

Creating a Culturally Responsive Classroom for World Language Classes: A Connection of CRT and Comprehensible Input, A Study of Strategies and Best Practices

Incorporating culturally responsive teaching practices that consider students' cultural backgrounds, interests, and proficiency levels, while providing comprehensible input, can significantly enhance language learning outcomes and promote a positive and inclusive learning environment.

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Abstract:

The ability to communicate in different languages is increasingly essential in today's interconnected world. However, language learning outcomes can often suffer due to low engagement and participation, especially among students from diverse cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds. To address this challenge, it is crucial to create a culturally responsive classroom environment that values inclusivity and fosters a sense of belonging for all students. Incorporating culturally responsive teaching practices that consider students' cultural backgrounds, interests, and proficiency levels while providing comprehensible input can significantly enhance language learning outcomes and promote a positive and inclusive learning environment. Comprehensible input involves the use of language that students can understand, even if it is slightly beyond their current level, in the context of meaningful and relevant language use. Culturally responsive teaching in world language classes involves tailoring the curriculum to be relevant and meaningful to students' cultural backgrounds, using instructional strategies that are culturally relevant, and creating a classroom environment that respects and values cultural diversity. This inclusive framework of culturally relevant education goes by various terms, including culturally relevant pedagogy, culturally responsive teaching, and culturally sustaining pedagogy. This thesis presents a curricular planning approach that is intentionally designed to be engaging and relevant to students, while also incorporating culturally responsive teaching practices. The approach centers around communicative strategies that foster inclusivity in the classroom, ensuring that every student feels valued and heard. A key component of this 3-day curricular planning unit revolves around a novel, which provides comprehensible input on real-world issues that are compelling for students, such as quinceañeras, turbulent relationships, gang violence, immigration, and more. By incorporating these themes and strategies into the curriculum, the aim is to create a learning environment that is both

academically rigorous and personally meaningful to students' lives, while also recognizing and respecting their diverse cultural backgrounds.

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Literature Review:

One of the most prevalent problems impacting student engagement and participation is anxiety. Research has demonstrated that anxiety and stress can have adverse effects on the physical and emotional wellbeing of children and adolescents. If left unaddressed, these conditions can bring on a range of problems including school absenteeism, poor self-esteem, communication difficulties, underperformance in academics, lack of focus and concentration, behavioral issues, increased reliance on others, attention-seeking behavior, and difficulty with task completion (Buchler, 2013 p.2).

According to research by Buchler (2013), cultural norms and values related to school achievement vary across cultures and impact anxiety levels. The study explored psychological distress in Hispanic, African-American, and Native North American students and found that each group experienced unique challenges. Hispanic students experienced anxiety, low self-efficacy, and negative behavior due to language and socio-cultural difficulties. African-American students were found to be at increased risk for depression, post-traumatic stress, anger, and anxiety due to exposure to violence and single-parent families. American Indian students experienced frustration, anxiety, alienation, and feelings of inferiority due to differences in cultural styles. Additionally, Wehner (2014) discusses the impact of foreign language anxiety (FLA) on motivation in the world language classroom. Debilitating FLA can hinder motivation to persist in language learning, and educators must find ways to close the tension-causing gaps between current and desired language abilities to help students succeed.

Kotluk and Kocakaya (2020) analyzed the importance of culturally sensitive and equitable educational approaches for culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students in Turkey. According to the research, teacher education programs should prepare teachers to

respond to cultural differences in classrooms through curriculum, teaching strategies, and programs that cater to student needs and support their academic, social, and emotional development while fostering their culture. Kotluk and Kocakaya (2020) also examined self-efficacy in teachers' ability to apply their knowledge of CRT principles to create a learning environment that is responsive to cultural differences. The research demonstrated that culturally responsive teachers have a positive perception of themselves and their students. "They are aware of how differences such as culture, socioeconomic status, disability, and language can affect the educational process" and while considering these factors, they consistently hold high expectations that all students can be successful. Kotluk and Kocakaya (2020) determined that culturally responsive teachers have the ability to incorporate the cultures of their students into the teaching and learning process which in turn leads into a learning partnership where students are able to recognize the cultures of themselves and others.

Culturally responsive teaching has emerged as a powerful approach to promote student engagement and participation in classrooms, particularly among students from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Hammond (2015) defines culturally responsive teaching as an educational approach that recognizes and values students' cultural identities and leverages them to enhance learning outcomes. According to Hammond (2015), culturally responsive teaching involves three key components: the use of culturally relevant materials, promoting positive social interactions, and the use of instructional strategies that are culturally relevant. The use of culturally relevant materials can include literature, music, and other forms of media that reflect the cultural diversity of the classroom. Studies have shown that incorporating culturally relevant materials in classroom instruction can enhance student engagement and improve learning outcomes (Gay, 2018).

