. Gonzalez et al., 2021; Swanson et al., 2021; Umansky et al., 2017; Yamasaki & Luk, 2018). Overrepresentation suggests that too many students are inaccurately identified with disabilities (Becker & Deris, 2019; Schissel & Kangas, 2018). ELs in the primary grades are commonly underidentified for special education services, but the disproportionality shifts toward overrepresentation in the

intermediate grades (Arias & Friberg, 2017; T. Gonzalez et al., 2021; Umansky et al., 2017; Yamasaki & Luk, 2018).

Although ELs make up 15% of the student population in U.S. schools, they only make up 8 to 9% of the special education population (Dussling, 2020; Kangas, 2018; Karvonen & Clark, 2019; Office of English Language Acquisition, 2017; Sinclair et al., 2018; K. J. Williams & Vaughn, 2020). Non-EL students maintain accurate representation in special education nationwide compared to the overall population of non-ELs in U.S. public schools (Motamedi et al., 2016; Umansky et al., 2017). When viewed by disability diagnosis, ELs tend to be overidentified with communication disorders by fifth grade and intellectual disabilities by third grade (Fish, 2019; Yamasaki & Luk, 2018). ELs are frequently overrepresented with diagnoses of specific learning disabilities (Kangas, 2018; Office of English Language Acquisition, 2017). ELs continue to be underrepresented throughout all grades, demonstrating the disproportionate nature of ELs included in and excluded from special education (Becker & Deris, 2019; Karvonen & Clark, 2019; Yamasaki & Luk, 2018).

Educators hesitate to refer EL students in primary grades for special education services even when they demonstrate significant deficiencies in phonological processing because they have a difficult time distinguishing manifestations of learning disorders from second language acquisition difficulties (Arias & Friberg, 2017; Motamedi et al., 2016; Umansky et al., 2017; Yamasaki & Luk, 2018). In the intermediate grades, ELs begin to be overrepresented in special education (Kangas, 2015; Kangas & Schissel, 2021). EL placement in special education programs varies across states, districts, and schools and can result in services that conflict with Title III mandates that enable ELs to receive instruction to help them develop English proficiency (Becker & Deris, 2019; Kangas, 2018; Umansky et al., 2017). Special education

determinations frequently rely on test scores, which seek student-centered causes for special education placement but may disregard the possibility of environment-based learning outcomes (Jozwik & Douglas, 2017; Kangas, 2015).

Despite challenges in being identified for special education services, approximately 14% of the EL population is known to have educational disabilities, constituting roughly 8 to 9% of the overall number of students with disabilities (Fish, 2019; Kangas, 2018; Karvonen & Clark, 2019; Liu et al., 2017; Office of English Language Acquisition, 2017). ELs with disabilities frequently receive inadequate or incomplete services through U.S. public schools (Becker & Deris, 2019; T. Gonzalez et al., 2021; Hoover et al., 2019; Kangas & Schissel, 2021; Karvonen et al., 2021; S. Park, 2019). Assessments can be biased or may not adequately assess students' intellectual abilities without proficient English acquisition (Christensen et al., 2018; Kangas, 2017a; Liu et al., 2017; Marinova-Todd et al., 2016; Uysal, 2022). A significant issue when identifying ELs with disabilities is the lack of a standard assessment to assess the special education needs of a student independently from their English acquisition needs (Jozwik & Douglas, 2017; Karvonen & Clark, 2019; Karvonen et al., 2021; Swanson et al., 2021). Additional issues occur when incorporating assessment in ELs' native languages into assessment practices, particularly when a student's L1 is not one of the most common (Arias & Friberg, 2017; Becker & Deris, 2019; Garcia & Kleifgen, 2018; Marinova-Todd et al., 2016).

Many clinicians lack language development and structural knowledge of foreign languages and are not adept at assessing students (Arias & Friberg, 2017; Newell & Looser, 2017). Practitioners heavily rely on standardized test scores when diagnosing monolingual, English-speaking students with disabilities (Arias & Friberg, 2017; Uysal, 2022). Most standardized assessments used to establish a student's need for special education services rely on

English proficiency, so results for students who have not acquired English can be invalid and unreliable (Arias & Friberg, 2017; Lakin & Lai, 2012; Liu et al., 2017; Yamasaki & Luk, 2018).

Standardized assessments in foreign languages are sparse, so English-based standardized tests are often used for ELs despite noted concerns (Arias & Friberg, 2017; Swanson et al., 2021; Yamasaki & Luk, 2018). Nonverbal assessments provide an alternative form of testing that reduces the language load required and increases the fairness for ELs (Cho & Kraemer, 2020; Lakin & Lai, 2012). Some English language tests are reproduced in other languages, but the translation across languages results in differing language structures, affecting test content and raising questions of validity (Arias & Friberg, 2017; Lakin & Lai, 2012; Liu et al., 2017). Federal law requires ELs with disabilities to be assessed for disabilities in their most dominant language, yet students are nearly always tested in English (Becker & Deris, 2019; Kangas, 2017a; Liu et al., 2017; Yamasaki & Luk, 2018). The result is that EL students are often placed into special education without being assessed at all in their native language despite federal requirements and the knowledge that ELs benefit significantly when both languages are used in the referral process (Becker & Deris, 2019; Kangas, 2017a). Furthermore, ELs typically perform below normal limits on standardized assessments (Arias & Friberg, 2017; Liu et al., 2017). Clinicians would benefit from using a battery of alternate assessments when determining the language capabilities of ELs (Arias & Friberg, 2017; Lakin & Lai, 2012; Uysal, 2022).

States are required to assess approximately 90% of all students, including ELs and students with disabilities, each year through standardized tests (Arias & Friberg, 2017; Christensen et al., 2018; Johnson, 2020; Kangas & Cook, 2020; Thurlow et al., 2020; Uysal, 2022). Students with disabilities are eligible for assessment modifications (Christensen et al., 2018; Schissel & Kangas, 2018; Thurlow et al., 2017, 2020). While assessment adaptations have

been implemented for special education populations, adaptations or modifications for ELs are lacking (Christensen et al., 2018; Liu et al., 2017). EL students with disabilities receive accommodations for their unique intersectional status, but the accommodations do not always provide the level of support they need (Christensen et al., 2018; Schissel & Kangas, 2018). Still, educators struggle to accurately determine the cognitive and academic levels of their ELs who have disabilities (Becker & Deris, 2019; Christensen et al., 2018).

Collaboration and Co-Teaching

Increased emphasis on and opportunities for collaboration between general and special education teachers is needed, yet both parties often have limited access to co-teaching exposure through professional development (Auslander, 2018; Kangas, 2017b; Kangas & Cook, 2020; Perry, 2022; Villavicencio et al., 2021). Such collaboration is warranted because the most common model of EL support is through push-in services with no collaborative preparation, which results in the limited use of the EL teacher as an aide (Auslander, 2018; Kangas, 2017b, 2018; Migliarini & Stinson, 2020; Villavicencio et al., 2021). A collaborative framework between general educators and specialists leads to the productive output of services for ELs (Babinski et al., 2018; Hoover et al., 2020; Jozwik et al., 2020; Kangas, 2017b; Villavicencio et al., 2021). A critical element of a support team is the inclusion of counselors on collaborative teams to address diverse learners' social and emotional needs and help close the cultural gap between schools, families, and communities (Auslander, 2018; Newell & Looser, 2017). Collaboration with counselors effectively improves school climate, leadership, and school-based support structures (Auslander, 2018; Hoover et al., 2020).

Co-teaching is the practice of combining the efforts of a general educator with a specialist of equal status in the general classroom setting, as they share the responsibility of instructing

students with diverse needs (Friend, 2007, 2015). Co-teaching is a research-based method of collaboration that allows qualified educators to team up and meet the culturally diverse needs of their ELs and special education students (Friend, 2007, 2015). Collaborative models that provide intervention within the general education classroom allow students with special needs to remain in the general education classroom alongside their peers, removing the stigmatization of being pulled out for special services (Friend, 2007, 2015; Perry, 2022). The six approaches involved in co-teaching are 1) Station Teaching, 2) Parallel Teaching, 3) Alternative Teaching, 4) Teaming, 5) One Teach, One Assist, and 6) One Teach, One Observe (Friend, 2015; Friend et al., 2010).

The approaches should be adjusted to fit the needs of the learners and the intent of the instruction (Friend, 2007, 2015). Coteaching can fulfill the requirements set by IEP goals while also meeting the diverse needs of other learners (Friend, 2015; Friend et al., 2010; Perry, 2022). The duration of coteaching lessons can vary from brief amounts of time to entire class periods or can even take a full day (Friend, 2015; Friend et al., 2010). Coteaching models are popular because they meet the demands of the NCLB Act of 2001 to ensure that all students, including those on IEPs or other learning plans, participate in general education curriculum and because it fulfills mandates by the IDEA Act of 2004 to place students in the least restrictive environments (Friend et al., 2010).

Effective co-teaching requires coordinated planning sessions between teacher collaborators (Friend et al., 2010; Kangas, 2017b; Kangas & Cook, 2020; Perry, 2022). It is critical for school leaders to support planning efforts by building time into educators' schedules so they can meet to plan lessons regularly (Friend, 2007; Kangas, 2017b; Perry, 2022). Both teachers must collaborate to actively establish criteria and success within the co-teaching model (Esler, 2022; Friend, 2007; Kang, 2022). The support of administrators is an essential component

of effective co-teaching as administrators set the tone for their school and can facilitate and promote time for collaboration between educators and specialists when planning co-teaching sessions (Addink, 2023; Esler, 2022; H. P. Williams & Ditch, 2019).

Culturally Responsive Teaching Practices

Students acquiring English require a high standard of education that attends to their unique linguistic abilities and needs while developing their proficiency in English CALP (Cummins, 1979a, 1980, 1981, 1999,2021; Silva & Kucer, 2016). Failure to provide instruction, intervention, and resources for these diverse learners allows them to fall further behind their peers, as evidenced by the achievement gap that exists between ELs and non-ELs (Becker & Deris, 2019; Chin, 2021; Cummins, 2021; Johnson, 2020; Reyes & Domina, 2019; Rivas, 2023; Swanson et al., 2021; Umansky et al., 2017; Villavicencio et al., 2021; K. J. Williams & Vaughn, 2020). Education that embraces and addresses ELs' diverse backgrounds and interests promotes feelings of belonging for ELs by creating a bridge between home and school experiences (Cummins, 1981, 2021; Griner & Stewart, 2013).

ELs in the United States are a population encompassing any student who struggles to speak, read, write, or understand the English language but must acquire English proficiency because they live in a place where English proficiency is required for one to fully participate in society (Chin, 2021; Hwang & Duke, 2020; Kangas, 2018; NCES, 2022a; Reyes & Domina, 2019). EL populations have been steadily growing for the past twenty years and comprise approximately 14% of all students in U.S. schools (Kangas, 2018; Sinclair et al., 2018; K. J. Williams & Vaughn, 2020). About 20% of children in the United States speak a language other than English in their homes, and half of this group lacks English proficiency (Nutta et al., 2020; K. D. Thompson, 2017). Researchers deduce from current trends that one in four public school

students will be English learners by 2025 (Kangas, 2015; Micek, 2017). The most prominent native language spoken by 5 to 17-year-old ELs is Spanish, comprising 70%-76% of all ELs (Garcia & Kleifgen, 2018; Newell & Looser, 2017; U.S. Census Bureau, 2021). Of the 8.5 billion native Spanish-speaking ELs, approximately 20% have not yet developed English proficiency (Cioe-Pena, 2020; Garcia & Kleifgen, 2018). In fact, Spanish is the leading native language of ELs in 45 states in the United States (Arias & Friberg, 2017; Christensen et al., 2018; Cioe-Pena, 2020; Garcia & Kleifgen, 2018; Kibler et al., 2018; Motamedi et al., 2016; Thurlow et al., 2020). Following the significant representation of native Spanish-speaking ELs, the next most common native language groups spoken by ELs are Asian/Pacific (13.5%), Indo-European (11%), and Other (4.5%), as shown in Table 1 (Garcia & Kleifgen, 2018; Thurlow et al., 2020).

Table 1

Numbers and Percentages of Languages Spoken by ELs, 5 to 17 years old

Language Group	Number of LOTE speakers	Number of ELs	% of all ELs
Spanish	8,118,810	1,727,839	69.1
Indo-European	1,662,388	358,045	14.3
Asian/Pacific	1,243,850	303,264	12.1
Other	666,229	113,603	4.5
Total	11,691,277	2,502,751	100

*Language other than English (LOTE)

Note. Data were taken from the U.S. Census Bureau (2021). Public domain.

Culturally responsive teaching fosters a culture of respect for all cultures and creates cultural awareness in the classroom (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Mensah, 2021; Soylu et al., 2020; Will & Najarro, 2022). Not only does it address the inequities that exist between ELs and non-ELs, but it also affirms the unique identities and values of all students, especially those with diverse backgrounds (Debnam et al., 2023; Gay, 2015, 2018; Muniz, 2019; Soylu et al., 2020).

No culture is prioritized or promoted as “normal” compared to other cultures, regardless of the prevalence of students from any one culture (Gay, 2015, 2018; Will & Najarro, 2022). A core characteristic of culturally responsive teaching is to recognize that students’ cultures influence the way they learn and to use this knowledge to clarify its role in teaching and learning (Gay, 2018; Mensah, 2021). Implementing culturally responsive teaching focuses instruction on students of ethnic and racial minority groups to improve their academic, behavioral, and social-emotional outcomes (Fallon et al., 2022; Gay, 2002, 2015; Mensah, 2021; Will & Najarro, 2022).

Culturally responsive teachers are versed in culturally responsive strategies and knowledge that make multiple cultures meaningful in classrooms (Gay, 2002; Soylu et al., 2020). These teachers respect cultural differences and modify their pedagogy based on the demographics of their community and school to support the structure that fits students’ diverse backgrounds, especially if they belong to a non-White culture (Karatas, 2020; Soylu et al., 2020; Will & Najarro, 2022). Teachers must utilize a variety of instructional strategies to meet the unique needs of their diverse learners in a culturally responsive manner (Debnam et al., 2023; Gay, 2015; Karatas, 2020; Will & Najarro, 2022). Culturally responsive teaching involves developing an awareness of and value for a social structure that asserts all students belong while embracing their language and cultural identity (Gay, 2002; Soylu et al., 2020). As student configurations differ by area and locale, instruction should be informed by the local contextuality when deciding which cultures to engage in through various instructional methods (Debnam et al., 2023; Gay, 2015; Will & Najarro, 2022). Teachers lean into culturally responsive teaching through demonstrations of empathy and self-reflection (Debnam et al., 2023; Karatas, 2020; Muniz, 2019).

A common trait exhibited by culturally responsive teachers is the high standard of achievement and expectations for all students, regardless of culture, race, background, or perceived ability (Debnam et al., 2023; Gay, 2015; Muniz, 2019; Will & Najarro, 2022). Systemic biases are acknowledged and confronted in a way that validates the sociocultural identities of students while embracing differences (Debnam et al., 2023; Gay, 2002; Muniz, 2019). All students are taught critical consciousness by honing their abilities to recognize and solve real-world problems regarding social inequities involving diverse populations (Debnam et al., 2023; Gay, 2015; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Muniz, 2019; Will & Najarro, 2022). As students familiarize themselves with other cultures, they explore different communication styles and gain perspective about appropriate cultural interactions (Gay, 2015; Muniz, 2019; Will & Najarro, 2022).

Student interests of and within diverse populations, including samples of diverse life and languages, must be included in culturally responsive instruction to heighten engagement and teach students from ethnic and racial groups more effectively (Gay, 2015; Soylu et al., 2020). To meet the full scope of learning needs for the wide range of ELs, culturally responsive strategies, such as cultural mindfulness, explicit content knowledge, and collaborative peer learning activities, can be used to promote their English language proficiency (Cummins, 1999; Griner & Stewart, 2013; Hadjioannou et al., 2016; Jozwik & Douglas, 2017; Orosco & Abdulrahim, 2017). Beyond instructional practices, culturally responsive assessments should guide intentional differentiation practices that motivate and engage ELs (Hadjioannou et al., 2016; Hoover & Erickson, 2015; Hoover et al., 2015; Newell & Looser, 2017).

General Education Classroom Services

School-based personnel should consider the environments where education takes place to recognize factors affecting their EL students' cultural and linguistic diversity (Auslander, 2018; Kangas, 2014). Most ELs spend most, if not all, of their school day in a general education classroom with limited EL supports (Christensen et al., 2018; Hadjioannou et al., 2016; Wanzek et al., 2016). One-fourth of intermediate and secondary school students needing English acquisition intervention are placed in full-time general education classes and overlooked as ELs, receiving no language services (Karvonen & Clark, 2019; S. Park, 2019). Furthermore, ELs with disabilities, although they may be pulled out of the classroom for portions of the day, need accommodations when they are in their general education classrooms if they are to close the gap and meet grade-level expectations (Fish, 2019; Kangas, 2017a, 2018; Wanzek et al., 2016).

Teachers' views regarding whose role it is to educate ELs with disabilities often lead them to make disability-related assessment modifications but fail to provide appropriately modified instruction in the general education classrooms (Kangas, 2017b; Kangas & Cook, 2020; Vintan & Gallagher, 2019). Many general education teachers believe that providing interventions for their ELs with and without disabilities falls outside the scope of their professional duties (Kangas, 2015, 2017b; Villavicencio et al., 2021). Most educators do not know how to linguistically and culturally address EL needs and cannot distinguish learning disabilities from English acquisition deficiencies because they lack the training, resources, and knowledge to differentiate and advocate for the diverse needs of their EL students (Hadjioannou et al., 2016; Hoover et al., 2015; Kangas, 2017a; S. Park, 2019; Villavicencio et al., 2021; Vintan & Gallagher, 2019). Current school policies across the country are not currently prioritized for ELs

with disabilities, resulting in limited opportunities to develop academic and bilingual needs (Fish, 2019; Kangas, 2017a; Migliarini & Stinson, 2020; S. Park, 2019).

When properly utilized, co-teaching models can effectively provide necessary levels of support for all students, including ELs, in a general education classroom (Kang, 2022; H. P. Williams & Ditch, 2019). Poor co-planning and a lack of time to collaborate between general education teachers and EL specialists frequently result in the use of the specialist as an aide, which lessens the effectiveness of push-in interventions (Kangas, 2015, 2017b; Migliarini & Stinson, 2020; Villavicencio et al., 2021). Conversely, push-in help is viewed by some educators as extremely valuable for ELs when educators are given the time to collaborate with EL specialists and other professionals to plan services and interventions (Friend, 2015; Friend et al., 2010; Villavicencio et al., 2021; Vintan & Gallagher, 2019). When Tier 1 supports are documented for ELs with disabilities, one-to-one interactions are usually limited to addressing behavioral concerns or repeating instructions (Kangas, 2021; Kangas & Cook, 2020; S. Park, 2019). Intervention efforts limited to redirection and repetition cause push-in or pull-out models to become ineffective (Kangas, 2014, 2021; Kangas & Cook, 2020; S. Park, 2019). Services for ELs can be less effective when attempts are made to overlap services with push-in or pull-out EL support by a non-certified paraprofessional, and doing so does not prioritize the learner's needs and failing to provide quality interventions (Kangas, 2014, 2017b, 2017a, 2018).

A balance of targeted language instruction integrated with content focus allows ELs to achieve optimal learning experiences (Esler, 2022; Kang, 2022; H. P. Williams & Ditch, 2019). If implemented with proper planning and intention, co-teaching models can support ELs without isolating ELs in pull-out services (Kang, 2022; H. P. Williams & Ditch, 2019). Professional development and dedicated planning sessions between educators and specialists can lead to

successful co-teaching experiences (Esler, 2022; Kang, 2022; H. P. Williams & Ditch, 2019). Combining the expertise of multiple trained professionals increases the instructional options available to ELs (Addink, 2023; Friend et al., 2010). If co-teaching models are not implemented correctly, pull-out services can provide the critical targeted support ELs need, but without authentic, uninterrupted content immersion (Esler, 2022).

Response to Intervention. Response to Intervention (RTI) is an educational model that focuses on the use of evidence-based practices to provide scaled interventions for students and monitor their intervention responses with data (Barrio, 2017; Kangas, 2015). Interventions are first done by the general education teacher in the classroom before students who do not respond to whole-class interventions receive more intense interventions through small-group or pull-out models that provide focused, supplemental. Students who do not respond to more intense interventions within a reasonable amount of time are referred for services, such as special education, where they are provided with intensive individual interventions (Cavazos et al., 2018; Foorman et al., 2017; Kangas, 2014; Ortiz et al., 2011; S. Park, 2019). Effective collaborative RTI allows educators to compare and share ideas regarding struggling students, including ELs and ELs with disabilities (Barrio, 2017; Becker & Deris, 2019; Kangas, 2014, 2015).

Multi-Tiered Systems of Support. Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) is a framework that incorporates the three levels of tiered interventions integrated with social-emotional learning and behavioral development (Barrio, 2017; Cavazos et al., 2018; Hoover et al., 2020). Implementing tiered interventions layered with socio-emotional support and team collaboration can lead to the practical application of best practices for EL and bilingual instruction (Cavazos et al., 2018; Hoover et al., 2020). EL teachers or trained paraprofessionals enter the general education classroom and provide English acquisition support services for ELs

during academic content lessons through scaffolding and differentiated instructional methods with increased duration and intensity (Hoover & Soltero-Gonzalez, 2018; Hoover et al., 2020). MTSS provides access to core instruction through diverse instructional strategies, scaffolds instruction in a way that helps to discern language acquisition needs from disabilities, and increases learning outcomes to prevent the misidentification of ELs for special education (Cavazos et al., 2018; Hoover & Soltero-Gonzalez, 2018; Hoover et al., 2020). ELs who do not respond to Tier 1 or 2 supports are candidates for special education referrals (Barrio, 2017; S. Park, 2019; Umansky et al., 2017).