Promoting positive social interactions is another important component of culturally responsive teaching. This can involve creating opportunities for students to engage in collaborative learning activities, group discussions, and other interactive learning experiences. Positive social interactions can help to create a sense of community in the classroom and promote a supportive learning environment (Hammond, 2015). Finally, the use of instructional strategies that are culturally relevant can help to increase student participation and engagement. These strategies may include using culturally relevant examples and analogies, incorporating student experiences into lesson plans, and leveraging students' cultural backgrounds to enhance learning (Hammond, 2015). Research has shown that culturally responsive teaching can significantly improve student engagement and participation in classrooms. For example, a study by Nieto (2013) found that culturally responsive teaching can help to create a more inclusive and welcoming classroom environment for students from diverse backgrounds. Another study by Gay (2018) showed that the use of culturally relevant materials in classroom instruction can improve student motivation and engagement. By incorporating culturally relevant materials, promoting positive social interactions, and using instructional strategies that are culturally relevant, educators can create a supportive learning environment that values and respects students' cultural identities and experiences.

Comprehensible input and culturally responsive teaching share a strong connection in language teaching. Comprehensible input refers to the language input that learners can understand. In order to make input comprehensible for all students, including those from diverse cultural backgrounds, educators must be intentional in selecting materials and resources that are relevant to their students' experiences and interests and that meet their needs (Ladson-Billings, 2014). Additionally, educators can use culturally responsive teaching practices, such as incorporating students' home languages or using culturally relevant examples, to make the input

more accessible and engaging for students (Brown & Cooper, 2011). By creating a classroom environment in which all students feel seen and heard, educators can facilitate language acquisition and create a more inclusive learning environment that promotes equity and social justice.

According to Krashen's "Affective Filter Hypothesis," the learner's absorption of language is subconsciously organized through affective factors, and affective factors influence world language learning (Oller & Krashen, 1988). The principle acknowledges that each student comes with a range of emotional qualities that affect language acquisition, including motivation, self-esteem, anxiety, and stress (Patrick, 2019 p. 42). The hypothesis proposes that affective factors can act as a filter to regulate emotions and have a negative effect on language input. Krashen believes that paying attention to students' emotions is more important than their performance for learning success. The affective filter hypothesis impacts learners' psychological and emotional factors, particularly motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety (Chen, 2022 pg. 1). The principle highlights that when anxiety levels rise, language acquisition diminishes. Therefore, it is crucial to focus on providing understandable input, stories, and communicative tasks that lower stress and create a positive affective filter (Patrick, 2019 p. 42). As such, teachers must be attuned to the emotional needs and experiences of their learners, and adapt their teaching strategies accordingly (Gay, 2018). By creating a safe and supportive learning environment that values the diverse cultural backgrounds and experiences of learners, teachers can help to foster positive emotional qualities such as a sense of belonging, empowerment, and self-worth (Ladson-Billings, 2014).

Research conducted by Chen, 2022 also discusses the role of anxiety in language learning, including two categories: facilitative anxiety and avoidance anxiety. Facilitative anxiety can be transformed into motivation, while avoidance anxiety can lead to a lack of learning and

ultimately failure. Anxiety in language learning is related to cultural factors, and Japanese students are particularly prone to anxiety due to their culture of shame and concern about negative evaluations. (Chen, 2022 pg. 2) Krashen argues that this type of anxiety can also be beneficial for language learners because it helps to focus their attention and encourages them to actively engage with the language. Krashen suggests that teachers can help to transform facilitative anxiety into motivation by creating a supportive and challenging learning environment. This can be achieved by setting realistic goals, providing feedback that is constructive and specific, and creating a classroom culture that values effort and progress. Furthermore, teachers can encourage students to take risks and make mistakes, emphasizing that mistakes are a natural part of the learning process. Krashen's view suggests that rather than trying to eliminate all forms of anxiety, teachers should strive to create an environment in which students can channel their anxiety into productive and positive motivation for language learning (Oller & Krashen, 1988). World language educators can create an environment in which students can channel their anxiety into productive and positive motivation for language learning in several specific ways. Firstly, educators can provide opportunities for learners to engage in authentic and meaningful communicative activities, such as role-playing or simulations, that help to reduce anxiety and increase motivation by giving learners a sense of purpose and agency (Dörnyei & Chan, 2013). Secondly, educators can incorporate culturally relevant materials and topics into their language instruction, which can help learners to develop a deeper appreciation for and connection to the target language and culture, and foster positive emotional engagement (Gay, 2018). Thirdly, educators can use mindfulness and relaxation techniques, such as deep breathing or meditation, to help learners manage their anxiety and regulate their emotional states (Talbot et al., 2020).