Necessary Interventions

Most ELs remain in general education classrooms for most of their school day (Kibler et al., 2018; Office of English Language Acquisition, 2017). Teachers are in need of culturally responsive instruction that can be implemented through Tier 1 and Tier 2 interventions (Becker & Deris, 2019; Karvonen et al., 2021; Marinova-Todd et al., 2016; S. Park, 2019). MTSS strategies need to be created to embrace ELs' cultural and linguistic diversity while improving the general education literacy instruction ELs with and without disabilities currently receive (Cavazos et al., 2018; Hoover & Soltero-Gonzalez, 2018; Hoover et al., 2020). In order to achieve maximum growth for ELs, attention must be paid to cultural relevancy and language development opportunities thoughtfully embedded into instruction for ELs (Cummins, 1979a, 1980, 1981; Hoover et al., 2020; Ortiz et al., 2011; Perry, 2022).

ELs benefit from explicit instruction through listening comprehension and word decoding when developing L2 reading comprehension (Cummins, 1979a, 1980; Lervag et al., 2018; Y. Park et al., 2019). Strong emphasis on basic decoding and comprehension skills in the primary grades will provide a solid foundation for ELs and allow them to participate in content-rich

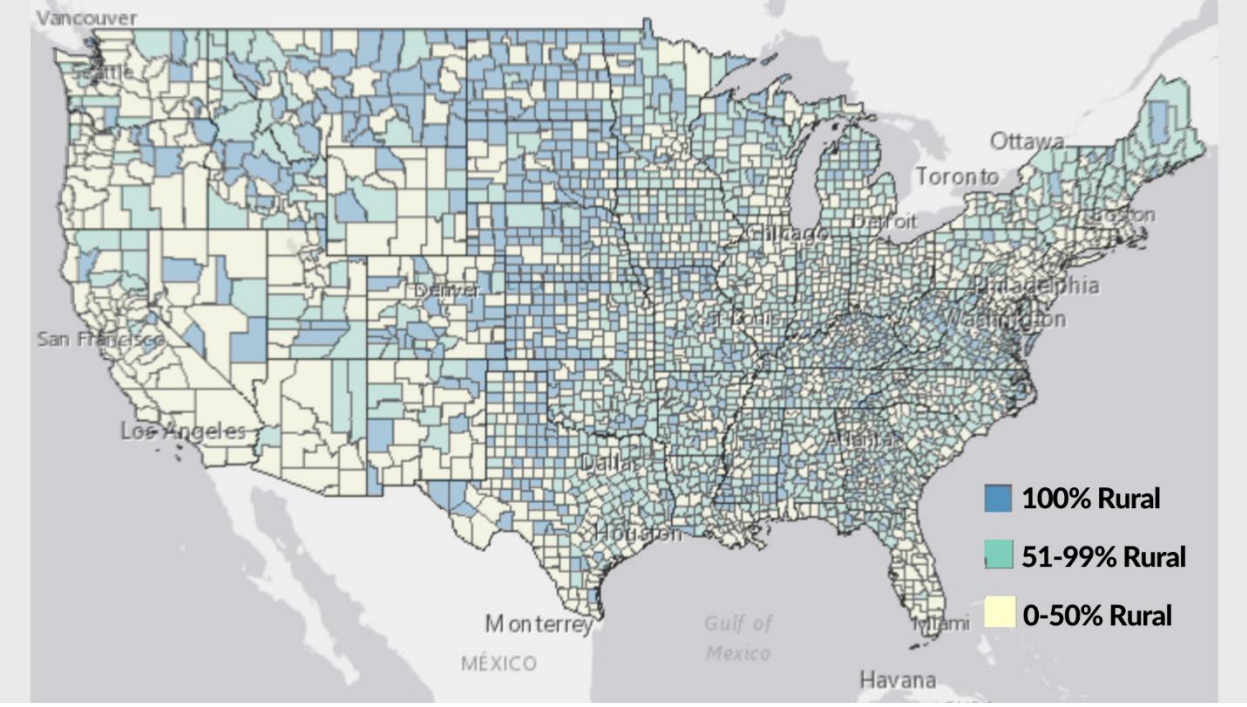
activities to develop their L2 comprehension skills in intermediate grades (Cummins, 1979a, 1979b; Hwang & Duke, 2020; Jozwik & Douglas, 2017). Instructing ELs in their native and acquired language provides them with more remarkable growth than ELs with disabilities who are only instructed in their acquired language (Cummins, 1979a, 1979b, 1980, 1981, 1999; Kangas, 2017a). Technology can enhance and scaffold learning for ELs by adjusting the format and built-in tools for content-specific components (Jozwik & Douglas, 2017; Y. Park et al., 2019). Writing activities and oral language instruction integrated with core content and vocabulary are essential to establishing best practices for ELs with and without disabilities (Cummins, 1979a, 1980, 2021; Wanzek et al., 2016).

Rural School Challenges

Urban areas of the country are densely settled areas with at least 2,000 housing units or a minimum population threshold of 5,000, and any non-urban areas are designated as rural (U.S. Census Bureau, 2021, 2022, 2023). About twenty percent of the U.S. population lives in rural locales (Showalter et al., 2019; U.S. Census Bureau, 2021, 2023). The most recent maps depicting county rurality are shown in Figure 5 and are based on 2010 Census data that reveal 704 counties were completely rural (100% rural), 1,185 were mostly rural (50-99.0% rural), and 1,254 were mostly urban (less than 50% rural) (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010a, 2010b).

Figure 5

Rural Population by County: 2010



Note. Adapted from U.S. Census Bureau (2010b). Public domain.

Approximately 21% of educators in the United States teach in rural locales, as shown in Table 2, (NCES, 2022b). Table 2

Number of U.S. Educators by School Locale, School Year 2020-21

Locale	Number (in thousands)	Percentage (%)
City	1,047	27.8
Suburban	1,453	38.6
Town	450	12.0
Rural	815	21.6
Total	3,765	100

Note. Data from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2022c). Public domain.

Public school students attending rural schools make up about 21% of the total public school population, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3

U.S. Public School Enrollment by School Locale, 2021

Locale	Number	Percentage (%)
City	14,647,609	29.8
Suburban	19,091,364	38.9
Town	5,306,426	10.8
Rural	9,801,145	20.0
Total	49,089,640	

Note. Data from National Center of Education Statistics. (NCES, 2022b). Public domain.

Rural school districts face unique educational challenges when compared to urban and other non-rural populations (Barzee, 2020; Echazarra & Radinger, 2019; Lavalley, 2018; Newell & Looser, 2017; Showalter et al., 2019; Tieken & Montgomery, 2021). Rural areas are typically areas with small populations that are situated a geographically significant distance from other populated areas (Barzee, 2020; Echazarra & Radinger, 2019; Newell & Looser, 2017). The small populations reflect low fertility rates and limited migration, which results in economies with low wages, high unemployment rates, and hard-to-fill positions (Echazarra & Radinger, 2019; Lavalley, 2018; Newell & Looser, 2017; Tieken & Montgomery, 2021). Because rural areas tend to be hit harder by economic downturns, the ensuing poverty rates are more frequent and persistent, causing students to work for pay (Echazarra & Radinger, 2019; Lavalley, 2018). The inability of rural areas to tap into scale economies results in less access to adequate, cost-effective services (Echazarra & Radinger, 2019; Tieken & Montgomery, 2021).

The national average salary for rural educators is lower than for educators from urban, suburban, and higher-populated districts, resulting in pay disparities for teachers who elect to

serve in rural districts (Showalter et al., 2019; Tieken & Montgomery, 2021). Rural schools experience hiring trends that follow their geographic norms, so teacher positions are hard to fill, especially because districts typically offer lower salaries than urban schools (Lavalley, 2018; Newell & Looser, 2017; Tieken & Montgomery, 2021). School positions are often filled by teachers or specialists with little experience working with diverse learners and few opportunities for culturally responsive professional development (Hoover et al., 2020; Lavalley, 2018; Newell & Looser, 2017). As a result of rural limitations, schools often experience high turnover rates in school staff (Arsen et al., 2021; Lavalley, 2018; Newell & Looser, 2017; Showalter et al., 2019).

Rural schools' geographic and economic confines lead to limited access to advanced coursework, lower literacy achievement scores, and a lower likelihood of pursuing post-secondary education (Echazarra & Radinger, 2019; Lavalley, 2018; Tieken & Montgomery, 2021). Higher pupil costs are incurred when fixed funding allocations are stretched to cover costs such as transportation, which are usually significantly higher for rural districts because they must cover large geographic areas despite lower population densities (Arsen et al., 2021; Showalter et al., 2019). Schools in rural areas typically serve high numbers of racial minority students but experience a lack of culturally diverse resources and administrative support (Echazarra & Radinger, 2019; Lavalley, 2018; Newell & Looser, 2017). Although rural high school graduation rates are increasing, there is a widening gap between rural white and non-white students' graduation rates and test scores (Tieken & Montgomery, 2021; U.S. Department of Agriculture, 2017). About one in four rural students represent a non-white population, yet rural schools continuously struggle to recruit teachers with the expertise necessary to provide high-quality instruction for diverse learners (Lavalley, 2018; Tieken & Montgomery, 2021).

Teacher Efficacy

Self-efficacy is the belief a person has in their ability to correctly and effectively use acquired skills and knowledge (Bandura, 1977; Siwatu, 2007a; Siwatu et al., 2023). Teachers need high levels of self-efficacy when implementing culturally responsive instruction so they can positively impact the learning outcomes of their ELs (Malo-Juvera et al., 2018; Siwatu, 2011a; Siwatu et al., 2016; Thomas et al., 2020). Teachers without knowledge of culturally responsive instruction tend to set low expectations for their ELs, which may have lasting negative effects on EL learning outcomes (Cummins, 2021; Siwatu et al., 2016; Thomas et al., 2020).

EL services need increased attention, support, and resources (Becker & Deris, 2019; Griner & Stewart, 2013; Hoover & Soltero-Gonzalez, 2018; Marinova-Todd et al., 2016; Przymus & Alvarado, 2019;). The number of ELs has steadily increased over the past decade, making it imperative for general education teachers to work with specialists to provide an inclusive educational experience for ELs with and without disabilities (Hoover et al., 2019; Kangas, 2017b). Few teachers, including special education and EL specialist teachers, are trained in special education and English acquisition services (Geide-Stevenson, 2018; Karvonen & Clark, 2019). The result is that few teachers are capable of identifying language deficits from manifestations of intellectual disabilities (Geide-Stevenson, 2018; Karvonen & Clark, 2019; Karvonen et al., 2021). The lack of training, resources, and knowledge prevent educators from effectively differentiating and advocating for the diverse needs of their ELs with suspected disabilities (Marinova-Todd et al., 2016; S. Park, 2019).

Many educators felt unprepared or only somewhat prepared to teach ELs upon completion of their teaching program despite EL authorizations being embedded in their coursework (T. Gonzalez et al., 2021; Hadjioannou et al., 2016; Hoover et al., 2015; Siwatu,

2011a, 2011b). Educators report feeling that their lack of bilingualism prevents them from confidently providing native language support to ELs (Becker & Deris, 2019; Lu et al., 2022). The lack of teacher efficacy among school professionals when addressing the needs of ELs hinders the progress and proper resource accessibility of students in need while passing the responsibility for ELs to others (Becker & Deris, 2019; Kangas & Cook, 2020). A misalignment exists between the practices and beliefs of professionals regarding biases about which services students receive, services ELs with disabilities have access to, and the forms of assessment used (Kangas & Cook, 2020; Marinova-Todd et al., 2016).

Many teachers recognize a need to improve their instruction to more effectively address the cultural, academic, and language needs of ELs (Auslander, 2018; Becker & Deris, 2019; Karvonen et al., 2021). However, little progress has been shown toward closing the learning gaps and providing educators with the tools to effectively address the unique needs of this diverse group of learners (Cummins, 2021; Karvonen et al., 2021; Orosco & Abdulrahim, 2017). Educators need to develop cultural competency and knowledge of second language acquisition (Becker & Deris, 2019; Cummins, 1979a, 1979b, 2000, 2021; Kangas, 2017b). With a growing population of ELs and the high likelihood that general educators will have ELs placed in their general education classrooms, teachers need to shore up their culturally responsive repertoires to prepare to meet the needs of their ELs (Becker & Deris, 2019; Liu et al., 2017; Reyes & Domina, 2019; Umansky et al., 2020). Teacher efficacy in implementing culturally responsive instruction in rural schools also needs to be improved despite challenges presented by staffing difficulties, less funding, and fewer resources (Lavalley, 2018; Tieken & Montgomery, 2021).

Implications for Educators

School leaders are responsible for making decisions that positively affect all students (Karvonen & Clark, 2019; Mendoza, 2019). School leaders must lead the way toward identifying ELs with intellectual disabilities so these students can effectively address their unique cognitive and English acquisition needs (Christensen et al., 2018; Karvonen et al., 2021). Leadership is key to developing welcoming environments that are sensitive to their students' cultural and diverse needs (Auslander, 2018; Karvonen et al., 2021; Lu et al., 2022; Villavicencio et al., 2021; Von Esch, 2018). In addition, school leaders must prioritize intensive, effective interventions for students who communicate in any limited capacity (Christensen et al., 2018; Karvonen & Clark, 2019; Karvonen et al., 2021; Lu et al., 2022; Von Esch, 2018).

All general educators are likely to teach ELs due to the historical and projected growth of the EL population (T. Gonzalez et al., 2021; Hadjioannou et al., 2016). School leaders need to ensure that all staff members receive high-quality professional development on culturally responsive RTI and EL support implementation in the classroom (Becker & Deris, 2019; Hoover et al., 2020). Proper professional training for educators is necessary to overcome the learning barriers and establish appropriate identification methods for ELs with significant intellectual disabilities (Kangas, 2015, 2021; Karvonen & Clark, 2019). Educators are often unsure how to identify ELs with disabilities and do not know what steps to take to improve their capacity for serving this population (Hoover et al., 2020; Karvonen & Clark, 2019). Many educators feel threatened when approached with mandates for EL and intervention requirements or when confronted about current practices, but the underlying truth is that they are responsible for removing barriers to collaborative instruction (Kangas, 2017b; Lu et al., 2022; S. Park, 2019). Administrators must be aware of the possibility of pushback when making policy changes, but

they are leaders of change and must navigate educators professionally through such change (S. Park, 2019; Perry, 2022).

School leadership can facilitate the shift to collaborative co-teaching between general educators and specialty teachers and provide the higher levels of education that all diverse populations need (Hoover et al., 2019; Kangas, 2017b, 2018; Perry, 2022; Villavicencio et al., 2021). Administrators should facilitate and protect collaborative time among educators so that the challenges of diverse learners can be consistently addressed by the diverse collective experience of specialists and professionals (Arias & Friberg, 2017; Babinski et al., 2018; Jozwik et al., 2020; Kangas, 2017b; Perry, 2022; Villavicencio et al., 2021; Vintan & Gallagher, 2019). The lack of administrative support for co-planning among general education teachers and specialists is one of the most detrimental factors preventing collaborative efforts (Hoover et al., 2020; Kangas, 2017b; Perry, 2022; Vintan & Gallagher, 2019). Current institutional conditions frequently undercut communication and collaboration between teachers (Kangas, 2017b; Perry, 2022). The result is that the needs of ELs with disabilities are often incorrectly categorized and inefficiently addressed (Kangas, 2017b, 2018; Migliarini & Stinson, 2020; Villavicencio et al., 2021). Supportive administrators who initiate productive, collaborative professional development while effectively improving supports for ELs with disabilities are a necessary agent for change to current service policies (Becker & Deris, 2019; Kangas, 2017b; Karvonen & Clark, 2019; S. Park, 2019).

Conclusion

The persistent achievement gap between ELs and non-ELs remains an ever-present reminder that ELs are underserved (Cummins, 2021; Kibler et al., 2018; Reyes & Domina, 2019; Soto-Corominas et al., 2020). Difficulties differentiating intellectual disabilities from language

deficits prevent ELs with disabilities from being identified for special education services in the primary grades (Cummins, 1980; Kangas, 2014; Karvonen & Clark, 2019; Ortiz et al., 2011; S. Park, 2019). Patterns of overrepresentation in special education for ELs are seen from middle school through high school (T. Gonzalez et al., 2021; Kangas & Cook, 2020; Kangas & Schissel, 2021; Umansky et al., 2017). Misidentification prevents many ELs from receiving appropriate services (Hoover & Soltero-Gonzalez, 2018; Jozwik & Douglas, 2017; Ortiz et al., 2011; Yamasaki & Luk, 2018). A lack of appropriate interventions and services for ELs with disabilities can lead to academic difficulties, especially in reading and math (Cavazos et al., 2018; Hwang & Duke, 2020; Ortiz et al., 2011; Swanson et al., 2021). It can also lead to high drop-out rates, grade retention, and limited employment opportunities (Jozwik & Douglas, 2017; Villavicencio et al., 2021; White & Mavrogordato, 2019). In some cases, the pressure of being an EL in an English-dominant society leads to heightened factors that result in depression and suicide (Aseltine & DeMartino, 2004; Rishel & Miller, 2017).

Reclassification policies promoting English learners to English proficient status contribute to the instability of the population of ELs with disabilities (Chin, 2021; Kangas & Schissel, 2021; Motamedi et al., 2016). The result is that reclassification targets vary across school districts, regions, and states (Pope, 2016; Robinson-Cimpian et al., 2016; K. D. Thompson, 2017; White & Mavrogordato, 2019). Even statewide objectives can be interpreted differently at district levels (Kangas & Schissel, 2021; Umansky et al., 2017). Challenges increase as inconsistent reclassification policies prevent the reclassification of ELs at critical moments in students' educational timelines (Kangas & Schissel, 2021; Schissel & Kangas, 2018; K. D. Thompson, 2017; Umansky et al., 2017). Reclassification by the end of tenth grade is key to providing ELs access to college preparation classes and career readiness opportunities in

eleventh grade (Carlson & Knowles, 2016; Johnson, 2020; Kanno, 2018; K. D. Thompson, 2017).

A gap in research exists in identifying the current state of EL services in rural public schools. Current research focuses on areas with large EL populations or non-rural districts and may not accurately represent ELs from rural schools (Dussling, 2020; T. Gonzalez et al., 2021; Johnson, 2020; Migliarini & Stinson, 2020; Pope, 2016; Reyes & Domina, 2019; Reyes & Hwang, 2019; Robinson-Cimpian et al., 2016; White & Mavrogordato, 2019; Wilcox et al., 2017). Further breakdown of the EL population shows that 4.4% of ELs in the United States are located in rural school districts, compared to 14.8% of ELs located in urban or suburban settings (Lavalley, 2018; NCES, 2022a; Tieken & Montgomery, 2021). Instructional environments that embrace the tenets of culturally responsive instructional techniques for ELs help provide equitable learning opportunities that build on students' prior knowledge and academic abilities to make content and instruction relevant by embracing their culture (Cruz et al., 2019; Cummins, 2021; Gay, 2018; Muniz, 2019; Siwatu, 2011b).

Chapter III: Design and Methodology

This chapter discusses the research design and methodology used to gather and analyze data related to determining the self-efficacy levels of general educators from rural schools when implementing culturally responsive teaching for their English learners. Research shows that educators generally lack confidence in their ability to address the diverse needs of culturally diverse learners and the skills necessary to attend to these populations (Bacon, 2018; Becker & Deris, 2019; Hoover et al., 2019; Kangas, 2017a; Orosco & Abdulrahim, 2017; S. Park, 2019). Special education referral procedures are frequently delayed or unclear due to uncertain policies for students acquiring English, especially because many indicators of potential disabilities overlap with second language acquisition (Fish, 2019; Motamedi et al., 2016; Przymus & Alvarado, 2019; Reyes & Domina, 2019; Swanson et al., 2021). Rural schools are faced with further resource and professional development limitations that inhibit the recruitment, retention, and training necessary for maintaining highly qualified teachers with the ability to meet the diverse needs of ELs (Arsen et al., 2021; Echazarra & Radinger, 2019; Lavalley, 2018; Showalter et al., 2019; Tieken & Montgomery, 2021). The purpose of this study was to investigate the culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy levels of general educators in rural schools to determine the areas that most need targeted development and identify any existing strengths. The objective of this mixed methods study was to explore the two following research questions:

RQ1: What culturally responsive instructional techniques are being used in rural general education classrooms?

RQ2: How confident are general educators from rural schools in their ability to provide culturally responsive instruction for students who are English learners?

Research Design

This study used a mixed methods sequential explanatory approach to investigate and explore the culturally responsive teaching strategies used by general educators in rural school districts. Mixed method approaches allow quantitative and qualitative data to be integrated during the research process to develop a deeper understanding of the research problem (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Ivankova et al., 2006). The combination of quantitative and qualitative data in a study provides greater details and trends within a situation by utilizing the strengths of each research method to provide a more robust analysis (Ivankova et al., 2006). The explanatory factor is a result of the qualitative expansion of the initial quantitative data (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Mixed method sequential explanatory designs are a popular design that involves the consecutive collection and analysis of quantitative data followed by qualitative data (Almeida, 2018; Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Ivankova et al., 2006).

Collecting quantitative and qualitative data in two distinct, consecutive phases is a defining characteristic of this methodology that allows the quantitative phase to elaborate on the quantitative results obtained in the first phase (Almeida, 2018; Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Ivankova et al., 2006). Explanatory sequential approaches are ideal for research completed by a single researcher because the investigation is broken down into two practicable tasks (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The goal of the quantitative phase of this study was to collect the culturally responsive self-efficacy ratings of general educators from rural schools. Data for the first phase was collected using an electronic version of the reliable and validated Culturally Responsive Teaching Self-Efficacy (CRTSE) Scale (Appendix B) (Siwatu, 2007b, 2011b). The 41-question CRTSE Scale was the primary tool utilized for this study, and permission for use was obtained from the creator (Appendix A).

For the second phase of this sequential exploratory design, four participants (two identified as having high culturally responsive self-efficacy and two with low culturally responsive self-efficacy) were selected from the respondents who completed the CRTSE to participate in interviews to identify the culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy experiences of participants that shaped their CRTSE beliefs. Interviews are used in qualitative research studies to provide depth to qualitative research studies (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Creswell & Guetterman, 2018; Marshall et al., 2022). Interviews during the second phase were used to clarify and expand on the previously collected survey data by identifying professional development and observational opportunities that influenced the culturally responsive abilities of general educators from rural schools. Interviews were coded for themes related to self-efficacy, current practices, and experiences that affected their ability to provide culturally responsive instruction. To ensure ethical protocols were followed throughout this research process, the researcher completed training and certification in Ethics and Human Subject Protection through the Association of Clinical Research Professionals (see Appendix D).

Participants

The target population for the initial state of this mixed methods sequential explanatory study is general educators from rural schools across the country. Approximately 21 percent of educators in the United States teach in rural schools (NCES, 2022b). The population of rural general educators was accessed through participant requests and a shared survey link through Facebook, which limited participants to rural general educators who were members of online teaching groups within the social media platform. Facebook is among educators' most widely used social media platforms when seeking professional outreach online (Bowen, 2022; McKeown, 2023). A WeAreTeachers survey revealed Facebook to be the most used social media

site by teachers, with 65% of educators indicating that they belong to at least one education-based Facebook group (MDR Marketing Team, 2023).

Nonprobability criterion sampling and purposeful sampling were utilized to satisfy the research questions. Nonprobability criterions sampling involves participant selection based on characteristics necessary to answer the questions in this study (Creswell & Guetterman, 2018; Suri, 2011). Establishing criteria for sampling allows the researcher to develop a comprehensive understanding of the research (Suri, 2011). Purposeful sampling techniques were used when selecting participants for the qualitative phase of the study. Purposeful qualitative sampling involves selecting people who can contribute to the development of a detailed understanding of the event or issue being examined in the research study (Creswell & Guetterman, 2018; Marshall et al., 2022). The target population for the initial quantitative phase of this research study included general educators from rural schools across the country, and convenience sampling was limited to participants who could be reached through Facebook social media pages.

Nonprobability criterion sampling was used to seek out 38 general educators from rural school districts for the first phase of this study. This study aimed to identify culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy from the perspective of the general educators in rural school districts, so the limiting criteria were necessary. An electronic version of the CRTSE survey was shared via social networking Facebook groups for rural educators. At the end of the survey, participants indicated their interest in participating in an interview following the first phase of the study, and interviewees were purposefully selected from these volunteers based on their overall high or low threshold scores.

The CRTSE was shared through an electronic survey created through Qualtrics. After confirming their status as rural general educators, respondents provided a scaled score from zero

(no confidence) to 100 (complete confidence) on 41 unique culturally responsive instructional techniques. Descriptive analysis was used during the study's first phase to disseminate quantitative data and identify general educators with high and low CRTSE beliefs. High and low efficacy thresholds were determined by using a median split based on the responses of all participants. The first threshold with scores above the median was classified as high self-efficacious, and the second group was deemed low self-efficacious. This technique was modeled after an explanatory mixed methods research study investigating preservice teachers' culturally responsive self-efficacy-forming experience (Siwatu, 2011a). Purposeful sampling was used to select two educators from the high self-efficacy group and two who scored below the high self-efficacy threshold. Four total teachers were chosen as participants for the phase two interviews. Data gathered in this phase provided depth to the quantitative analysis and clarified the research questions in this study. The purposeful sampling technique aimed to represent diverse views based on self-efficacy. Virtual semi-structured interviews elicited information from the respondents about the experiences that shaped their self-efficacy while providing depth to the research. Prior to carrying out this study, the research design was reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Northwest Nazarene University (Appendix F).

Data Collection

This mixed methods sequential exploratory study utilized quantitative and qualitative data to answer the research questions. Pairing quantitative data with qualitative data yields appreciable benefits and adds depth to studied behaviors or events (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Creswell & Guetterman, 2018; Marshall et al., 2022). The first data collection phase utilized the CRTSE Scale to identify the self-efficacy level and culturally responsive instructional strategies used by rural general educators. A Qualtrics link to an electronic version of the CRTSE scale

was posted in Facebook groups for rural educators. Social media websites, such as Facebook, are valid methods for recruiting participants by effectively allowing a single researcher to reach target populations quickly (Bhutta, 2012; Dusek et al., 2015). Facebook outreach provides high response levels that can overcome decreasing trends in traditional research recruitment (Dusek et al., 2015; Trungtreechart, 2022). Participant requests (Appendix E) were posted on educator Facebook groups during the first phase of the study, yielding 38 valid and complete CRTSE surveys from rural general educators. Surveys were followed by semi-structured interviews with four participants in the second phase to clarify quantitative data and provide depth to the research questions.

Although quantitative sample sizes tend to be high and qualitative sample sizes are typically lower, a compromise must be made in mixed-method research to make the study feasible while balancing representativeness and comparability (Teddlie & Yu, 2007). For this study, quantitative data from the CRTSE tool was collected from 38 participants, followed by qualitative interviews from participants from the quantitative pool who completed the CRTSE survey and indicated a willingness to participate in a follow-up interview. Previous studies utilizing the CRTSE instrument varied from 12 to 628 participants (Blanch, 2016; Favors-Welch, 2021; Flory et al., 2023; Lewis-Pratl, 2021; Malo-Juvera et al., 2018; Siwatu, 2011a; Siwatu & Starker, 2010; Siwatu et al., 2016; Sutphin, 2022; Whitaker & Valtierra, 2018; E. R. Williams, 2021). The range for smaller quantitative measurements was between 12 and 54 participants, and the 38 valid responses obtained during the recruitment phase fit into this range. Four follow-up interviews were held with willing participants from the first phase of data collection. Previous mixed methods studies utilizing the CRTSE scale followed the first quantitative phase with two to eight qualitative interviews (Lewis-Pratl, 2021; Siwatu, 2011a; Siwatu et al., 2016; Sutphin,

2022; E. R. Williams, 2021). Although 13 participants indicated in the initial survey that they were willing to participate in a follow-up interview, only four participants responded to requests to schedule and complete interviews during the second phase. Four follow-up interviews fell into the range of interviews used in previous studies. Of the four interviewees, two were within the high self-efficacy threshold, and two were within the low self-efficacy threshold. Five open-ended interview questions were designed to provide qualitative depth to both research questions. The researcher conducted interviews in one-on-one video calls. Participants were assured of the confidentiality of the interviews by using pseudonyms and password-protected files. Video interviews were recorded for verbatim transcription. The following instruments were used for data collection:

CRTSE Scale. The Culturally Responsive Teaching Self-Efficacy (CRTSE) scale is a valid and reliable survey instrument that provides data on teachers' perceptions of their ability to execute specific culturally responsive practices (Siwatu, 2007a, 2011b). An in-depth literature review of culturally responsive instruction revealed a multi-disciplinary list of essential skills and knowledge identified as necessary competencies in curriculum and instruction, student assessment, cultural enrichment, and classroom management (Siwatu, 2007a, 2007b). The CRTSE survey was created to explore the psychometric properties of culturally responsive teaching concerning the established culturally responsive teaching competencies (Siwatu, 2007b). In order for educators to develop culturally responsive teaching environments, they must have a positive belief in their ability to establish culturally-minded behaviors and actions based on relevant knowledge and skills (Bandura, 1977; Bandura & National Institute of Mental Health, 1986; Siwatu, 2007a, 2007b). Gaps in culturally responsive self-efficacy research

necessitated the creation of the CRTSE scale, a valid instrument for measuring culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy (Siwatu, 2007b).

The CRTSE scale lists 41 specific culturally responsive tasks related to the culturally responsive teaching competencies identified by scholars and practitioners of culturally sensitive teaching (Siwatu, 2007a, 2007b; Siwatu et al., 2016). Participants rate their degree of confidence in their ability to carry out each culturally responsive task on a scale from 0 (*no confidence*) to 100 (*completely confident*). The sum of total scores provides a raw overall score between 0 and 4,100 that is then divided by 41 to give each participant a CRTSE strength index between 0 and 100 that is indicative of their CRTSE beliefs (Siwatu, 2007b; Siwatu et al., 2016). Participants with higher mean scores on the CRTSE survey maintain greater confidence in their ability to engage in culturally responsive teaching tasks (Cruz et al., 2019; Siwatu et al., 2017). The 0 to 100 rating scale used for the CRTSE survey produces psychometrically more robust results than a traditional Likert-type scale (Siwatu et al., 2017). The scale was validated through a pilot study to establish high external and internal reliability ($\alpha = .96$) (Siwatu, 2007b; Siwatu et al., 2017). The full survey protocol is included in Appendix B.

Qualitative semi-structured interviews. Reported self-efficacy data were analyzed using statistical analysis to identify participants' mean strength index scores, and participants were ranked from low to high self-efficacy. A median split was used to divide the sample population into high and low efficacy thresholds. Purposeful sampling was used to select two participants from the high self-efficacy threshold and four from the low self-efficacy threshold. These four participants participated in phase two post-survey interviews. The chosen participants indicated a willingness to participate in follow-up interviews upon completing the electronic survey administered in phase one. The semi-structured interviews were conducted virtually and

followed an adapted five-question interview protocol (Appendix C) established with the CRTSE survey, exempting questions specific to preservice teachers who participated in the initial instrument research (Siwatu, 2011a).

Follow-up interviews provided depth and clarity to the data collected during the first phase of the research study. Interview participants were provided with their mean strength index scores and asked questions about their high or low self-efficacious ranking based on the data set's thresholds. Survey data also elicited descriptions of opportunities for learning, practicing, or observing culturally responsive teaching. All survey questions informed the research questions in this study. Interviews were recorded, transcribed verbatim, and examined for themes or categories. As required by law, the researcher will maintain all recordings and transcriptions for this study for five years, after which they will be destroyed. During the study, data were secured in a locked file cabinet or within password-protected digital files accessible only to the researcher.

Pilot Interviews. Pilot studies are used to inform the researcher about the acceptability of the procedures to be used in a larger study, determine the feasibility of intended data collection methods, establish methods of participant recruitment, and identify problem areas to adjust before administering the instrument with a larger sample population (Connelly, 2008; Morin, 2023; Spurlock, 2018). Pilot studies consist of small samples of the target population, and participants may be recruited through convenience sampling methods with a plan to incorporate a more representative sample in the larger study (Connelly, 2008). Pilot studies are important when planning a research study as they help predict problems with procedures or study plans (Connelly, 2008; Morin, 2023). While pilot studies can be an effective way to test instruments,

they should not inform the hypothesis or intended outcome of the research (Morin, 2023; Spurlock, 2018).

The pilot study involved administering the CRTSE survey and validated a four-question interview protocol to three general educators from rural schools selected through convenience sampling. The purpose of the pilot study was to determine if the questions on the interview protocol were clear to participants within their contexts and establish if responses answered the applicable research questions. It also served as an opportunity to adjust the interview protocol questions and allow the researcher to practice data recording methods before collecting data for use in the study. After completing the pilot interviews, questions 2, 3, and 4 were reworded to be more concise and reference culturally responsive instruction using terms more familiar to general educators (i.e., instruction for English learners). Question 5 was removed from the interview protocol, leaving the protocol with four total questions instead of five.

Quantitative data from the CRTSE scale was imported into SPSS and analyzed to provide individual strength index scores and independent samples *t*-tests, although the results were not valid due to the small sample size, and the data did not inform the study. The feasibility of data collection through an electronic Qualtrics survey with the ability to organize the data in SPSS proved to be sufficient. Recorded semi-structured interviews through Google Meet with transcription through Otter.ai and handwritten field notes also proved viable methods for qualitative data collection. After minor adjustments were made to questions on the interview protocol, the pilot study was concluded.

Content Validity

Content validity assesses the degree to which an instrument relates to and measures its intended target (Polit & Beck, 2006; Yusoff, 2019). After an instrument has been developed with

items specific to its research domain, experts must determine the validity of individual items and the instrument (Lynn, 1986). The content validity of individual items, or I-CVI, is developed to specify the degree to which an item is determined to be relevant by an expert review panel by identifying the portion of expert review members who establish an item as relevant through a rating of 3 or 4 on a 1 to 4 scale (Lynn, 1986; Polit & Beck, 2006). The total sum of relevant item ratings is divided by the total number of ratings to produce the scale-level content validity index based on the average method, or the S-CVI/Ave (Lynn, 1986; Yusoff, 2019). The proportion of items achieving 100% relevance ratings by the full panel is divided by the total number of items on the scale to calculate the S-CVI based on the universal agreement method (Lynn, 1986; Polit & Beck, 2006; Polit et al., 2007; Yusoff, 2019).

A seven-member expert panel reviewed the five-question interview protocol to establish content validity through independent Google Form submissions. All panel members unanimously agreed that every question was relevant by indicating their level of agreement on a four-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 4 (Strongly Agree), with all ratings received being 3 (Agree) or 4 (Strongly Agree). The results of the content validity index (CVI) are shown in Table 4.

Table 4

Relevance Ratings on the Interview Protocol by Seven Experts

	Experts							Experts in Agreement	I-CVI	UA
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7			
Q1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	7	1	1
Q2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	7	1	1
Q3	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	7	1	1
Q4	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	7	1	1
Q5	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	7	1	1
								S-CVI/Ave	1	
PR*	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	S-CVI/UA		1
Ave proportion of items judged as relevant by 7 experts								1		

* Proportion relevance

Note. Question 5 was included in the expert review but was removed from the protocol after the pilot study.

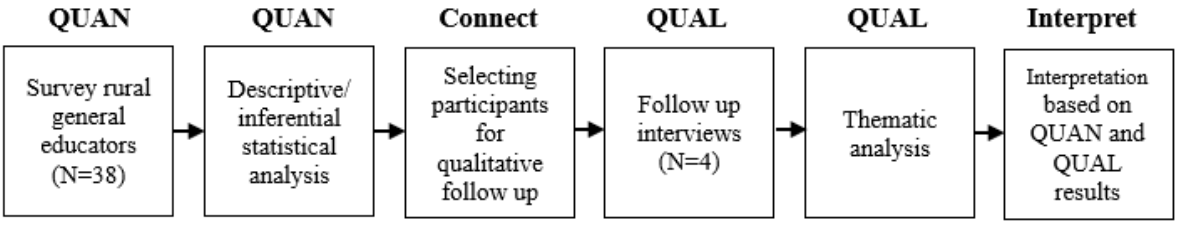
In order for items and instruments to be considered valid by a seven-member review panel, the CVI must be 0.83 or higher (Lynn, 1986). Based on the ratings of the instrument validation survey, the interview protocol achieved content validity.

Analytical Methods

In mixed methods studies, sequential explanatory designs involve collecting and analyzing quantitative data before collecting and analyzing qualitative data to clarify and refine qualitative results (Hashemi, 2023; Ivankova & Creswell, 2009; Ivankova et al., 2006). Figure 6 shows the data collection and analysis process utilized for this mixed methods sequential explanatory design.

Figure 6

Mixed Methods Sequential Explanatory Design Data Collection and Analysis



Note. This image depicts sample sizes and steps for the research design used in this study. The necessary steps for a mixed methods sequential explanatory design are laid out by Ivankova and Creswell (2009) and Ivankova et al. (2006).

Quantitative data analysis is often categorized through descriptive statistics, including measures of central tendency and frequency (Hashemi, 2023; Ivankova & Creswell, 2009). The second qualitative phase is meant to provide more meaningful data to inform the quantitative data from phase one and often involves participant interviews (Ivankova & Creswell, 2009; Ivankova et al., 2006). The first phase of quantitative research is described in detail and followed by qualitative data analysis (Hashemi, 2023; Ivankova & Creswell, 2009; Ivankova et al., 2006). Priority is often given to quantitative data during mixed methods sequential explanatory designs because it guides the qualitative phase of data collection and is representative of the main themes related to the purpose of the study and research questions (Ivankova et al., 2006).

With the first research question in mind, the quantitative scale data from the CRTSE survey was analyzed and moderately quantified to produce a rank for each self-evaluated participant in the study. Overall scores were reviewed for each participant and were identified as high-efficacy or low-efficacy culturally responsive teaching levels using a median split. Qualitative interviews explored teachers' feelings of efficacy regarding their perceived ability to

provide culturally responsive instruction for English learners and explored the experiences of rural teachers that shaped their culturally responsive teaching confidence.

Quantitative and qualitative methods were also used to inform the second research question. Frequencies obtained from the CRTSE were observed to identify the tasks educators implemented with the highest and lowest confidence levels. During qualitative interviews, educators identified the culturally responsive instructional strategies from the CRTSE tasks that they used the most in their current teaching settings. The semi-structured interviews were recorded, transcribed, and organized along with the quantitative measures from the initial phase to produce a list of the culturally responsive strategies most used by rural general educators. Interviews were coded for themes and analyzed by the researcher to triangulate this study's quantitative and qualitative findings.

Validity and Reliability.

The tools used by the researcher in this study were established protocols designed to track and identify culturally responsive instructional strategies. The CRTSE is a valid and reliable tool developed to determine the self-efficacy levels of educators regarding their ability to implement culturally responsive teaching strategies (Cruz et al., 2019; Fitchett et al., 2012; Siwatu, 2007a, 2011b). The established interview protocols were established to expound on the quantitative data produced by the CRTSE (Siwatu, 2007b). The interview protocol was adapted to exclude questions limited to preservice teachers to fit the participants in this study. The researcher piloted the adapted interview questions prior to the beginning of this study to establish validity and reliability when using survey instruments and to produce the targeted data. A seven-member panel of rural educators reviewed the CRTSE scale items and the adapted interview protocol.

Modifications were made to provide clarity and elicit specific answers after consensus for changes was reached across the panel.

Limitations

The purpose of this study was to investigate the use of culturally responsive instructional techniques in rural, intermediate-grade general education classrooms. The researcher took steps to eliminate variances and ensure the quality of the study; however, limitations are present in every study. The limitations of this study are listed below:

- The participant sample size of this study was relatively small, and the results may not be generalizable to other rural schools in the nation.
- Participants were limited to rural general educators who could be reached through Facebook, a social media platform.
- Online surveys may underrepresent members of a target population who are members of racial and ethnic groups or participants with limited financial resources or education (Bhutta, 2012).
- Electronic surveys may reach unintended participants or be completed multiple times by a single participant.

As social media continues to play an increasing role in personal and professional associations, web-based sample populations become more representative of the actual population. Given the ease of reaching large populations that share attributes or interests, an electronic survey shared through Facebook was an ideal method for collecting pertinent quantitative data in a timely manner, allowing the researcher to have time for follow-up interviews in the second phase of the study.

Role of the Researcher

Researcher bias can taint a study and call the validity of the results into question (Marshall et al., 2022). At the time of this study, the researcher had recently completed the special education referral process for her daughter, an adopted eleven-year-old English learner. In addition, the researcher has a seven-year-old EL daughter who was also adopted. Theories of culturally responsive instruction are of great interest to the researcher due to their applicability to young family members, which is why the researcher is invested in this study. In addition, the data collected came from sources such as the self-efficacy survey and the semi-structured interview, so the researcher could not direct the data. The researcher is also a fourth-grade rural school teacher.

Chapter IV: Results

Researchers have established the necessity of culturally responsive teaching practices when instructing English learners (Adam & Byrne, 2023; Cummins, 2021; Gay, 2015; Mensah, 2021; Muniz, 2020). The theory of linguistic interdependence asserts that ELs require instruction that embraces their background knowledge, language, and culture while providing sociocultural validation and maximizing literacy and academic content in their L1 and L2 (Cummins, 2011, 2021). Culturally responsive teaching involves embracing ELs' cultural diversity through curriculum and communication and helps close the academic achievement gap for ELs (Aceves & Orosco, 2014; Debnam et al., 2023; Gay, 2002, 2010, 2015). Failing to address the diverse needs of ELs lessens the quality of their education and limits their academic progress, widening the achievement gap between ELs and non-ELs (Debnam et al., 2023; Gay, 2015; Karatas, 2020; Siwatu et al., 2016). A lack of culturally responsive expertise also makes it difficult for educators to differentiate between ELs' language needs and learning disabilities, which can result in unnecessary special education referrals and services or withholding services that are critical for academic growth and support (Griner & Stewart, 2013; Kangas, 2014, 2015; Yamasaki & Luk, 2018).

Many general educators lack proficiency and confidence when attending to the needs of their diverse learners despite EL coursework embedded within teacher education programs (T. Gonzalez et al., 2021; Hadjioannou et al., 2016; Hoover et al., 2015; Siwatu, 2011a, 2011b). Because ELs in public schools spend the majority, if not all, of their school day in general education classrooms, they are largely left without the culturally responsive support they need if their teachers are not adequately employing strategies that attend to their diverse needs (Christensen et al., 2018; Hadjioannou et al., 2016; Wanzek et al., 2016). When teachers have

high levels of self-efficacy in providing culturally responsive instruction, they are able to help ELs develop positive academic outcomes for ELs (Gay, 2015; Karatas, 2020; Siwatu et al., 2016).

For those diverse learners attending schools in rural areas, there exist many challenges accessing the culturally responsive education they need (Arsen et al., 2021; Dobis et al., 2021; Lavalley, 2018; Tieken & Montgomery, 2021). Rural schools face challenges in recruiting and retaining highly qualified teachers with experience and expertise in teaching diverse students (Dobis et al., 2021; Echazarra & Radinger, 2019; Lavalley, 2018; Tieken & Montgomery, 2021). Funding constraints limit opportunities for culturally responsive professional development (Hoover et al., 2020; Lavalley, 2018; Newell & Looser, 2017). Despite the added challenges, rural educators must be prepared to teach their growing number of diverse learners (Lavalley, 2018; Tieken & Montgomery, 2021).

Self-efficacy plays a critical role in the ability and performance of teachers, as one's belief in their ability to produce a specific result strongly predicts their behavior (Bandura, 1977, 2006; Bandura & National Institute of Mental Health, 1986; Siwatu, 2007b). With culturally responsive instruction and associated self-efficacy of rural educators in mind, the questions guiding this research study were the following:

RQ1: What culturally responsive instructional techniques are being used in rural general education classrooms?

RQ2: How confident are general educators from rural schools in their ability to provide culturally responsive instruction for students who are English learners?

Chapter four reviews the quantitative and qualitative findings for each research question involved in this mixed methods study.

The data collection for this study was described in great detail in Chapter III. The results and particular demographics of the sample, along with the outcomes of the mixed methods data collection in this study, will be shared in Chapter IV. Chapter IV will also offer findings relevant to the two research questions involved in this study. The sample characteristics will be disaggregated before the quantitative data from phase one and qualitative data from phase two are applied to the research questions.

Sample Characteristics

Data collection began by using Facebook to recruit rural general educators to participate through an electronic link to the Culturally Responsive Teaching Self-Efficacy scale. Thirty-eight responses were completed and met the criteria for inclusion in this study. An overall strength index score was calculated for each participant by adding the total value of self-scored items on the survey and dividing the sum by 41 (the total number of items educators rated themselves on when completing the CRTSE scale). A median split was used to divide the data set into a high and low efficacy threshold. The second data collection phase involved interviewing two participants from the high-threshold group and two from the low-threshold group. Requests for interviews were sent to all participants who had indicated at the end of the CRTSE survey that they were willing to participate in a follow-up interview. The first two participants from each threshold to respond to the follow-up interview were selected to participate in the qualitative portion of the surveys.

The target demographic for this research study was general educators in rural schools across the country. Outreach was done through Facebook, thus limiting the pool of participants to rural educators who were members of education-related groups within the Facebook platform. The electronic CRTSE survey link was shared on rural educator Facebook pages from November

2023 through January 2024 and yielded 69 responses. Demographic information collected at the beginning of the survey verified that respondents were general education teachers. Seven of the 69 participants indicated they were not general educators and were directed to the end of the survey without contributing additional demographic information or self-efficacy scores.

Further demographic information was sought to confirm participants' status as general educators from rural school districts. Two participants indicated that neither the school nor the district where they taught was rural, and they were directed to the end of the survey without contributing further demographic information or self-efficacy scores. Two participants responded that they were unsure whether their school or district was rural, and although they provided self-efficacy scores, their data was not included in this study as their status as rural general educators could not be verified. Of the 58 remaining responses, twenty were incomplete and had to be thrown out. These respondents provided the initial demographic information, confirming their status as general educators in rural schools, but they did not submit self-efficacy scores. Due to the lack of quantitative data, these twenty responses were not included in the data set. The removal of incomplete data sets and responses from participants who did not meet the criteria for this study was a necessary step to ensure the validity of the results as they pertain to the research questions.

The final survey participants were 38 rural general educators from 12 of 50 states across the country. The highest number of participants were rural educators in Idaho, with 14 respondents from this state. The second highest number of participants came from rural schools in Alabama, with 11 respondents. Approximately 66% of the valid responses were from educators in Idaho and Alabama. The number of participants by state is shown in Table 5.

Table 5

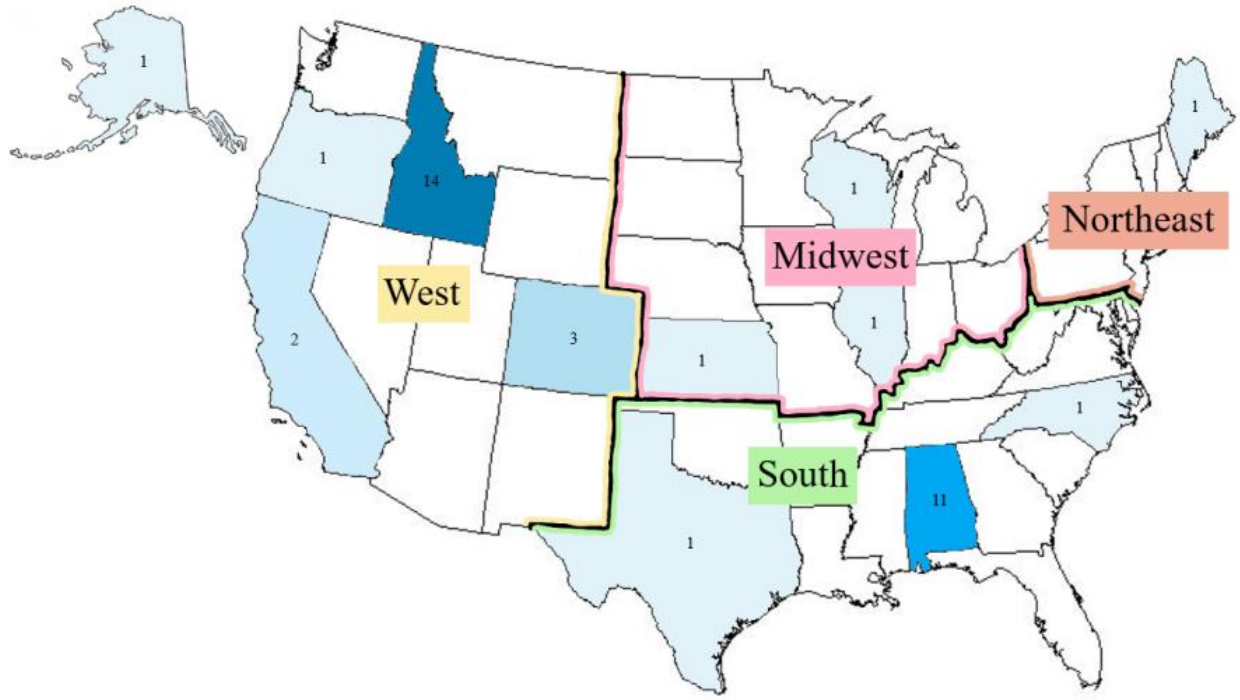
Participant Breakdown by State

State	Number of Participants
Alabama	11
Alaska	1
California	2
Colorado	3
Idaho	14
Illinois	1
Kansas	1
Maine	1
North Carolina	1
Oregon	1
Texas	1
Wisconsin	1
Total	38

While the participants represent nearly one-quarter of the states in the U.S., comparisons by region were not feasible. Although the participant numbers from the West and South regions are robust enough for a regional comparison, the low representation of participants from the Midwest and Northeast regions is too small. The Midwest and Northeast regions have sample sizes of less than five, with three participants and one participant, respectively. Combining the regions to increase the group size would dilute the accuracy of the result, so no statistical tests were run to compare individual strength index scores of rural general educators by region. The participant summary by region is shown in Figure 7.

Figure 7

Demographic Summary by Region



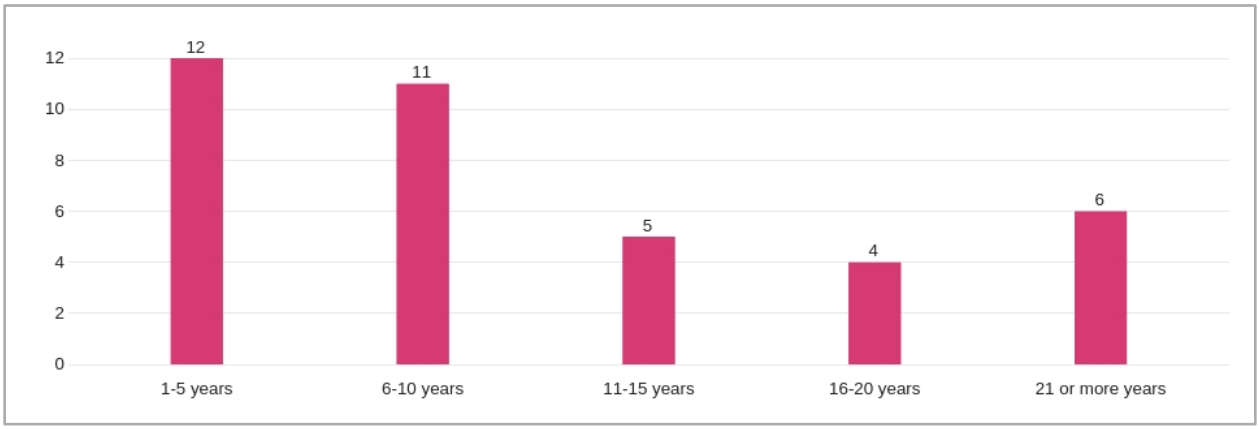
Note. The demographic breakdown by region shows the uneven spread of participants by region, with high participant numbers in the West (n = 21) and South (n = 13) but low representation in the Northeast (n = 1) and Midwest (n = 3).

The years of teaching experience for the rural general educators in this study varied from one year of experience to 21 or more years of experience, with nearly one-third of the participants in their first five years of teaching. The spread of years in the field of education allowed for comparisons between participants with varying years of teaching experience. Participants were grouped into those with one to ten years of teaching experience (M = 78.4957) and those who had been teaching for 11 or more years (M = 79.5747). An independent samples t-test revealed that there was not a significant difference in the individual strength index scores for rural general educators who were in their first ten years of teaching and teachers with 11 or more

years of experience, t(36) = -.219, p = .828. The amount of teaching experience of the sample demographic is displayed in Figure 8.

Figure 8

Participants' Years of Experience

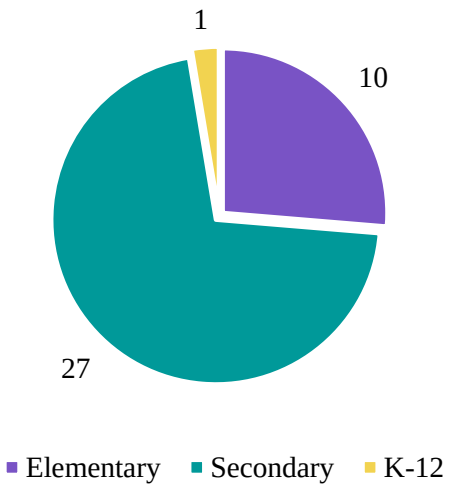


Note. Figure 8 shows that the greatest number of participants had one to five years of teaching experience (n = 12), followed by participants with six to ten years of experience (n = 11).

Participants in this study were general educators of all grades from preschool to twelfth grade. The most significant number of participants were secondary school teachers. The elementary group included all of the primary grades, from preschool through fifth grade, while the secondary group included teachers of grades six through twelve. Although sixth grade can be considered an elementary school grade, it was grouped as a secondary grade. It is more common for sixth grade to be housed in a middle school than an elementary school, given that there are approximately 13,000 middle schools housing sixth grade in the U.S., compared to about 2,500 junior high schools across the country (Craft, 2023; We Are Teachers Staff, 2023). The current grades taught by participants in this study are shown in Figure 9.

Figure 9

Grade(s) Currently Taught by Participants



Note. The single participant who reported teaching all elementary and secondary grades was not included in the independent *t*-test, which compared the individual strength index scores between elementary and secondary teachers.

The mean individual strength index score for the ten rural general educators who taught elementary school (M = 79.64, SD = 13.04) was slightly higher than it was for the 27 secondary teachers (M = 78.27, SD = 15.51). An independent samples *t*-test concluded that the difference between groups was not significant, t(35) = .248, p = .805. The individual strength index score for the participant who reported teaching all grades from preschool to twelfth grade was not included in the *t*-test.

CRTSE Tool

During the quantitative phase of this mixed methods sequential explanatory study, the researcher utilized the valid and reliable Culturally Responsive Teaching Self-Efficacy to attain the self-efficacy ratings of 38 rural school general educators when implementing 41 culturally

responsive tasks. Tasks ranged from easier-to-implement general teaching practices to tasks requiring greater levels of culturally responsive expertise. Participants ranked their confidence level for each item using a scale from 0 (not confident) to 100 (extremely confident). Individual scores were summed and divided by 41 to provide each participant with an overall strength index score, and participants were sorted into a high or low efficacy threshold based on a median split of all strength index scores, setting the stage for the second phase of the study. Two participants from each threshold were selected to participate in semi-structured interviews for a total of four interviews, providing context and depth through a qualitative lens. Results were viewed first through a quantitative lens, followed by a qualitative lens to replicate the order in which data was collected and organized. Finally, quantitative and qualitative data were combined to provide a meaningful look at this study's results.

Research Question 1

Rural educators typically lack funding, resources, and professional development opportunities (Arsen et al., 2021; Hoover & Soltero-Gonzalez, 2018; Hoover et al., 2020; Lavalley, 2018). As the population of culturally diverse students in rural schools increases, rural educators face more challenges in providing culturally relevant instruction (Showalter et al., 2019; Siwatu et al., 2016; Tieken & Montgomery, 2021). Preservice teachers enter the educational landscape with higher confidence levels when implementing culturally responsive strategies that involve the development of positive relationships with their students than carrying out culturally responsive strategies that involve the integration of students' cultures or require communication with ELs and their parents (Siwatu et al., 2016, 2017). This study examined the gap in research regarding the self-efficacy of general educators serving in rural schools when implementing culturally responsive instruction. Prior research has been conducted regarding the

culturally responsive self-efficacy levels of preservice and practicing teachers, but the self-efficacy levels of general educators from rural schools have not been explored.

The first research question to guide this study sought to identify which culturally responsive instructional techniques are used by general educators in rural schools. The CRTSE scale (Appendix B) was used during the first data collection phase to quantify educators' use of 41 culturally responsive instructional items. While educators provided a score from 0 to 100, reflecting their belief in their ability to complete each item, further context was gained through qualitative semi-structured interviews in the second phase of the data collection, when teachers answered whether or not they had ever employed each strategy. The quantitative data provided a glimpse into areas where rural educators could struggle to implement culturally responsive instruction. Educators' perceived self-efficacy directly impacts their instructional quality, so higher levels of self-efficacy reflect higher instructional quality and lower self-efficacy reflects lessened instructional quality (Bandura, 2006; Leijen et al., 2024).

Quantitative Results

The theory of self-efficacy connects the belief one has in oneself to one's behaviors (Artino, 2012; Bandura, 1977, 2012; Hysong & Quinones, 1997). Self-efficacy beliefs can be predictors of behavior and outcomes. For this reason, items receiving scores of 100 or close to 100 on the CRTSE instrument indicate the culturally responsive teaching strategies that are implemented in rural schools. Items receiving scores close to zero strongly indicate tasks that some rural general educators are not implementing. The minimum, maximum, and mean scores for each of the 41 tasks included on the CRTSE scale are included in Table 6.

Strategies Used by Rural General Educators. More than half of the survey respondents in this study rated their self-efficacy level on Item 3, "determine whether my

students like to work alone or in a group," at 100 (n = 20). Twenty-seven participants rated themselves at 95 or higher (71%), and thirty-five rated their self-efficacy level at 90 or above (92%). Item 3 also received the highest item-specific mean (m = 93.79) and median (Mdn = 100). A continuum of culturally responsive teaching practices is reflected in the items on the CRTSE scale, as culturally responsive teaching comprises easier-to-implement general teaching practices and more difficult-to-implement culturally sensitive practices (Siwatu, 2007b). Item 3 leans toward the easier side of the continuum; thus, it is unsurprising that it received the highest scores.

Two strategies from the CRTSE scale received scores of 100 from just under half of the participants- Item 9, "build a sense of trust in my students," and Item 20, "develop a personal relationship with my students-" with each item receiving 17 responses indicating complete confidence (45%). Item 9 and Item 20 each received 24 responses at confidence levels of 95 or higher, showing that 59% of the sample population feel highly capable of implementing both items. Item 20 received 33 scores of 90 or higher (87%), and Item 9 received 30 scores of 90 or higher (79%). Items 20 and 9 received the second and third-highest item-specific means of 93.18 and 92.53, respectively. Item-specific medians revealed high levels of self-efficacy by more than half of the sample population, with Item 9 receiving a median score of 96.50 and Item 20 receiving a median score of 95.

Table 6

CRTSE Item-Specific Results

Item		Min	Max	Mean	Standard Deviation
I am able to:					
1	adapt instruction to meet the needs of my students	50	100	83.55	12.651
2	obtain information about my students' academic strengths	50	100	88.21	13.477
3	determine whether my students like to work alone or in a group	50	100	93.79	11.752
4	determine whether my students feel comfortable competing with other students	50	100	89.03	12.312
5	identify ways that the school culture (e.g., values, norms, and practices) is different from my students' home culture	40	100	75.24	17.320
6	implement strategies to minimize the effects of the mismatch between my students' home culture and the school culture	25	100	69.87	20.620
7	assess student learning using various types of assessments	50	100	87.00	12.636
8	obtain information about my students' home life	15	100	78.13	20.958
9	build a sense of trust in my students	50	100	92.53	10.699
10	establish positive home-school relations	10	100	85.32	18.553
11	use a variety of teaching methods	25	100	88.87	16.682
12	develop a community of learners when my class consists of students from diverse backgrounds	10	100	83.58	18.269
13	use my students' cultural background to help make learning meaningful	50	100	80.55	17.084
14	use my students' prior knowledge to help them make sense of new information	10	100	83.63	17.845
15	identify ways how students communicate at home may differ from the school norms	0	100	75.03	24.061
16	obtain information about my students' cultural background	10	100	78.26	21.172
17	teach students about their cultures' contributions to science	0	100	59.18	34.594
18	greet English Language Learners with a phrase in their native language	0	100	66.53	35.186
19	design a classroom environment using displays that reflects a variety of cultures	10	100	68.53	26.184
20	develop a personal relationship with my students	50	100	93.18	9.967
21	obtain information about my students' academic weaknesses	10	100	88.45	16.398
22	praise English Language Learners for their accomplishments using a phrase in their native language	0	100	61.61	36.953
23	identify ways that standardized tests may be biased towards linguistically diverse students	0	100	62.74	30.899
24	communicate with parents regarding their child's educational progress	10	100	84.39	20.425
25	structure parent-teacher conferences so that the meeting is not intimidating for parents	10	100	83.47	20.125
26	help students to develop positive relationships with their classmates	10	100	85.45	16.839
27	revise instructional material to include a better representation of cultural groups	0	100	68.00	27.640
28	critically examine the curriculum to determine whether it reinforces negative cultural stereotypes	0	100	72.45	27.991
29	design a lesson that shows how other cultural groups have made use of mathematics	0	100	60.76	33.572
30	model classroom tasks to enhance English Language Learners' understanding	20	100	77.00	21.640
31	communicate with the parents of English Language Learners regarding their child's achievement	0	100	69.92	25.526
32	help students feel like important members of the classroom	50	100	90.61	10.430

Item		Min	Max	Mean	Standard Deviation
33	identify ways that standardized tests may be biased towards culturally diverse students	0	100	68.13	26.672
34	use a learning preference inventory to gather data about how my students like to learn	1	100	79.47	24.611
35	use examples that are familiar to students from diverse cultural backgrounds	1	100	71.39	24.313
36	explain new concepts using examples that are taken from my students' everyday lives	1	100	78.61	23.431
37	obtain information regarding my students' academic interests	50	100	86.82	13.542
38	use the interests of my students to make learning meaningful for them	20	100	83.11	16.892
39	implement cooperative learning activities for those students who like to work in groups	50	100	87.76	13.288
40	design instruction that matches my students' developmental needs	20	100	83.24	18.083
41	teach students about their cultures' contributions to society	20	100	72.34	24.079

Note. The maximum and minimum scores are indicators of whether or not rural general educators are utilizing specific strategies.

Both of the strategies referred to by these items are related to general teaching practices and fall on the easier end of the continuum of culturally responsive competencies. The higher scores indicate a high likelihood of corresponding behaviors, making these strategies likely to occur in rural general education classrooms.

Item 11, "use a variety of teaching methods," had the fourth-highest frequency of 100 scores (n = 16, 42%) and scores of 95 or above (n = 22, 58%). Twenty-five participants rated themselves with scores of 90 or higher on Item 11, representing 66% of the sample population. The item-specific mean was 88.87, which falls outside the 90 or higher threshold. However, the median of individual scores was 95, indicating higher scores by over half of the participants but a wide spread of confidence levels for those scoring themselves in the lower threshold. Item 11 falls toward the general teaching end of the culturally responsive continuum and, based on these results, is most likely being implemented in approximately half of rural general education classrooms.

No other items that received scores of 95 or higher comprised more than half of the sample population, so the strength between high self-efficacy scores leading to associated behaviors begins to weaken slightly. Despite the lowered frequencies of 95 or higher scores, high confidence levels from more than half the sample population are still visible at the 90 or higher level. The confidence levels when implementing the following twelve items indicate a likely chance that these strategies are being used in rural general education classrooms:

- Item 32, “help students feel like important members of the classroom,” received 28 scores of 90 or higher (74%) with an item-specific mean of 90.61 and median of 90.
- Item 4, “determine whether my students like to work alone or in a group,” received 28 scores of 90 or higher (74%) with an item-specific mean of 89.03 and median of 90.
- Item 21, “obtain information about my students’ academic weaknesses,” received 27 scores of 90 or higher (71%) with an item-specific mean of 88.45 and median of 90.
- Item 2, “obtain information about my students’ academic strengths,” received 27 scores of 90 or higher (71%) with an item-specific mean of 88.21 and median of 90.
- Item 10, “establish positive home-school relations,” received 26 scores of 90 or higher (68%) with an item-specific mean of 85.32 and median of 90.
- Item 39, “implement cooperative learning activities for those students who like to work in groups,” received 24 scores of 90 or higher (63%) with an item-specific mean of 87.76 and median of 90.
- Item 37, "obtain information regarding my students’ academic interests,” received 22 scores of 90 or higher (58%) with an item-specific mean of 86.82 and median of 90.
- Item 26, “help students to develop positive relationships with their classmates,” received 22 scores of 90 or higher (58%) with an item-specific mean of 85.45 and median of 90.

- Item 24, “communicate with parents regarding their child’s educational progress,” received 21 scores of 90 or higher (55%) with an item-specific mean of 84.39 and median of 91.
- Item 34, “use a learning preference inventory to gather data about how my students like to learn,” received 21 scores of 90 or higher (55%) with an item-specific mean of 79.47 and median of 90.
- Item 7, “assess student learning using various types of assessments,” received 20 scores of 90 or higher (53%) with an item-specific mean of 87 and median of 90.
- Item 12, “develop a community of learners when my class consists of students from diverse backgrounds,” received 20 scores of 90 or higher (53%) with an item-specific mean of 83.58 and median of 90.

The items listed above, with the exception of Item 12, are nearer to the general teaching end of the culturally responsive teaching continuum and represent skills more common to general educators. Item 12 introduces a skill where cultural sensitivity and awareness are necessary, so it falls on the more difficult end of the continuum. Although more than half of the sample expressed higher levels of self-efficacy when implementing Item 12, the item-specific mean indicates a wider spread of scores for those who scored themselves below the median.

Based on the quantitative results, all of the culturally responsive strategies from the CRTSE scale are being used in rural general education classrooms by some educators at some point. However, some occur with considerably less frequency and confidence. Culturally responsive practices common to general teaching are implemented more confidently and likely more frequently than practices that require greater skill, knowledge, and experience with cultural diversity.

Strategies Used with Less Confidence and Frequency. Low self-efficacy scores can predict the likelihood of someone failing to exemplify a specified behavior. The theory of self-efficacy asserts that people with low self-efficacy for certain tasks are more likely to give in to barriers preventing them from completing the tasks and are less likely to perform the task in question (Bandura, 2012; Hysong & Quinones, 1997). This study revealed culturally responsive instructional techniques that are not being confidently or effectively implemented in rural general education classrooms. These culturally responsive techniques were identified as those with self-efficacy scores of 40 or below.

Item 22 on the CRTSE scale, "praise English Language Learners for their accomplishments using a phrase in their native language," received the most significant amount of 0 (no confidence at all) scores, with five participants (13% of sample participants) rating themselves at 0. Seven participants ranked their self-efficacy below 10 (18%), nine rated themselves less than 20 (24%), 10 ranked themselves below 30 (26%), and 12 ranked themselves at 40 or below (32%). Item 22 had an item-specific mean of 61.61 and a median of 80, which reveals the wide range between participants in the lower, less confident threshold.

Item 18, "greet English Language Learners with a phrase in their native language," was among the ten lowest-scored items on the scale. Ten people scored themselves at 40 or below (26%) on Item 18, with two rankings of 0 (5%). Conversing with ELs in their native language(s) requires higher cultural competence and sensitivity, so Items 22 and 18 fall on the more challenging end of the CRTSE continuum. Most teachers need to have specific training, preparation, or access to resources to be able to implement such strategies.

The culturally responsive strategy with the lowest item-specific mean was Item 17, "teach students about their cultures' contributions to science" (M = 59.18). Four educators

ranked their self-efficacy level regarding this task as 0 (no confidence at all), representing 11% of the overall sample. Nine educators ranked themselves less than 10 (24%), and 11 ranked themselves at 40 or below (29%). This item falls on the difficult side of the continuum and requires teachers to have background knowledge of cultures' contributions to the specific content area of science. A math or economics teacher may consider this item as one they would not implement within their content areas, which may affect the self-efficacy scores. Item 29, "design a lesson that shows how other cultural groups have made use of mathematics," may have received low rankings due to the belief that math teachers would or should be the only educators to implement this strategy. Eleven participants ranked their self-efficacy level for Item 29 at 40 or below (29% of the sample), with nine of those scores at 20 or below (24%) and three scores indicating no confidence at all (8%). The item-specific mean of Item 29 was the second lowest at 60.76, and the median of 72.50 was the second lowest of all scale items.

Item 23, "identify ways that standardized tests may be biased toward linguistically diverse students," had the lowest item-specific median score (Mdn = 65) and the fourth lowest mean (M = 62.74). A similar strategy was used in Item 33, which "identify ways that standardized tests may be biased towards culturally diverse students," and had one of the lowest item-specific medians (Mdn = 75) and means (M = 68.13). Items 23 and 33 received scores of 40 or below from eight (21%) and five (13%) participants, respectively, with each receiving two 0 scores. The discrepancy between linguistically and culturally diverse students may have been overlooked, as the two items are similarly worded. Some teachers may not be familiar with the specific language requirements or assumed cultural references involved in standardized tests, and identifying biases requires culturally responsive awareness. Both items fall on the difficult end of the continuum and require training and specific skills to implement.

Four additional culturally responsive items received item-specific mean scores below 70 and would be considered less likely to be implemented in rural general education classrooms. The items include:

- Item 27, “revise instructional material to include a better representation of cultural groups,” received an item-specific mean of 68 and a median of 77.50, with two (5%) 0 ratings and six ratings of 40 or below (16%).
- Item 19, “design a classroom environment using displays that reflect a variety of cultures,” received an item-specific mean of 68.53 and a median of 75, with 3 participants (8%) scoring themselves 10 or below and five scoring 40 or below (13%).
- Item 6, “implement strategies to minimize the effects of the mismatch between my students’ home culture and the school culture,” received an item-specific mean of 69.87 and a median of 75, with four participants scoring themselves 30 or below (11%).
- Item 31, “communicate with the parents of English Language Learners regarding their child’s achievement,” received an item-specific mean of 69.92 and a median of 75, with one participant (3%) providing a score of 0 and five (13%) participants scoring 40 or below.

Each of the above items requires specific training and skills to implement. These items fall on the difficult side of the CRTSE continuum, and some, like Item 31, require bilingual or multilingual skills. Low salaries and limited hiring pools create challenges for rural schools when attempting to recruit teachers with experience teaching ELs, and funding constraints make it difficult to secure culturally responsive professional development (Arsen et al., 2021; Lavalley, 2018; Showalter et al., 2019; Tieken & Montgomery, 2021). ELs in rural schools are receiving less of the instruction they need in their general education classroom with regard to maximizing

literacy and academic content in their L1 and L2, engaging their background, language, and culture, and providing the necessary sociocultural validation. Resources to support culturally responsive strategy implementation were explored in the qualitative phase.

Qualitative Results

Four participants participated in semi-structured interviews during the second phase of the study to discover which culturally responsive instructional techniques were being used in rural general education classrooms. Two participants obtained individual strength index scores in the upper threshold of overall scores, and two obtained scores that fell in the lower threshold, as determined by a median split. The interviews provided insight into how strategies were being implemented.

Strategies Used by Rural General Educators. All four teachers interviewed listed the top four items (Items 4, 20, 9, and 11) from the quantitative portion of the study as techniques they use in their rural general education classrooms, thus strengthening the quantitative claim. Several participants expressed strong feelings about implementing these strategies, which are considered general teaching practices and lean toward the easier end of the CRTSE continuum. When discussing Item 4 (determine whether my students like to work alone or in a group), Hattie stated, “Yeah, that’s pretty obvious,” and Gwyneth responded, “Of course! I do that for all my students.” Layla added, “Yeah, I get that the first day.” Gwyneth mentioned that she works hard to develop positive rapport with all of her students, and it is something she works on all year. Similar sentiments were shared by the interviewees when discussing Item 9 (build a sense of trust in my students). When asked if he had implemented Item 9, Jamal responded, “Absolutely, yes!” Layla added that building trust is one of her strong points, and Gwyneth mentioned that she builds trust with everybody. Regardless of their placement in the high or low threshold, these

teachers are clearly implementing these strategies not just for their ELs but for all of their students.

Strategies Used with Less Confidence and Frequency. The qualitative phase informed and supported the quantitative data from the first phase of the study. At least one interviewee per item shared that they were not implementing one of the strategies with the lowest self-efficacy scores. The lowest-ranked strategy from phase one was to praise an English Language Learner using a phrase in their native language (Item 22). Jerome admitted that he is sometimes able to incorporate this strategy into his teaching, but Layla responded that she did not implement this strategy at all. Item 18 (greet English Language Learners with a phrase in their native language) had similar positive and negative responses, with Jerome acknowledging that he tries to implement it and Layla commenting that she does not because "language has not always been *[her]* strong point." Gwyneth added that she utilizes Google Translate to look up phrases in Spanish for her ELs about once a week.

Three teachers responded positively about implementing Item 17 (teach students about their cultures' contributions to science). Hattie shared an experience where she purchased a book from the Smithsonian for Hispanic Heritage Month and read it aloud to her students daily. All of her students became invested in the story and would remind her to read to them each day. Gwyneth shared that she is able to cover this strategy using the Alabama history curriculum and added that she supplements Black History Month with the history of additional cultures. Jerome did not implement Item 17 and mentioned, "I'm an English teacher, so it's not related to science." He responded similarly to Item 29 (design a lesson that shows how other cultural groups have made use of mathematics). Gwyneth also responded that she did not implement Item

29, saying, “I don’t really teach math this year, so I’m probably not doing that.” Their responses demonstrate the belief that some culturally responsive strategies are content-specific.

Items 23 and 33 received similar responses and demonstrated lower teacher self-efficacy for implementation. These items involved identifying ways that standardized tests may be biased towards linguistically diverse (Item 23) or culturally diverse (Item 33) students. Responding to Item 23, Gwyneth commented, “I probably never, ever do that. Yeah, I don’t think I ever do that.” Jerome said he did not implement these strategies because he does not currently give his students any standardized tests. Layla pointed out that the responsibility for eliminating biases from standardized tests falls on the test developers, especially because teachers often can not read or view the tests ahead of time.

Hattie, a fifth-grade teacher with a Master’s degree in ESL, responded affirmatively to identifying the biases in standardized testing, saying:

> This one lights me up- standardized tests. So, we have this assessment program- I-Ready- and they have it in Spanish, but they won’t let our kids take it in Spanish because they won’t be able to take it in Spanish [for state testing], so we want them to be prepared. And I’m like, that’s cool, I guess, but I-Ready is for me. Like, I’m not sure what my kids know because you’re giving it to them in English, and they speak and read Spanish. I know that the state, our ACAP state testing, they have it in Spanish because first-year students- English Language students- get to take it in Spanish their very first year, so I don’t understand, like, why we can’t just allow them to make the decision if they want it in, like, whatever language they want it in. That’s how life works. We’ve got a phone. We can translate anything. I guess I get the reading, but, like, math? I’m not testing if they can read the math question. I’m testing if they know the skill.

The qualitative data gathered during interviews clarified the ways some of the culturally responsive strategies were being implemented. Interview responses painted a bigger picture of why some strategies were not implemented as frequently or with less confidence. Together, the quantitative and qualitative data explain which culturally responsive instructional techniques are being used in rural general education classrooms.

Research Question 2

The second research question in this study asked how confident general educators from rural schools were in their ability to provide culturally responsive instruction for students who are English learners. The quantitative data gathered in phase one of this research study measured teachers' self-efficacy using the CRTSE scale. SPSS was used to calculate descriptive statistics for the data set. The item-specific mean scores, along with maximum and minimum values for each of the 41 items included on the CRTSE scale, were shown in Table 6.

Quantitative Results

The quantitative data to support RQ2 bears redundancies to the quantitative data shared in RQ1. The overlap occurs because self-efficacy levels are predictors of behavior (Artino, 2012; Bandura, 1977, 2012; Hysong & Quinones, 1997). Participants rated their confidence level when implementing the 41 items listed on the CRTSE scale. Individual scores were summed and divided by 41 to provide each participant with an individual CRTSE Strength Index score. CRTSE Strength Index scores were then ranked and sorted into high and low thresholds by utilizing a median split at 82.44, placing 19 participants into each threshold. An independent samples t-test revealed a significant difference (M = 21.34) between the average CRTSE strength index scores for rural general educators in the upper and lower threshold, proving that while some educators were experiencing higher levels of confidence, others were falling short. In

addition, some culturally responsive items were found to be implemented with higher levels of self-efficacy than others.

Participant CRTSE scores were summed and divided by their total number of self-ratings to provide each participant with a CRTSE strength index score. The strength index scores were ranked, and a median split was used to separate responses into high or low self-efficacy thresholds. Participants' strength index scores, ranging from 32.56 to 100 with a median split of 82.44, are listed and organized within high and low efficacy thresholds in Table 7.

Table 7

CRTSE Strength Index Scores

High Efficacy Threshold				*Low Efficacy Threshold*			
Participant Number	State	Years of Experience	CRTSE Strength Index	Participant Number	State	Years of Experience	CRTSE Strength Index
32	AL	21+	100.00	7	CO	6-10	82.32
37	AL	11-15	98.41	3	WI	21+	81.34
34	AL	1-5	97.73	17	ID	16-20	78.85
14	ID	6-10	95.61	36	AL	21+	78.27
15	IL	1-5	91.83	1	AK	11-15	78.05
4	ME	21+	91.59	26	ID	6-10	75.49
28	ID	1-5	90.98	30	AL	1-5	73.41
27	ID	11-15	89.79	5	OR	1-5	73.29
12	AL	16-20	89.71	10	NC	6-10	72.93
11	CA	6-10	89.27	38	AL	16-20	72.93
13	CO	11-15	89.02	16	ID	21+	72.56
24	ID	1-5	88.05	9	IA	1-5	71.95
2	TX	6-10	87.29	6	ID	1-5	67.20
31	AL	1-5	86.46	33	AL	6-10	62.93
21	AL	16-20	85.54	19	CO	6-10	61.90
23	ID	6-10	84.93	20	ID	1-5	55.49
22	ID	1-5	83.66	8	CA	11-15	55.00
35	AL	6-10	82.68	18	ID	1-5	47.44
29	ID	6-10	82.56	25	ID	21+	32.56
		Group Mean	**89.74**			***Group Mean***	**68.10**

Note. A statistically significant difference exists between the means of each group.

An independent samples t-test was used to analyze the group means and determine if there was a significant mean difference between grouped efficacy thresholds. The sample data

must satisfy assumptions for independent t-test results to be valid. The data set contains a continuous dependent variable, a categorical independent variable with two groups, and independent observations. A boxplot of the data revealed a single outlier in the data set. Because there was only one outlier in the entire set and it was not an extreme outlier, the assumption of no outliers was considered to be met.

Shapiro-Wilk's test of normality revealed a normal distribution for high-efficacy level data with a p-value greater than .05 ($p = .280$). However, data for the low-efficacy level showed that the p-value was less than .05 ($p = .010$). Because the independent samples t-test is fairly robust to deviations from normality and the sample sizes of the high and low groups were equal, non-normality within the data sets does not substantially affect a Type I error rate. Thus, the t-test remained a suitable test for this analysis.

Levene's Test for homogeneity of variances, the final assumption of the independent samples t-test, resulted in a p-value less than .05 ($p = .004$), which indicated that the population variance of both groups was unequal and violated the assumption of homogeneity of variances. Because there was no difference in sample size between groups, a Welch t-test was recommended for this unbalanced design. The p-value less than .05 ($p < .001$) proved that there was a statistically significant difference in mean CRTSE strength index scores for rural general educators in the upper threshold and lower threshold, with rural general educators in the upper threshold scoring higher than those in the lower threshold, $M = 21.34$, 95% CI [15.07, 28.21], $t(23.749)$, $p < .001$.

The cultural competencies referenced by the CRTSE scale integrate strategies that are considered general teaching practices with practices that require greater levels of cultural sensitivity and equity (Siwatu, 2007b). Each of the top ten strategies being implemented with the

greatest degrees of confidence are items related to general teaching practices. The top ten items include determining whether students like to work alone or in a group (Item 3, M = 93.79), developing a personal relationship with students (Item 20, M = 93.18), building a sense of trust with students (Item 9, M = 92.53), helping students feel like important members of the classroom (Item 32, M = 90.61), determining whether students feel comfortable competing with other students (Item 4, M = 89.03), using a variety of teaching methods (Item 11, M = 88.87), obtaining information about my students' academic weaknesses (Item 21, M = 88.45), obtaining information about my students' academic strengths (Item 2, M = 88.21), implementing cooperative learning activities for those students who like to work in groups (Item 39, M = 87.76), and assessing student learning using various types of assessments (Item 7, M = 87.00). These high-scoring items indicate that rural general educators feel confident about their ability to provide general teaching practices that benefit all students, including those who are ELs.

Items that require higher levels of cultural awareness and training were found to receive lower scores. The item implemented with the least amount of confidence is Item 17 (teach students about their cultures' contributions to science), with an item-specific mean of 59.18. The following nine items received the next-lowest mean scores: Item 29 (design a lesson that shows how other cultural groups have made use of mathematics, M = 60.76), Item 22 (praise English Language Learners for their accomplishments using a phrase in their native language, M = 61.61), Item 23 (identify ways that standardized tests may be biased towards linguistically diverse students, M = 62.74), Item 18 (greet English Language Learners with a phrase in their native language, M = 66.53), Item 27 (revise instructional material to include a better representation of cultural groups, M = 68.00), Item 33 (identify ways that standardized tests may be biased towards culturally diverse students, M = 68.13), Item 19 (design a classroom

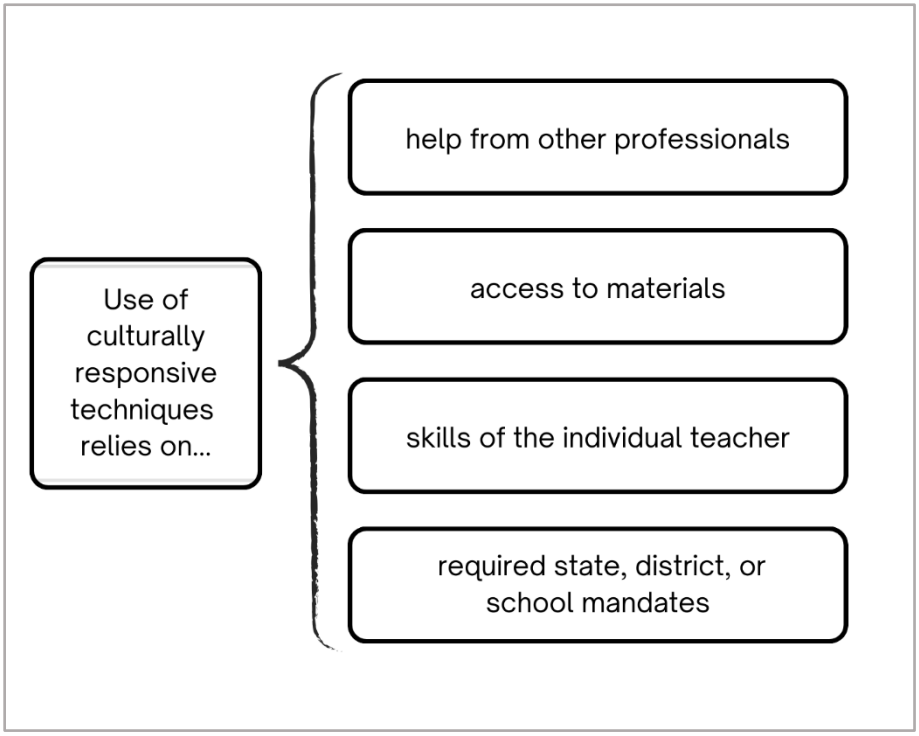
environment using displays that reflect a variety of cultures, M = 68.53), Item 6 (implement strategies to minimize the effects of the mismatch between my students' home culture and the school culture, M = 69.87), and Item 31 (communicate with the parents of English Language Learners regarding their child's achievement, M = 69.92). All of the culturally responsive instructional strategies listed above are on the difficult end of the CRTSE continuum and require preparation and experience to implement.

Qualitative Results

Four participants from the first phase of the study participated in semi-structured interviews during the second study phase. Two participants had individual CRTSE strength index scores that were in the upper threshold of overall scores, and two possessed scores from the lower threshold, as determined by a median split (Med = 82.44). The semi-structured interviews from the second phase of data collection provided depth and helped identify four themes to identify factors general educators rely on when implementing culturally responsive instruction. The four critical factors include help from other professionals, access to materials, the skills of the individual teacher, and required state, district, and school mandates. The themes are depicted in Figure 10.

Figure 10

Critical Supports for Culturally Responsive Instruction



Note. The four supports listed above were identified during the qualitative phase of this study.

Help From Other Professionals. A recurring theme derived from the qualitative interviews was the reliance on other professionals when implementing culturally responsive instruction. Other professionals included migrant program leaders, interpreters, and ESL teachers. When asked about obtaining information about students' academic strengths (Item 2), Hattie responded, "I guess just for that one, um, just, like the school, I guess, prepares or gives us that information." Gwyneth also relied on an alternate source for this information, saying, "I interpreted that as the EL information that we get from our migrant person." Gwyneth referenced outside help when asked how she obtained information about her students' home life (Item 8). She said, "We have, like, a person that's over the migrant kids, and she kind of, like, fills us in on that. And if we can't communicate with the parents because they don't speak any English or

whatever, she's our go-between person." In reference to the same item, Layla said that in the past, she would get information about her students' home lives from the school before the start of the school year, but her school now provides that information much later in the year.

Gwyneth shared that her district supplies each classroom with laminated cards containing English and Spanish labels for common classroom items. The labels are hung up around the classroom to help translate common items for Spanish-speaking students. Hattie mentioned that she would occasionally ask her fluent bilingual students to proofread messages she translated using Google Translate so they could catch any awkward translations. Every teacher interviewed mentioned the use of a translator, especially when communicating with parents of ELs regarding their child's achievement (Item 31). Jerome shared that he did not feel like he could implement this item without the use of an interpreter, and Layla expressed the same sentiment.

When implementing Item 32 (help students feel like important members of the classroom), Gwyneth brought up a school initiative called "Wellness Wednesday," where all students fill out a weekly electronic wellness check that is then submitted to the school counselor. The answers are only viewed by the counselor, who then addresses any needs that come up each week. She relies on her school counselor to share the information she might need that will help her students feel valued.

Access to Materials. Throughout the interviews, teachers referenced materials they relied on to implement some of the culturally responsive strategies. Gwyneth mentioned using Google Translate to help her learn phrases in her students' native language (Item 22). Her class gets excited about looking up phrases and teaching each other to communicate with the Spanish-speaking ELs in their class. Hattie, a fifth-grade mathematics teacher, also mentioned Google Translate when implementing tasks, such as adapting instruction to meet the needs of her

students (Item 1). “I have one student who started the year. She was brand new to the US, and she only spoke Spanish, so I’ve been translating a lot for her. Google Translate is my best friend this year.” She also addressed the importance of math manipulatives as a way to integrate a variety of teaching methods when helping students develop new skills (Item 11).

Gwyneth and Layla rely on curriculum programs to include a better representation of cultural groups (Item 27) and use examples that are familiar to students from diverse cultural backgrounds (Item 35). Gwyneth commented that “if you use the standardized [instructional material], a lot of it is kind of done for you now.” She mentioned that her sixth graders notice the diversity, which leads to classroom conversations about cultural groups. Layla, a third-grade teacher with a range of experience between 16 and 20 years, discussed the shift in curriculum programs over the past 20 years to become more inclusive of diverse populations. “I don’t think curriculums have [negative stereotypes] so much nowadays as they did when I was first teaching. It’s kind of gone the other way” (Item 28).

Hattie referenced the I-Station computer program as a resource with a Spanish version for Spanish-speaking students. However, she mentioned that the Spanish version of I-Station is only available to students during their first year in U.S. public schools. After their first year, ELs must take the I-Station test in English, regardless of their ability to speak and read English. State-level decision-makers view the English-only mandate as a method to prepare ELs for state-standardized testing, which they are required to complete in English. She pointed out the frustration of requiring the I-Station instruction to be in students’ L2 because then it becomes a test of translating and understanding instead of a test of mathematical ability. Knowing that the Spanish-modified version is available but only on a limited basis frustrates Hattie.

Skills of the Individual Teacher. Many of the items were reliant on individual teachers' acquired skills and innovative abilities. When Hattie was asked about Item 29 (design a lesson that shows how other cultural groups have made use of mathematics), she was able to create a scenario where she might apply this strategy, saying:

> That would be cool to just have a lesson, like, on one of the days like tomorrow. We were supposed to go from 11 to 2:15. I was like, what am I supposed to do with that kind of a day? But that would be cool to design a lesson that shows how other cultural groups have made use of mathematics. That'd be super cool. And then have the kids, like, solve it.

Despite the fact that she had not implemented this strategy before, she demonstrated high self-efficacy by crafting a scenario that would involve her use of the strategy in Item 29.

Gwyneth mentioned her ease when implementing Item 30 (model classroom tasks to enhance English Language Learners' understanding), saying, "I do that mostly because I model a lot of classroom tasks." Her teaching style incorporates modeling, which makes it easy for her to connect the skill to her ELs. In response to Item 34 (use a learning preference inventory to gather data about how students like to learn), Layla said, "Oh, yes. I have several things that I do that very first week of school, especially trying to identify those kinds of things." Layla has accumulated many learning preference inventories and uses them strategically to identify the ways her students learn best.

Teacher capacity is built through effective professional development. Bandura (2006) said, "Powerful mastery experiences that provide striking testimony to one's capacity to effect personal changes can produce a transformational restructuring of efficacy beliefs that is manifested across diverse realms of functioning" (p. 308). Hattie cites her student teaching experience in an ESL classroom as having a powerful mastery experience that has influenced her

culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy. The individual self-efficacy of rural teachers to implement culturally responsive teaching is affected by powerful mastery experiences, and these experiences can be provided through high-quality professional development.

Required State, District, or School Mandates. The final support for successfully implementing culturally responsive teaching strategies comes from the mandates required by states, districts, or schools. Many of the items from the scale were implemented through programs or procedures already in place, as required by decision-making entities. When asked about Item 24 (communicate with parents regarding their child's educational progress), Hattie referenced a school requirement to send progress reports home for every student each week. She takes the added step of translating messages for parents who do not speak English using Google Translate. Gwyneth's school utilizes Wellness Wednesday to help students feel like important members of the classroom (Item 32). This individualized check-in provides students with a discreet option for students to express the ways they may feel out of place or to share needs they need to have met. Gwyneth also incorporates strategies and support from schoolwide RTI, IEP, and 504 measures. Layla uses state and school-required I-Station assessments to determine cooperative learning activities for students who like to work in groups (Item 39).

Most of the professional development opportunities teachers reported experiencing were through schoolwide initiatives. For example, Gwyneth's district participates in yearly SAMUEL training, a program specializing in enhancing language arts content for ELs. She said Alabama's state department hosts EL-geared AMSTI trainings, but they are optional and fill up fast. Jamal participated in school-required Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol, or SIOP, training, but the training took place approximately ten years ago, and the program has not been revisited in

the past few years. Layla also reported participating in SIOP training as a requirement of her former and current school districts.

Highest and Lowest Rated CRTSE Items

Item-specific means were used to determine upper and lower quartiles and identify the greatest and least confidence areas for rural general educators. The upper quartile included items with means ranging from 87.00 to 93.79. Rural general educators in this study identified the greatest confidence levels when implementing the following ten culturally responsive teaching strategies:

- Determine whether my students like to work alone or in a group (M = 93.79, SD = 11.752)
- Develop a personal relationship with my students (M = 93.18, SD = 9.967)
- Build a sense of trust in my students (M = 92.53, SD = 10.699)
- Help students feel like important members of the classroom (M = 90.61, SD = 10.430)
- Determine whether my students feel comfortable competing with other students (M = 89.03, SD = 12.312)
- Use a variety of teaching methods (M = 88.87, SD = 16.682)
- Obtain information about my students' academic weaknesses (M = 88.45, SD = 16.398)
- Obtain information about my students' academic strengths (M = 88.21, SD = 13.477)
- Implement cooperative learning activities for those students who like to work in groups (M = 87.76, SD = 13.288)
- Assess student learning using various types of assessments (M = 87.00, SD = 12.636)

The items rated by rural general educators as areas of least confidence were identified as those falling into the lowest quartile, which included items with mean scores of 59.18 to 69.92. The following ten culturally responsive instructional strategies received the lowest confidence levels:

- Teach students about their cultures' contributions to science (M = 59.18, SD = 34.594)
- Design a lesson that shows how other cultural groups have made use of mathematics (M = 60.76, SD = 33.572)
- Praise English Language Learners for their accomplishments using a phrase in their native language (M = 61.61, SD = 36.953)
- Identify ways that standardized tests may be biased towards linguistically diverse students (M = 62.74, SD = 30.899)
- Greet English Language Learners with a phrase in their native language (M = 66.53, SD = 35.186)
- Revise instructional material to include a better representation of cultural groups (M = 68.00, SD = 27.650)
- Identify ways that standardized tests may be biased towards culturally diverse students (M = 68.13, SD = 26.672)
- Design a classroom environment using displays that reflect a variety of cultures (M = 68.53; SD = 26.184)
- Implement strategies to minimize the effects of the mismatch between my students' home culture and the school culture (M = 69.87, SD = 20.620)

- Communicate with the parents of English Language Learners regarding their child's achievement (M = 69.92, SD = 25.526).

The ten lowest items obtained item-specific scores from 59.18 to 69.92. Strategies with high item-specific means reflect those that are on the easier side of the culturally responsive continuum. These strategies are easier to implement because they overlap with general teaching practices. Similarly, the strategies that received the lowest item-specific means required greater levels of cultural training and sensitivity.

Conclusion

Chapter IV included a summary of the quantitative and qualitative data collected to investigate the culturally responsive teaching strategies being implemented in rural general education classrooms and to explore the culturally responsive self-efficacy of rural general educators. The CRTSE instrument was used to identify the teaching strategies used with the most and least confidence by general educators in rural schools. Culturally responsive strategies aligned with general teaching practices were used more frequently and with more confidence than strategies requiring more specific and culturally sensitive expertise. Additionally, an independent samples t-test compared the individual CRTSE strength index scores of teachers with high self-efficacy to those with low self-efficacy and found that a significant difference existed between groups, proving the wide span of general educators' abilities regarding culturally responsive teaching in rural schools. Semi-structured interviews supported the information revealed in the quantitative phase. Themes from qualitative data revealed that the implementation of culturally responsive teaching strategies relies on help from other professionals, access to materials, skills of individual teachers, and required state, district, or school mandates. It was also revealed during semi-structured interviews that rural general

educators had either received professional development focused on culturally responsive instruction or had observed culturally responsive teaching geared toward English learners. However, no participants participated in both observations and professional development.

Data from Chapter IV is explored in further detail in Chapter V. Data regarding the self-efficacy levels of rural general educators and strategies currently employed to help diverse learners in rural general education classrooms is expanded upon to paint a picture of the quality of education for ELs in rural schools. The themes are investigated in greater depth, and implications for rural education are made that will help support general education teachers as they provide high-quality education for their diverse students.

Chapter V: Discussion

As the number of English learners enrolled in U.S. public schools continues to increase, the need for general education teachers to expand their capabilities to include culturally responsive practices increases as well (Becker & Deris, 2019; J. Gonzalez, 2023; T. Gonzalez et al., 2021; Langlais, 2022). Culturally responsive instruction involves maximizing literacy and academic content in ELs' native (L1) and acquired (L2) language, engaging their background knowledge, language, and culture, and providing sociocultural validation in school settings (Cummins, 2011, 2021). However, general education teachers often lack the expertise necessary to provide high-quality learning experiences that fit the unique needs of ELs (J. Gonzalez, 2023; Jozwik et al., 2020; Langlais, 2022; Von Esch, 2018). In rural areas where schools are faced with additional challenges such as funding constraints, high staff turnover, and accessing resources, it is even more difficult for ELs to access the culturally responsive instruction they need (Hoover & Erickson, 2015; Hoover et al., 2020; Newell & Looser, 2017). To teach culturally diverse students effectively, educators must acquire the necessary skills, knowledge, and beliefs to implement the skills (Becker & Deris, 2019; Lu et al., 2022; Siwatu, 2011b). The gap in research exists as much of the research regarding the culturally responsive abilities and efficacy of educators investigates preservice teachers instead of teachers actively serving in their profession (Lu et al., 2022). There is also a dearth of culturally responsive research regarding the state of diverse learner populations in rural settings (Newell & Looser, 2017). This research study investigated the self-efficacy beliefs of practicing general educators from rural schools and asked the following research questions:

RQ1: What culturally responsive instructional techniques are being used in rural general education classrooms?

RQ2: How confident are general educators from rural schools in their ability to provide culturally responsive instruction for students who are English learners?

Summary of the Results

This study investigated the culturally responsive strategies currently used by rural general educators and their confidence levels when implementing culturally responsive strategies for English learners. Quantitative and qualitative measures were combined for this mixed methods study. Mixed methods approaches provide researchers with an ideal lens through which to view educational issues by investigating with numbers and personal experiences, thus tapping into the generalizability of quantitative methodology and delving into the context through qualitative methodology (Almalki, 2016; Almeida, 2018; Creswell & Guetterman, 2018). Sequential explanatory mixed methods approaches utilize qualitative data to explain the research problem depicted through quantitative data (Almalki, 2016; Creswell & Guetterman, 2018).

During the quantitative phase of this mixed methods sequential explanatory study, the researcher utilized the valid and reliable Culturally Responsive Teaching Self-Efficacy to attain the self-efficacy ratings of 38 rural school general educators when implementing 41 culturally responsive tasks. Participants ranked their confidence level for each item using a scale from 0 (not confident) to 100 (extremely confident). Individual scores were summed and divided by 41 to provide each participant with an overall strength index score, and participants were sorted into a high or low efficacy threshold based on a median split (Med = 82.44) of all strength index scores, setting the stage for the second phase of the study.

Two participants from each threshold were selected to participate in semi-structured interviews for a total of four interviews, providing context and depth through a qualitative lens. Results were viewed first through a quantitative lens, followed by a qualitative lens to replicate

the order in which data was collected and organized. Finally, quantitative and qualitative data were combined to provide a meaningful look at this study's results.

Research Question 1

What culturally responsive instructional techniques are being used in rural general education classrooms? In this study, it was important to address the gap in research regarding the culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy of practicing general educators in rural schools. Prior research has investigated the culturally responsive self-efficacy of preservice teachers and practicing teachers, but the culturally responsive self-efficacy population of general educators in rural schools has not been explored. The self-efficacy levels of rural general educators were measured in this study using the CRTSE scale developed by Kamau Oginga Siwatu (Siwatu, 2007b). The theory of self-efficacy, which fueled the creation of the CRTSE instrument, asserts that a person's belief in their ability to produce a specific result is a powerful predictor of their behavior (Bandura, 1977, 2006; Bandura & National Institute of Mental Health, 1986; Siwatu, 2007b).

The culturally responsive strategies included in the CRTSE scale comprise varying degrees of difficulty and include tasks from each of the following four categories: classroom management, curriculum and instruction, student assessment, and cultural enrichment (Siwatu, 2007b). A teacher's ability to address ELs' linguistic diversity by maximizing literacy and academic content in ELs' L1 and L2, engaging background knowledge, language, and culture, and providing sociocultural validation has a powerful effect on the quality of education they are able to provide for ELs (Cummins, 2011, 2021). By investigating the culturally responsive self-efficacy beliefs of rural educators through quantitative and qualitative lenses, attention can be directed toward resources and practices that can enhance learning opportunities for ELs in rural

schools. This study identified the culturally responsive strategies rural general educators are using and provided clarity regarding support for culturally responsive instruction.

Strategies Used by Rural General Educators. The theory of self-efficacy asserts that self-efficacy levels often predict one's behaviors (Artino, 2012; Bandura, 1977, 2012; Hysong & Quinones, 1997). It follows that educators in rural schools are successfully implementing items receiving scores near 100 on the CRTSE scale and are less likely to be utilizing items with lower scores. The quantitative scores from the CRTSE instrument indicate the culturally responsive teaching techniques used in rural general education classrooms and those not implemented as frequently. The spectrum of culturally responsive teaching strategies ranges from easy-to-implement strategies that overlap with general teaching skills to tougher-to-implement strategies that require more expertise and cultural sensitivity. The top 15 CRTSE tasks with the highest item-specific mean scores were culturally responsive strategies that are also considered general teaching practices. Each of the 15 items with the highest individual item scores are strategies teachers typically perform for all of their students. These strategies are considered to be within the realm of general practice for educators, regardless of teaching context or student needs. The top 15 practices, starting with the item receiving the highest item-specific mean, include:

1. determine whether my students like to work alone or in a group (item 3)
2. develop a personal relationship with my students (item 20)
3. build a sense of trust in my students (item 9)
4. help students feel like important members of the classroom (item 32)
5. determine whether my students like competing with other students (item 4)
6. use a variety of teaching methods (item 11)
7. obtain information about my students' academic weaknesses (item 21)

8. obtain information about my students' academic strengths (item 2)
9. implement cooperative learning activities for those students who like to work in groups (item 39)
10. assess student learning using various types of assessments (item 7)
11. obtain information regarding my students' academic interests (item 37)
12. help students to develop positive relationships with their classmates (item 26)
13. build positive home-school relations (item 10)
14. communicate with parents regarding their child's educational progress (item 24)
15. use my students' prior knowledge to help them make sense of new information (item 14).

Semi-structured interviews during phase two of the study confirmed the quantitative results with regard to the culturally responsive strategies being utilized in rural general education classrooms. Of the four interviewees, each one of them acknowledged that they implemented the following eleven items from the tasks with the top 15 highest individual item scores:

- determine whether my students like to work alone or in a group (Item 3)
- develop a personal relationship with my students (Item 20)
- build a sense of trust in my students (Item 9)
- help students feel like important members of the classroom (Item 4)
- use a variety of teaching methods (Item 11)
- obtain information about my students' academic strengths (Item 2)
- implement cooperative learning activities for those students who like to work in groups (Item 39)
- assess student learning using various types of assessments (Item 7)

- obtain information regarding my students' academic interests (Item 37)
- help students to develop positive relationships with their classmates (Item 26)
- use my students' prior knowledge to help them make sense of new information (Item 14).

Of the four top 15 items that were not being implemented by all four of the interviewees, three were still being implemented by three participants. Item 4 (determine whether my students like competing with other students), Item 21 (obtain information about my students' academic weaknesses), and Item 24 (communicate with parents regarding their child's academic progress) were not being utilized by Jamal, one of the participants with a strength index score in the lower threshold. Jamal said that because he relies on the EL teacher to contact the parents of his EL students, he does not utilize Item 24. He depends on the services and skills of another colleague to ensure that communication takes place and parent contact is being made, but he did not feel confident about his ability to provide the service.

Two out of four participants confirmed that they implemented Item 10 (build positive home-school relations), the last of the top 15 items not implemented by all of the participants interviewed. Hattie pointed out that she struggles with this one when it comes to ELs because of the language barrier. She said it is difficult to get the parents of her ELs to come to the school or talk on the phone, so she usually ends up texting them a translated message. She said, "I wonder if it's more like they're just nervous to come up to the school- the parents. But I have found that with my English language learners, I don't have as good of a relationship with their families as I do other students." Jamal added that he does not communicate with the parents of ELs because they do not come to the school buildings and that although "the intention [to communicate with ELs' parents] is there, the follow through is not." The language barrier between rural general

educators and their EL students and families is a challenging obstacle to overcome, and interviews revealed a reliance on bilingual colleagues to bridge the communication barrier.

The item with the 16th highest mean score was Item 12, "develop a community of learners when my class consists of students from diverse backgrounds," which fell toward the side of the spectrum with higher levels of culturally responsive expertise. Item 12 is the only item on the more difficult side of the CRTSE spectrum that received a score above the median, showing that it is implemented more confidently than some of the items requiring less cultural expertise, such as adapting instruction to meet the needs of your students (Item 1) and structure parent-teacher conferences so that the meeting is not intimidating for parents (Item 25). Despite requiring some degree of sensitivity to culturally responsive instruction, this strategy relates to creating a positive classroom environment where students feel like valued members of the classroom, so it shares similarities to skills considered as general practice. It may be easier to implement than some of the other culturally responsive strategies. All four interviewees acknowledged that they implemented Item 12 in their classrooms.

For many rural general educators, tasks related to establishing a positive classroom environment and cultivating respect and belonging for students were expressed as necessary tasks to implement, regardless of students' cultural background. These items scored within the top 15 and included building a sense of trust in my students (Item 9), developing a personal relationship with my students (Item 20), and helping students develop positive relationships with their classmates (Item 26). All four interviewees implemented each of these listed strategies and, in discussing them, expressed them as non-negotiable items. For example, when addressing their ability to build a sense of trust in their students, Gwyneth responded, "That's kind of like with everybody," and Layla identified it as one of her strong points. Jamal's succinct response was,

"Absolutely, yes!" Gwyneth, again, pointed out with Item 21 that she has developed a positive rapport with all of her students. Hattie's response to Item 26 was, "Yes, definitely!" These tasks were implemented without question and with an apparent belief that each was important.

The combined qualitative and quantitative data shows that tasks that overlap with general practice teaching strategies are implemented in greater frequency than those requiring more specific expertise in culturally responsive instruction. Teachers develop the skills to implement these strategies more readily through teacher education programs and individual experiences. Such practices are refined over time as they are implemented with all students in mind. Because they are not isolated for use with specific populations, teachers have constant practice implementing and developing strategies to enhance these skills over time. Whether or not general educators realize that many of the instructional strategies they have embedded into their day-to-day classroom routines have culturally responsive benefits is a topic to be explored further.

Strategies Used with Less Confidence and Frequency. Similar to the relationship between high-scoring culturally responsive tasks and qualitative interviews, the qualitative interviews aligned with and confirmed the conclusions drawn from the quantitative data. Items that received lower item-specific mean scores were tasks that were implemented with less confidence if implemented at all. Because self-efficacy scores can predict behavior, lower scores were likely to reflect instructional strategies that rural general educators were not using. The culturally responsive strategies used less frequently that received the lowest item-specific mean scores were strategies requiring specific knowledge and development of cultural sensitivity.

The two strategies with the lowest item-specific scores were linked to content areas. Item 17 (teach students about their cultures' contributions to science) was the lowest scoring item, followed by Item 29 (design a lesson that shows how other cultural groups have made use of

mathematics). Three of the four interviewees responded affirmatively to implementing Item 17, and only two acknowledged that they had implemented Item 29. Jamal, a high school ELA teacher, commented on each item that these strategies were outside his content area, and that is why he did not utilize these strategies. Gwyneth, a sixth-grade teacher of science, history, and STEM, echoed similar reasoning, stating that she did not implement Item 29 because she was not a math teacher. Jamal also reasoned that he did not use Item 23 (identify ways that standardized tests may be biased towards linguistically diverse students) because he does not use standardized tests in his ELA course. In secondary grades, where teachers specialize in teaching certain subjects, it stands to reason that culturally responsive strategies specific to subjects outside their content area would be less likely to be implemented by some teachers. Integration of strategies through cross-curricular lesson planning could take place, but teachers would need to be motivated to create or seek out such lessons. There were no indications that the rural educators interviewed had considered implementing content outside of their specified subject areas.

Tasks involving the use of ELs' native language ranked in the bottom five CRTSE strategies. Praise English Language Learners for their accomplishments using a phrase in their native language (Item 22) and greet English Language Learners with a phrase in their native language (Item 18) require teachers to develop a skill by learning a language other than English. The language barrier is a challenge preventing rural general educators from connecting with their ELs. Hattie explicitly mentioned the language barrier as a challenge she struggled to overcome when establishing positive home-school relations (Item 10) and obtaining information about her EL students' academic strengths (Item 2). In the context of Item 2, she had a newcomer EL who spoke little-to-no English. The summary assessments provided by the ESL teacher indicated that this student was performing math at a kindergarten level, yet "she could out-multiply anybody,"

according to Hattie. She believed the disconnect was due to a language barrier during the assessment.

The language barrier is also an obstacle when communicating with parents of ELs. Speaking with the parents of students is critical to establishing positive home-school relations (Item 10) and communicating with parents regarding their child's educational progress (Item 24). Every interview participant acknowledged the necessity of involving other professionals to help translate communication or to serve as a point of contact. Such professionals include migrant program directors, bilingual paraprofessionals, designated translators, and ESL teachers. In several instances, educators reported using Google Translate, and two educators said they enlisted the help of English-proficient bilingual students when another resource was not readily available.

Culturally responsive strategies that were not frequently implemented and were not subject-specific or directly linked to a language barrier varied in regard to the tasks. Such strategies require specific expertise in culturally responsive teaching to be implemented intentionally and successfully. For example, Item 6 involves implementing strategies to minimize the effects of the mismatch between students' home and school cultures. Teachers need to know strategies to identify the mismatch and address the disparity with research-based strategies. Such skills are not inherent to general teaching practices and would need to be taught to teachers explicitly.

None of the interviewees specifically stated they would need further preparation or training to implement strategies they were not currently using. However, each interviewee cited professional development related to ELs or observations of culturally responsive teaching as key factors that shaped their ability to teach ELs. Gwyneth stated that her experiences with culturally

responsive professional development have equipped her to better understand how to teach ELs and how to include them in the classroom. Through professional development, she has gained an understanding of ELs' vocabulary needs and the way their cultures influence their learning experience. The strategies she has learned from professional development have made it easier for her to make education easier for her ELs. Jamal cited an appreciation for culturally responsive professional development because it allows him to "meet [ELs] where they are" and "hold high expectations." He has been able to use the skills he has gained to challenge his diverse learners and make them a part of the education in his classroom. Layla stated that professional development experiences have given her much insight into things she would not have thought about before. Professional development is an effective tool for enhancing the culturally responsive teaching abilities of practicing rural general educators.

Hattie was the only participant who had not participated in professional development related to teaching ELs, yet her individual strength index placed her at the upper threshold of participants. She credits her expertise to her master's degree in English as a Second Language, which she completed within her first two years of teaching. Educational programs designed to boost culturally responsive teaching are a valuable resource for educators seeking rigorous development. Rural districts have difficulties recruiting and retaining educators with Hattie's level of culturally responsive expertise, thus making her an invaluable resource within her school district.

Research Question 2

How confident are general educators from rural schools in their ability to provide culturally responsive instruction for students who are English learners? The quantitative data gathered through the CRTSE scale answered this question by clarifying the culturally responsive

areas where rural general educators felt the most confident as well as the areas where they were less confident. The use of the CRTSE scale resulted in responses that directly answered RQ2. The semi-structured interviews helped inform the quantitative data by expanding on the context and circumstances when culturally responsive instruction was taking place. Coded interview data revealed four core components rural general educators rely on when implementing culturally responsive instruction. Weak areas or unfamiliarity within these critical resources directly affect rural educators' confidence levels when implementing culturally responsive strategies. The self-efficacy of general educators in rural schools when providing culturally responsive instruction for ELs has been overlooked in prior research, but this study addresses the gap.

Self-Efficacy Levels of Rural General Educators. Teachers' belief in their abilities to carry out certain tasks determines their actions (Bandura, 1977; Leijen et al., 2024; Siwatu, 2007b). Self-efficacy levels are common indicators of behavior (Artino, 2012; Bandura, 1977, 2012; Hysong & Quinones, 1997). The self-efficacy levels of the rural general educators in this study were explored as they related to culturally responsive teaching. Individual strength index scores for each participant and item-specific mean scores provided a glimpse into their ability levels when providing diverse instruction for ELs.

Rural general educators scored themselves significantly higher when implementing culturally responsive strategies that overlapped with general teaching practices than they did when implementing strategies requiring more cultural sensitivity. Tasks that mirror general teaching practices are more readily used in general education classrooms because they can apply to all students. Teachers become more familiar with general practice strategies because they are relevant to all student populations. Because of their frequent implementation, teachers develop high levels of self-efficacy to carry them out due to their use and experience. Teachers rated

themselves highest when determining whether students like to work alone or in a group and if students are comfortable competing with each other, developing personal relationships, building a sense of trust with students, and helping students feel like important members of the classroom. Teachers also feel confident utilizing a variety of teaching methods and assessments and assessing students' strengths and weaknesses. All of these strategies are used for all students while also attending to some of the culturally diverse needs of ELs.

Teachers reported the lowest amounts of self-efficacy when teaching students about their cultures' contributions to science and exploring how cultural groups have made use of mathematics. Praising ELs' accomplishments in their L1 or greeting them with a phrase in their native language were also among the lowest-scoring strategies. Teachers reported low self-efficacy when identifying the potential biases for culturally and linguistically diverse students in standardized testing. Other low-scoring tasks included revising instructional material to include a better representation of cultural groups, designing a classroom environment using displays that reflect a variety of cultures, implementing strategies to minimize the effects of the mismatch between my students' home culture and the school culture, and communicating with the parents of ELs regarding their child's achievement. These strategies require specific training and expertise regarding culturally responsive instruction and are beneficial to a specific student population. They are not used as frequently as culturally responsive strategies that overlap with general teaching practices.

Various groupings were used to compare participants' self-efficacy scores. Comparisons between years of experience, professional setting, and threshold level were investigated using independent samples *t*-tests. Comparisons of mean strength index scores based on years of experience (10 or less and 11 or more years) and setting (elementary or secondary) did not yield

significant results. Neither test had a p-value less than 0.05. The only grouping that showed any statistical significance was when the differences between educator scores from the high and low efficacy thresholds were compared.

Educators' self-efficacy levels were quantified through the use of CRTSE individual strength index scores for each participant. Strength index scores were calculated by summing an individual's total scores for each of the 41 items on the CRTSE scale. The sum was then divided by 41 to produce a resulting strength index score. Scores were then split into a high and low threshold as determined by a median split of the data at 82.44. The high efficacy mean score was 89.74, and the low efficacy mean score was 68.10. The high efficacy mean score was significantly higher than the low efficacy mean score by 21.34, as proven by an independent samples *t*-test. The difference suggests that a wide range of capabilities exists among rural general educators. The significant difference between high and low self-efficacy groups demonstrated an alarming deficit for educators in the lower threshold.

High Self-Efficacy Leads to More Positivity. Responses between the high and low-threshold interviewees were coded for themes related to their confidence levels when implementing culturally responsive strategies. One theme that evolved between groups was that the higher threshold participants yielded more positive responses than the lower threshold when reviewing the list of items from the CRTSE scale. The two high-threshold interviewees were Hattie Barnes and Gwyneth Manning. Hattie replied that she used 40 items from the CRTSE scale in her classroom. She theorized that she could implement the only item she was not currently using (identify ways how students communicate at home may differ from the school norms) by thinking it through now that the strategy had been brought to her attention. Gwyneth responded yes to utilizing 36 of the 41 items listed on the survey.

Also of note was Gwyneth's passion when responding positively to many of the listed strategies. Her responses included phrases such as, "Of course we do," "That's a given," and "We definitely do that!" She used a variation of these phrases on seven items from the scale. Hattie also responded with similar affirmative expressions on seven items, often saying, "That's pretty obvious," and "Oh, yeah, definitely!" Such expressions revealed patterns of positive attitudes and underlying beliefs that culturally responsive strategies for ELs were imperative to general education classrooms.

Each of the lower threshold participants had fewer "yes" responses when asked if they used the scale items as part of their teaching practice. Layla McMahon and Jamal Rogers had 33 and 23 positive responses, respectively. Layla identified her greatest challenges as greeting ELs with a phrase in their native language and praising them for their accomplishments using a phrase in their native language. While the preceding two strategies were her only "no" responses, she acknowledged that she could implement more of the other strategies with the support of translators and a rigorous, high-quality curriculum. She expressed strong affirmative responses for five of the 41 items and remarked that she obtained information regarding her students' academic interests and used the interests of her students to make learning meaningful for them "all day long."

Jamal indicated that while he had at some point implemented many of the culturally responsive strategies listed on the CRTSE survey, he did not always use some strategies or did not use them enough. In these cases, Jamal felt like a "no" response more accurately answered the question. He ended with 18 "no" and 23 "yes" responses. Jamal also pointed out that as a high school English teacher, he would not implement an item such as designing a lesson that

shows how other cultural groups have made use of mathematics. Some of the items from the scale would not be a natural fit for all content-specific general education classrooms.

Culturally Responsive PD is Scarce. A final theme was the dearth of opportunities for all four educators to participate in professional development related to culturally responsive strategies for ELs. Paired with this were opportunities to observe authentic lessons taught by professionals who geared their instruction specifically toward ELs. Three out of four rural general educators in this study reported having some professional development experiences related to culturally responsive instruction, with only one of them participating in recurring yearly training. Gwyneth, the interview participant who received yearly professional development for culturally responsive instruction, was one of the high-threshold participants. The other high-threshold participant, Hattie, had not participated in any culturally responsive professional development but had completed her master's degree in EL education. Layla and Jerome had been exposed to EL-focused professional development at some point in their careers, but the opportunities were not persistent.

Layla reported that she had participated in a few professional development seminars focusing on ELs, including training on the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol, or SIOP model. However, she had only viewed EL-centered lessons as they were modeled within SIOP training seminars. Hattie was the only participant who reported observing a lesson geared toward ELs, and it was during her student teaching experience. However, she was the only interview participant who had not participated in EL-related professional development courses. Her response, when asked if she had participated in professional development related to culturally responsive teaching, was, "Isn't that cute? Half of my class are English learners, and we heard

that we're getting several more students from Mexico coming soon… I already have 27 in my homeroom."

Strategies specific to a smaller demographic, such as strategies for ELs that involve the use of students' L1 or unique cultural background, are not implemented as frequently as strategies that overlap with general teaching practices. To become proficient in implementing culturally responsive strategies, educators need focused instruction that specifically addresses the strategy's use and benefits. Teacher preparation courses do not cover culturally responsive strategies in great depth, causing teachers to enter the field unprepared to work with culturally diverse students (Langlais, 2022; Robertson et al., 2017; Silva & Kucera, 2016; Siwatu, 2011b). Once teachers enter the field, it is a challenge for them to find opportunities to participate in quality professional development to help them acquire culturally responsive skills (Debnam et al., 2023; Langlais, 2022). Among the challenges rural schools face is the struggle to access high-quality professional development related to culturally responsive teaching. The results of this study verified that rural general educators struggle to access professional development to help them teach their ELs.

Four Components for Providing Culturally Responsive Instruction. The semi-structured interviews depicted rural educators' use of culturally responsive strategies in context. Participants discussed their implementation of items from the CRTSE scale. The interviews revealed that teachers rely on four core components when implementing culturally responsive strategies. The four components identified in this study were:

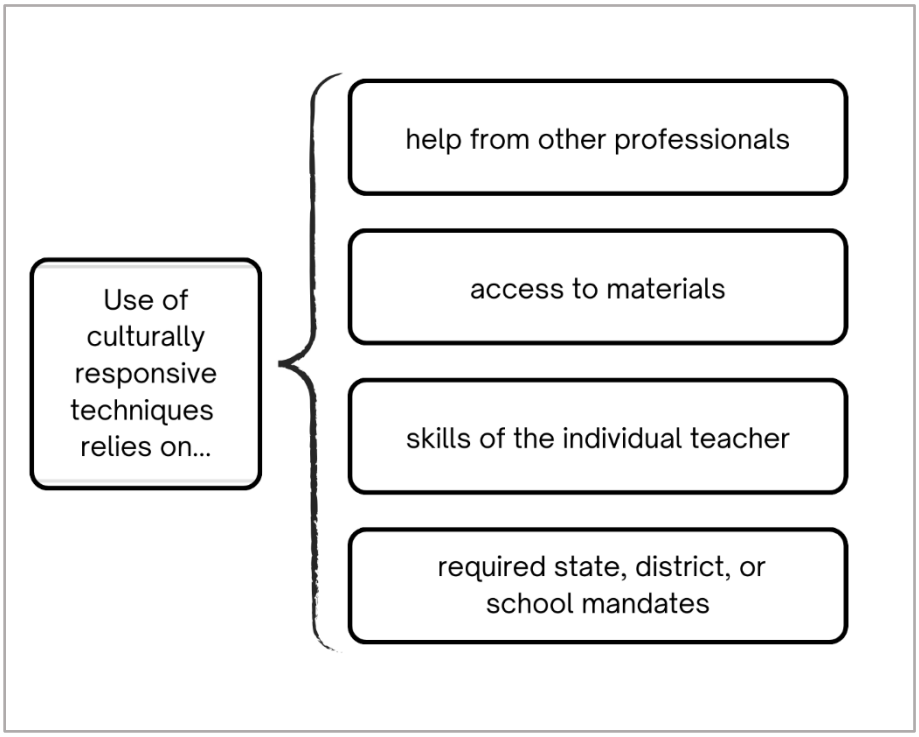
1. Help from other professionals
2. Access to materials
3. Individual skills

4. Required state, district, and school mandates

Figure 10 depicts the four components through visual representation. Each component is discussed in greater detail.

Figure 10

Critical Supports for Culturally Responsive Instruction



Help From Other Professionals. In this study, rural general educators revealed that their use of some specific culturally responsive tasks required the help of others. The most commonly cited tasks requiring assistance were strategies requiring communication between teachers and the parents of students who speak a language other than English at home. Such tasks include communicating with the parents of English Language Learners regarding their child's achievement and educational progress.

Each interview participant acknowledged a need for translation services at various points when serving their ELs. Some districts employ a translator who is designated as the go-between when teachers need to reach out to non-English-speaking parents. Other educators rely on their school, district, or county migrant program resource personnel to help translate. Gwyneth reported using migrant resource personnel to contact the parents of ELs, to help translate student surveys that were sent home, and to help fill her in on the home life of her EL students. She also counts on her school's migrant resource teacher to provide her with academic information, such as WIDA assessment results, for her ELs.

Hattie and Layla reported that they relied on school ESL teachers to provide academic testing results and information about EL students' home lives. Layla cited a need for a translator to be able to carry out parent-teacher conferences with parents who do not speak English. Hattie also relied on translation services to adapt instruction for ELs. When she needs to translate an assignment to provide adapted instruction for her ELs, she uses Google Translate, but the translation is not always accurate. If time is short, Hattie might ask her fluent bilingual English and Spanish-speaking students to review a translated message before she sends it home to a parent.

Jerome and Layla admitted that they would not be able to communicate with the parents of their EL students without help from an interpreter. Jerome pointed out that he would not be able to pursue communication with ELs' parents without an interpreter. He relied on the EL teacher to contact home to communicate academic achievement and educational progress. Rural general educators have a persistent need for translators, whether they are ESL teachers, migrant resource teachers, designated translators, or capable bilingual students.

In addition to translation services and academic information, Gwyneth reported a reliance on her school counselor to help ensure that students feel like important members of the classroom. The counselor collects weekly check-ins from every student in the school to monitor their emotional state and identify any issues. Teachers are kept out of this process so that students can comfortably report any classroom concerns without fear of upsetting their teacher. The counselor then follows up on any concerns brought to their attention. Without this program, there may be issues where ELs and other students are not comfortable participating in their classrooms that might not be brought to anyone's attention.

Access to Materials. Interview participants referenced several materials as they discussed their implementation of culturally responsive strategies. In some cases, teachers would rely solely on a particular material to implement a particular culturally responsive task. Other instances relied on materials as a way to support something the educator was already implementing. Materials can include technological resources or print resources.

The most referenced technological support in this study was Google Translate. Teachers can use Google Translate to adapt instruction to an EL's native language or to translate messages for non-English-speaking parents. Hattie shared that she has a newcomer EL this year who only speaks Spanish. She has been able to modify work for this student through Google Translate. In Hattie's words, "Google Translate is my best friend this year." She noted that Google Translate is usually able to get the job done but sometimes might be slightly off in its interpretation. She cited an instance where she was having a holiday party, and Google Translate changed "cupcake" to "muffin." Google Translate is not a perfect resource, but it is free, accessible, easy to use, and provides quick results. If a translator is not present, Google Translate is an excellent tool for translating day-to-day conversations, instructions, and correspondence.

Gwyneth also reported using Google Translate to communicate with two of her Spanish-speaking students this year. She engages her entire class in learning different phrases in Spanish. She looks up ways to provide directions around the school, such as providing directions to the restroom. She will also use it to explain the day's lunch menu. Any time her Spanish-speaking students struggle to understand a concept, Hattie turns to Google Translate. These occurrences happen at least once a week.

Teachers reported using computer programs to support learning strategies for their ELs. I-Station is a testing resource that came up more than once. Layla uses I-Station to implement cooperative learning activities for those students who like to work in groups. Other than providing benchmark and targeted assessments, I-Station organizes students into groups based on students' areas of greatest needs. Layla facilitates classroom rotations every day that allow her students to collaborate in groups while working on targeted skills.

Hattie uses i-Ready, another benchmark and assessment program, to track student abilities and determine necessary services. She expressed frustration that her ELs are not able to take the i-Ready assessment in Spanish despite its built-in Spanish translation capabilities. She has been told that the test must be taken in English because the state testing will have to be completed in English, and they want students to be prepared. She reasoned that, as a math teacher, she needs to be informed of students' mathematical abilities, not whether or not students are able to read or understand the instructions. Changing the language of delivery, in her opinion, would not change the test and would allow students to demonstrate their math skills. Hattie has identified this as one example of standardized tests being biased toward culturally or linguistically diverse students.

Gwyneth and Layla recognized the valuable culturally responsive tasks that are built into curriculum materials. Gwyneth praised current standardized curriculums for integrating instructional material that incorporates a better representation of cultural groups. She noted that even her students tune into the cultural diversity of story characters or examples, and it has led to classroom discussions on diversity. She uses tests that come straight from the textbook, and they include examples that are familiar to students from diverse cultural backgrounds. This one is "done for you," she expressed.

Layla cited her HMH reading program as an excellent source of assessments that utilize cultural diversity. She pointed out that there are high-quality assessments available to teachers that assess student learning in a variety of ways. Ultimately, she felt like the responsibility for identifying ways that standardized tests may be biased towards culturally or linguistically diverse students falls on the curriculum developers. Much of this is due to the inability of educators to view or access standardized tests before students take them.

Most curriculum programs have applications or lessons specifically for ELs, and many of the assessments utilized in rural general education classrooms come from curriculum programs. Curriculum adoption, then, should be thoughtfully and carefully considered by schools to ensure the necessary supports, such as EL lesson plan extensions, are built-in. Teachers need access to all of the available curriculum resources, including online components.

Individual Teacher Skills. Some culturally responsive tasks included in the CRTSE scale were implemented by teachers who relied on their unique abilities, ingenuity, and experiences to carry them out. Teachers reported high self-efficacy levels in these areas, as their confidence to complete them was established. Many of the skills needed to implement culturally responsive strategies were developed through college teacher preparation courses, especially those skills that

are recognized as general teaching practices in addition to culturally responsive strategies. These easy-to-implement skills do not require as much culturally sensitive expertise and can be useful for all students.

Items implemented with high levels of individual confidence include adapting instruction to meet the needs of students and determining whether students like to work alone or in a group. Teachers were confident in their ability to build a sense of trust in my students, with Jerome responding, “Absolutely, yes!” and Layla stating, “I think that’s been one of my strong points.” When asked if they were able to determine whether students felt comfortable competing with other students, Hattie responded, “Oh, yeah! Fifth-graders are super competitive!” and Gwyneth stated, “I think that’s a given.” These are strategies implemented with great confidence by the participants who were interviewed.

Some participants expressed confidence when implementing strategies that require more culturally responsive expertise. Hattie described how she uses examples that are familiar to students from diverse cultural backgrounds by integrating her students’ names and interests into math problems. She also noted that she models classroom tasks to enhance English Language Learner’s understanding by strategically placing students in certain areas of the classroom where they will learn best. Hattie taught students about their cultures’ contributions to science, the scale item ranked as having the lowest amount of self-efficacy, by purchasing a Smithsonian book about important Latina or Latino scientists and reading it to her class each day. Her students were highly engaged and would remind her to read from it if she skipped it for a day. The school did not mandate Hattie’s purchase of the book, nor was the book paid for with school funds. It was an initiative that Hattie took upon herself as a way to embrace diversity in her classroom. Hattie’s confidence and sense of initiative landed her in the upper efficacy threshold according to

her CRTSE strength index score. She credits her culturally responsive abilities to her master's program, which focused on ESL instruction.

Layla reported high levels of self-efficacy when implementing culturally responsive strategies that overlapped with general teaching practices. She mentioned that building a community of learners is "constant," using students' prior knowledge to help them make sense of new information as something she does "all day long," and determining whether students like to work alone or in a group is something she gets the first day of school. Her abilities expanded to more culturally demanding strategies, such as designing a classroom environment using displays that reflect a variety of cultures. Geography and social science were her minors, so she has always loved other cultures and geography. Layla readily admitted that her areas of lowest self-efficacy were greeting an EL or praising their accomplishments with a phrase in their native language. She stated that language has never been her strong area, and she relies on translators to communicate when a language other than English is required.

In many instances, teachers' areas of expertise or content-specific assignments may affect the way they are able to implement culturally responsive strategies. In some cases, their assignment or content area supports implementation. For example, Hattie's response to using her students' prior knowledge to help them make sense of new information was, "Yes, of course, for math." She also responded that she is able to assess student learning using various types of assessment very easily because she teaches math. She pointed out that her content area makes it difficult to use her students' cultural backgrounds to help make learning meaningful, but it might be easier to implement if she taught social studies or ELA.

Other examples emerged where teachers felt like their specific content areas made it difficult or nonsensical to implement some strategies. When asked if she had designed a lesson

that shows how other cultural groups have made use of mathematics, Gwyneth replied that she does not teach math this year, so she is not doing that. Jamal stated he does not teach students about their cultures' contributions to science because he is an English teacher, and the content is not related to science. He reported not identifying ways that standardized tests may be biased toward linguistically or culturally diverse students because he does not give standardized assessments and does not "teach those classes."

Teachers' individual experiences affect their self-efficacy levels. If they have had less exposure to culturally responsive teaching strategies, they will be less confident implementing them. Targeted professional development is needed to help educators become confident and competent when implementing culturally responsive instruction (Fallon et al., 2022; Langlais, 2022; Rivas, 2023). Only three of the four interview participants had participated in professional development related to addressing the diverse needs of ELs.

Gwyneth expressed the value of her culturally responsive professional development experiences because they have better equipped her to understand the way her ELs learn. She has learned meaningful strategies to help ELs develop vocabulary and comprehension skills. Jamal said his professional development experiences related to ELs, although completed 10-12 years ago, have helped him get better at meeting his ELs where they are. Layla reported that her EL-focused professional development opportunities gave her a lot of insight into things she would not have considered before.

Hattie, the lone interviewee who had not experienced culturally responsive professional development, discussed the value of her opportunities to observe an incredible ESL teacher during student teaching. She recognized the amount of front-loading the ESL was doing for ELs and noticed that it made a huge difference. Pre-teaching vocabulary words provided ELs with

background knowledge when the words were introduced in their general education classrooms. Hattie was saddened by her lack of culturally responsive professional development opportunities but appreciated the chance she had to participate in an amazing ESL class as a student teacher.

Required State, District, and School Mandates. Mandates required by states, districts, or local schools shaped the way some of the culturally responsive strategies from the CRTSE scale were carried out. These instances included training requirements, as well as school or district-level initiatives that filtered down to general education classrooms. Local interpretation of laws and statutes regarding ELs also played a part in some of the shared experiences.

Gwyneth, Jerome, and Layla cited experiences with culturally responsive professional development courses, which were required by their schools or districts. Layla participated in SIOP training in her previous district and completed SIOP sessions in her current district. Jerome also participated in training related to the SIOP model, but he expressed that it took place over a decade ago. He was one of a small group of people from his school selected to attend the training, but he has not attended any training sessions for EL education since then.

Gwyneth was the only teacher who referred to yearly SAMUEL training, which was a program related to EL education and was required by her district. Her entire district participates in this training before school starts every year. She mentioned that her state provides AMSTI training, another program that builds skills for education ELs, but this program is optional, and courses fill up quickly. Her experiences with EL-centered professional development have helped her understand the language needs of her ELs.

Gwyneth cited several school or district-wide initiatives that helped her satisfy some of the culturally responsive tasks. Schoolwide RTI strategies are applied to ELs, so EL students receive intervention services, such as accommodations and advancement between tiers, based on

their areas of greatest need. The RTI procedure allows her to assess student learning using various types of assessments. Her school also has a testing policy that allows ELs to retake a test three times if they do not pass on the first try. She designs instruction that matches her student's developmental needs by relying on RTI, IEPs, 504s, and LEPs.

Gwyneth uses a variety of teaching methods when she implements her schoolwide initiative known as Kids First, which requires teachers to utilize different strategies every single day. She also described Wellness Wednesday, a schoolwide initiative that aided her in helping students feel like important members of the classroom. Every Wednesday, students complete an online wellness check, where they can share feelings of being left out or can express concerns. The results are sent to the school counselor, who then follows up on any actionable issues. The final initiative referenced by Gwyneth was a district push for teachers to display picture cards with Spanish words for common classroom items in all general education classrooms. The district provides each teacher with a laminated set of picture cards to hang in their classrooms. Through this initiative, Gwyneth is able to design a classroom environment using displays that reflect a variety of cultures.

Hattie cited a school requirement to send progress reports home for her students every week, completing the task of communicating with parents regarding their child's educational progress. She writes comments to let parents know how their child is doing. For parents who do not speak English, she uses Google Translate to write messages in Spanish. She occasionally asks her bilingual students, who are proficient in English and Spanish, to review her messages to ensure they make sense. She is able to connect school to home by following her school's guidelines to send home weekly progress reports.

Conclusion

This mixed methods study answered the following research questions:

RQ1: What culturally responsive instructional techniques are being used in rural general education classrooms?

RQ2: How confident are general educators from rural schools in their ability to provide culturally responsive instruction for students who are English learners?

The self-efficacy of rural general educators was measured using the 41-item CRTSE scale in the first phase of this sequential explanatory design research study. Next, semi-structured interviews were conducted with four participants from the first phase, with two participants who scored in the upper threshold of the individual CRTSE strength index and two from the lower threshold, as determined by a median split of all individual CRTSE strength index scores. Evidence from quantitative data revealed that culturally responsive strategies that were easier to implement as general teaching practices were being implemented in rural general education classrooms. Additionally, quantitative data revealed that culturally responsive strategies requiring high levels of cultural awareness and sensitivity were not being implemented as frequently or with as much confidence as items that included general teaching practices.

Qualitative data gathered through four semi-structured interviews revealed some of the factors affecting rural general educators' self-efficacy and the successful implementation of culturally responsive strategies. Teachers were asked which items from the CRTSE scale they use and described professional development or observation opportunities they have had related to culturally responsive teaching. Data revealed that the implementation of culturally responsive techniques relies on help from other professionals, access to materials, the skills and capacity of individual teachers, and required state, district, or school mandates.

Research indicates that challenges faced by rural schools include recruiting and retaining highly qualified teachers with culturally diverse experience. Rural schools struggle to provide competitive salaries and have limited access to funding and opportunities for culturally responsive professional development. Despite the struggles of rural schools, the number of ELs in rural areas continues to increase, necessitating instruction that is culturally responsive. As learners acquire a language other than their L1, ELs require culturally responsive instruction that maximizes literacy and academic content in their L1 and L2, engages their background knowledge, language, and culture, and provides sociocultural validation (Cummins, 1981, 2000, 2011, 2021).

General educators in rural schools are able to implement culturally responsive strategies that overlap with general education practices with high levels of self-efficacy. Lower self-efficacy levels are reported when implementing strategies that require greater levels of cultural sensitivity and expertise, causing more culturally sensitive strategies to be implemented with much less frequency. When separated into high and low thresholds by individual strength index scores, a statistically significant difference exists between group means, with upper-threshold participants scoring higher than those in the lower threshold. The substantial difference indicates the wide range of low self-efficacy scores by rural general educators in the low-efficacy threshold.

Rural general educators rely on four key components when implementing culturally responsive instruction. These components include help from other professionals, access to materials, the skills of the individual teacher, and required state, district, or school initiatives. Teacher capacity for implementing culturally responsive instruction can increase through targeted professional development and opportunities to observe teaching geared toward ELs.

ELs thrive when academic instruction embraces their L1 and L2 while providing sociocultural validation and engaging their background knowledge, language and culture (Cummins, 2001, 2021). Rural schools must make concerted efforts to access high-quality professional development to help general education teachers develop the culturally responsive repertoire to meet each of these unique needs. They must also ensure they adopt a culture-rich curriculum with access to all of the embedded technological supports. Rural districts need to make sure their teachers have access to technological resources, such as Google Translate and web-based assessments. Although rural districts struggle to retain and recruit highly qualified teachers who are skilled in culturally responsive application, they must find a way to draw teachers with rich experience to their schools. They must train their staff to enrich their culturally responsive abilities so the growing number of ELs in their schools can receive the educational experiences they need to become college and career-ready.

Recommendations for Further Research

This study tapped the surface of culturally responsive teaching in rural general education classrooms. While outreach for participants included rural general educators across the country, the final participant pool did not include representation from all U.S. states and was not robust enough to investigate the state of culturally responsive education in rural schools by region. A similar study that is more representative of rural general educators can help support the findings of this study.

A longitudinal study could be used to observe how the self-efficacy levels of rural general educators evolve over time with targeted interventions aimed at enhancing cultural responsiveness. A study could involve implementing professional development programs and tracking change in self-efficacy levels and actual implementation of culturally sensitive tasks

over several years. While the results of this study confirmed that professional development geared toward the education of ELs plays a significant role in teachers' ability to implement culturally responsive instruction, no specific professional development programs or initiatives were investigated. Future research could explore the outcomes when using existing culturally responsive professional development programs or could design and implement targeted interventions aimed at enhancing the cultural responsiveness of rural general educators. The effectiveness of imposed interventions could be evaluated by assessing changes in self-efficacy levels and observable behaviors in the classroom.

Further studies could explore teacher development of specific cultural competence areas. Siwatu (2007b) identified the following four general competencies that reflect the necessary skills and knowledge of culturally responsive teachers: curriculum and instruction, classroom management, student assessment, and cultural enrichment. The self-efficacy levels and implementation practices of educators can be investigated within competencies to identify areas of strength and weakness. Cultural enrichment can be a focal area when developing abilities that embrace cultural diversity.

This study focused on the self-efficacy levels of rural general educators. Comparison studies can be used to compare the self-efficacy of rural educators working outside the context of general education classrooms, including the culturally responsive self-efficacy of administrators in rural schools. Studies might explore general educators' cultural responsiveness in urban settings. Comparison studies could help identify unique challenges and strengths in rural and general education settings and could help inform the development of tailored interventions.

Future research into cross-cultural comparisons can explore the self-efficacy levels and implementation of culturally responsive practices among rural teachers from different cultural

backgrounds. A study of cultural diversity among teachers could provide insight into the ways a teacher's cultural background influences their beliefs and practices. Contextual factors of rural communities may investigated to identify factors, such as community demographics, school resources, support structures, and professional development opportunities, that influence teachers' self-efficacy and cultural responsiveness.

A final suggestion for future research would be to conduct a study that explores the impact of teachers' cultural responsiveness on student outcomes. Outcomes to explore could include academic achievement, engagement, and socioemotional development. An investigation could reveal whether improvements in teachers' self-efficacy and implementation of culturally sensitive tasks lead to positive outcomes for students from diverse cultural backgrounds. Conducting this work in a rural setting would help to establish the culturally responsive framework necessary for the growing number of ELs in these locales.

Engaging in further research that explores longitudinal trends, qualitative insights, and comparisons between school settings, educator positions, and teacher backgrounds can significantly contribute to the body of research exploring culturally responsive teaching in rural education. A deeper understanding of cultural responsiveness in rural contexts can not only help to identify the factors shaping rural educators' culturally responsive self-efficacy but can also direct efforts toward developing targeted interventions and professional development to enhance the culturally responsive abilities of rural general educators. Focusing attention on the culturally responsive abilities of rural general educators will improve educational outcomes for ELs in rural schools by ensuring they receive the inclusive learning experiences they need and preparing them to succeed in the world beyond high school.

Implications for Professional Practice

Rural schools need to approach instruction for their increasingly diverse student population with the intention to overcome challenges with the recruitment and retention of highly qualified teachers, limited funding for salaries and resources, and less access to high-quality professional development. The results of this study show that most rural general educators are implementing culturally responsive instructional strategies that overlap with general teaching practices. Whether educators realize that they are addressing some of the less culturally sensitive needs of their ELs through the use of these practices is unclear. What is clear is that rural general educators have high levels of self-efficacy regarding culturally responsive strategies that overlap with general teaching practices and lower levels of self-efficacy when implementing strategies that require more cultural expertise. The result is the limited use of culturally rich strategies for ELs by general education teachers in rural schools.

Given that culturally responsive tasks that overlap with general teaching practices are implemented with higher self-efficacy and in greater frequency than more stringent strategies, opportunities exist for the seamless integration of culturally responsive strategies with instructional approaches. Acknowledging the culturally responsive strategies rural educators are already implementing can provide an opportunity for educators to recognize they are not starting at "ground zero," regardless of their culturally responsive self-efficacy. Educating teachers about the spectrum of culturally responsive instruction may bolster their confidence as they realize many of the strategies they use in their general practice have culturally responsive benefits for their diverse learners. Professional development focusing on currently implemented practices can emphasize the connections between the culturally responsive strategies they currently use and practical, actionable strategies that can be incorporated by building onto their daily teaching

routines. Allowing educators to acknowledge the culturally responsive ability they already have, even if inadvertent, will provide them with a stepping stone to bridge the uncertainty they may experience when developing their culturally responsive teaching ability.

Educators with lower levels of culturally responsive self-efficacy are in need of targeted professional development aimed at enhancing their skills and confidence in implementing culturally sensitive practices. These professional development programs should be tailored to address strategies that are largely missing from rural general education classrooms. Teachers need targeted professional development to help them understand the cultural differences between the home and school lives of their diverse students and find ways to embrace students' cultural diversity while utilizing their unique background knowledge to make learning meaningful. Increasing cultural awareness, understanding diverse perspectives, and integrating culturally relevant content into the curriculum will lead to greater academic outcomes for ELs in rural schools.

This study highlights the need to prioritize culturally responsive instruction that focuses on higher levels of culturally responsive expertise. Professional development opportunities that embrace the culturally responsive strategies already implemented by rural educators can bridge the gap between current abilities and areas for growth. Because the scale of culturally responsive instruction includes strategies that overlap with general teaching techniques, many general educators are implementing culturally responsive techniques, possibly without realizing that some of their familiar practices provide benefits for their ELs. Helping teachers identify the culturally responsive abilities they have when utilizing solid teaching practices, whether they were aware of the culturally responsive implications or not, allows them to make a foundation using strategies they are familiar with. Professional development should build teachers' cultural

responsivity from where they are using the progress they have already made. Bridging the culturally responsive learning gap in this way would allow rural general educators to activate prior knowledge and experiences when expanding their repertoire of culturally responsive teaching. A greater understanding of diverse backgrounds will enable teachers to create inclusive learning environments that embrace cultural diversity and provide sociocultural validation in school settings.

Rural school teachers can utilize ongoing assessment and reflection of their culturally responsive self-efficacy levels, abilities, and classroom practices. Collaborative learning communities within rural schools can provide a platform for educators to share experiences, exchange ideas, and collectively problem-solve issues related to culturally responsive instruction, especially regarding issues unique to their rural context. Collaborative learning communities can foster a culture of continuous learning, improvement, assessment, and reflection in a supportive environment that allows them to enhance their cultural competence and teaching practices. Built-in communities can provide support for rural educators when access to outside professionals and sources is limited.

ELs need to receive differentiated instruction in their general education classrooms to support their individual needs and academic levels. They may require adaptations on assignments and can benefit from various instructional strategies and assessments. General education teachers need to be familiar with the language learning processes of ELs so they can effectively modify classwork and provide appropriate supports to enhance their learning. Supports in the classroom may include strategies built into reading or math curricula. Besides targeted professional development, teachers can increase their knowledge of appropriate culturally responsive strategies through coaching, mentoring, and peer collaboration that utilizes

the strengths and expertise of school and district staff. Beyond professional development, rural general educators need to be supplied with materials and resources to help carry out culturally responsive instructional tasks, including access to professionals who can assist them in their individual settings, curriculum with built-in supports for ELs, and technology to help adapt instruction, provide various assessments, and assist teachers as they overcome language barriers. Administrators and stakeholders need to divert funding to bring in high-quality professional development for general educators and all school staff who will be working with ELs.

As the number of diverse learners in rural schools continues to increase, increased resources are needed to support the teachers responsible for providing equitable, high-quality instruction. Professional development geared toward culturally responsive teaching will benefit rural general educators by familiarizing them with the scale of culturally responsive strategies, linking their current classroom practices, and extending their instructional abilities to include more intensive culture-specific strategies. This professional growth will provide optimal learning outcomes for ELs in rural settings. By implementing these strategies, rural schools can overcome the challenges present in the current education system by improving the cultural responsiveness of general educators and creating more inclusive and culturally rich learning environments where students of all cultures feel valued, respected, and empowered to succeed.

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Appendix A

Permission to Use CRTSE Scale

TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY
College *of* Education

Permission To Use Instrument(s)

Dear Researcher:

You have my permission to use the Culturally Responsive Teaching Self-Efficacy Scale, the Culturally Responsive Teaching Outcome Expectations Scale, and/or the Culturally Responsive Classroom Management Self-Efficacy Scale in your research. A copy of the instruments are attached. Request for any changes or alterations to the instrument should be sent via email to kamau.siwatu@ttu.edu. When using the instrument(s) please cite accordingly.

- **Culturally Responsive Teaching Self-Efficacy Scale**

  Siwatu, K. O. (2007). Preservice teachers' culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy and outcome expectancy beliefs. Teaching and Teacher Education, 23, 1086-1101.

- **Culturally Responsive Teaching Outcome Expectations Scale**

  Siwatu, K. O. (2007). Preservice teachers' culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy and outcome expectancy beliefs. Teaching and Teacher Education, 23, 1086-1101.

- **Culturally Responsive Classroom Management Self-Efficacy Scale**

  Siwatu, K. O., Putnam, M., Starker, T. V., & Lewis, C. (2015). The development of the culturally responsive classroom management self-efficacy scale: Development and initial validation. *Urban Education*. Prepublished September 9, 2015.

Best wishes with your research.

Sincerely,

Kamau Oginga Siwatu, PhD
Professor of Educational Psychology

Box 41071 | Lubbock, Texas | 79409-1071 | T 806-834-5850 | F 806-742-2179

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Appendix B

Culturally Responsive Teaching Self-Efficacy Scale

Culturally Responsive Teaching Self-Efficacy Scale

Rate how confident you are in your ability to successfully accomplish each of the tasks listed below. Each task is related to teaching. Please rate your degree of confidence by recording a number from 0 (no confidence at all) to 100 (completely confident). Remember that you may use any number between 0 and 100.

0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
No Confidence At All					Moderately Confident					Completely Confident

I am able to:

_____ 1. adapt instruction to meet the needs of my students.

_____ 2. obtain information about my students' academic strengths.

_____ 3. determine whether my students like to work alone or in a group.

_____ 4. determine whether my students feel comfortable competing with other students.

_____ 5. identify ways that the school culture (e.g., values, norms, and practices) is different from my students' home culture.

_____ 6. implement strategies to minimize the effects of the mismatch between my students' home culture and the school culture.

_____ 7. assess student learning using various types of assessments.

_____ 8. obtain information about my students' home life.

_____ 9. build a sense of trust in my students.

_____ 10. establish positive home-school relations.

_____ 11. use a variety of teaching methods.

_____ 12. develop a community of learners when my class consists of students from diverse backgrounds.

_____ 13. use my students' cultural background to help make learning meaningful.

_____ 14. use my students' prior knowledge to help them make sense of new information.

_____ 15. identify ways how students communicate at home may differ from the school norms.

_____ 16. obtain information about my students' cultural background.

_____ 17. teach students about their cultures' contributions to science.

_____ 18. greet English Language Learners with a phrase in their native language.

_____ 19. design a classroom environment using displays that reflects a variety of cultures.

0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
No Confidence At All					Moderately Confident					Completely Confident

I am able to:

_____ 20. develop a personal relationship with my students.

_____ 21. obtain information about my students' academic weaknesses.

_____ 22. praise English Language Learners for their accomplishments using a phrase in their native language.

_____ 23. identify ways that standardized tests may be biased towards linguistically diverse students.

_____ 24. communicate with parents regarding their child's educational progress.

_____ 25. structure parent-teacher conferences so that the meeting is not intimidating for parents.

_____ 26. help students to develop positive relationships with their classmates.

_____ 27. revise instructional material to include a better representation of cultural groups.

_____ 28. critically examine the curriculum to determine whether it reinforces negative cultural stereotypes.

_____ 29. design a lesson that shows how other cultural groups have made use of mathematics.

_____ 30. model classroom tasks to enhance English Language Learner's understanding.

_____ 31. communicate with the parents of English Language Learners regarding their child's achievement.

_____ 32. help students feel like important members of the classroom.

_____ 33. identify ways that standardized tests may be biased towards culturally diverse students.

_____ 34. use a learning preference inventory to gather data about how my students like to learn.

_____ 35. use examples that are familiar to students from diverse cultural backgrounds.

_____ 36. explain new concepts using examples that are taken from my students' everyday lives.

_____ 37. obtain information regarding my students' academic interests.

_____ 38. use the interests of my students to make learning meaningful for them.

_____ 39. implement cooperative learning activities for those students who like to work in groups.

_____ 40. design instruction that matches my students' developmental needs.

_____ 41. teach students about their cultures' contributions to society.

Appendix C

Interview Protocol

1) Which items from the CRTSE scale do you currently use in your practice?

2) Have you had professional development related to providing instruction for English learners? Please describe.

3) Have you ever had a chance to observe teaching geared toward English learner students? Please describe.

4) How have your previously mentioned experiences affected your ability to teach students who are English learners?

Appendix D

ACRP Ethics and Human Subject Protection Certificate of Completion

ACRP

FOR LEARNING FOR LISTENING FOR LIFE

Certificate of Completion

Association of Clinical Research Professionals certifies that

Jordan Shumway

has successfully completed

Ethics and Human Subject Protection: A Comprehensive Introduction

Version: Jan 2020

Date of completion: January 19, 2022, 11:48 PM MST

Bridget Gonzales — Director, Training and Professional Development

ACRP

Appendix E

Facebook Social Media Recruitment Post

Hello Rural Educators!

I am a fellow rural educator and graduate student researching culturally diverse instruction for English learners in rural schools. I am completing my Doctorate program at Northwest Nazarene University in Nampa, Idaho. I am looking for K-12 rural educators to take a 5-10 minute electronic survey to inform my research. I am attaching a link for anyone willing to complete the survey. I appreciate your willingness to contribute to this body of research, and I respect what you, as rural educators, do for students every day!

Thank you!

Jordan Shumway

www.tinyurl.com/RuralEdSurvey

Appendix F

IRB Full Approval

Wed, May 31, 2023 6:30 PM

From: Sarah Marion
To: Jordan Shumway
Subject: Full Approval

Dear Jordan,

The IRB has reviewed your protocol: Providing the Culturally Responsive Instruction They Need: Investigating Diverse Instruction for English Learners in Rural Schools. You received "Full Approval". Congratulations, you may begin your research. If you have any questions, let me know.

Northwest Nazarene University

Sarah Marion

IRB Member

623 S University Blvd

Nampa, ID 83686

Appendix G

Permission to Use Copyrighted Figures

GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY PRESS

June 6, 2023
Jordan Shumway
Northwest Nazarene University

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