The Acquisition-Learning Distinction Principle proposed by Krashen in 1982 highlights that learning language and acquiring language are not interchangeable and are not the same thing. Acquisition is unconscious and implicit, picked up from meaningful messages in the target language. In contrast, learning language is a consciously undertaken activity, involving explicit knowledge about the way language works (Patrick, 2019 p. 39- 41). Acquiring a language, as opposed to simply learning it, is an important part of culturally responsive teaching because it emphasizes the idea that language is not simply a set of rules to be memorized, but a tool for communication and cultural understanding. In order to truly acquire a language, students must be exposed to meaningful and relevant language input that reflects their own experiences and the experiences of the communities they come from (Ladson-Billings, 2014). This means that language acquisition is not just about acquiring a new set of linguistic skills, but also about gaining cultural competence and developing the ability to navigate and communicate within diverse cultural contexts. By emphasizing language acquisition as a key goal of language learning, culturally responsive educators can help their students develop the linguistic and cultural competencies needed to thrive in a diverse and interconnected world.

The "natural order principle" in language acquisition refers to the idea that language learners tend to acquire certain grammatical structures in a predictable order, regardless of their age, first language, or the language they are learning (Krashen, 1982). This principle suggests that language learning occurs in a similar way to how children naturally acquire their first language, and that some aspects of language are easier to learn than others. For example, learners tend to acquire basic grammatical structures, like word order and verb tense, before more complex structures, like conditional sentences or passive voice. This principle has been supported by many studies in second language acquisition and is an important concept in understanding how learners acquire language (Ellis, 2008; Lightbown & Spada, 2013). The

“natural order principle” is relevant to culturally responsive teaching because it underscores the importance of recognizing that all learners bring unique linguistic backgrounds and experiences to the language learning process. This means that educators must be attentive to the diverse linguistic needs and backgrounds of their students and must use that knowledge to create learning environments that are responsive to their linguistic and cultural differences (Gay, 2018). By understanding the natural order principle and how it applies to their students' language learning, culturally responsive educators can better support their students' language development and ensure that all learners have access to the tools and resources they need to succeed.

The Monitor Principle is a concept in language teaching that suggests that learners use their conscious knowledge of grammar rules to monitor and correct their language output. According to this principle, learners can use their knowledge of grammar rules to catch and correct errors they make in their speech or writing. Stephen Krashen argued that the Monitor Principle should be used as a tool for editing rather than as the primary means of generating language (Krashen, 1982). The effectiveness of the Monitor Principle in language teaching has been debated, with some scholars suggesting that an overreliance on conscious monitoring can inhibit fluency and communication (Ellis, 2008). However, others have suggested that the Monitor Principle can be a useful tool for learners who want to improve their accuracy and precision in language use (Lightbown & Spada, 2013). The use of scaffolding activities supports students and keeps their self-consciousness at a low profile. Teachers should be sympathetic listeners and readers of student-produced language, rather than correcting errors on paper, which research indicates can actually hinder progress. By delivering understandable messages in the target language and modeling good language use, teachers can cultivate a healthy monitor in students (Patrick, 2019 p. 41). Peer feedback is a key component of culturally responsive teaching and can be especially beneficial in language learning contexts. The use of peer feedback

allows learners to receive input from individuals who are at a similar language proficiency level and can provide insight and support from a peer perspective (Jun Liu & Jette Hansen Edwards, 2018). Additionally, the Monitor Principle can be applied during peer feedback sessions.

Learners can use their conscious knowledge of grammar rules to provide feedback on their peers' language output and provide suggestions for improvement (Krashen, 1982). By incorporating peer feedback and the Monitor Principle in language learning classrooms, educators can create a culturally responsive learning environment that promotes collaboration, communication, and language development.

The Input Principle is a key concept in language teaching that highlights the importance of exposing learners to language input that is just beyond their current level of competence (Krahnke et al., 1985). This is done to facilitate language learning without causing frustration or anxiety. The principle is based on the idea that learners acquire language through comprehensible input, which refers to language input that is understood despite the presence of some unknown words or structures (Krashen, 1982). In this regard, teachers should provide learners with input that is slightly more challenging than their current level of competence, allowing them to progress in their language learning (Lightbown & Spada, 2013). Studies have supported the effectiveness of the Input Principle in language learning, showing that learners who receive more comprehensible input tend to make more progress in their language learning (Ellis, 2008). Nonetheless, it is essential to note that the quality of input matters, and learners need to be actively engaged in the language input to make progress (Lightbown & Spada, 2013).

It is crucial for language teachers to understand their students' proficiency levels and avoid assuming a one-size-fits-all approach to language learning. Understanding students' proficiency levels is crucial for language teachers practicing culturally responsive teaching because it allows them to effectively tailor their instruction to meet the diverse needs and

backgrounds of their students. As noted by Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011), "students vary greatly in their second language proficiency, learning styles, and motivation levels, and teachers must take these differences into account when planning instruction" (p. 6). This means that teachers should not assume that all students have the same level of proficiency or that a single teaching method will work for everyone. Instead, they should use a variety of instructional strategies when curating input materials that cater to the individual needs of each student, meeting them at their appropriate level of proficiency.

Prior to creating input that meets learners' levels of proficiency and helps them reach the next level of proficiency, it is important to assess learners' proficiency levels and set appropriate learning goals (Brown, 2015). The ACTFL Proficiency Levels and Performance Descriptors offer an effective tool for assessing the communication and production abilities of language learners at different proficiency levels. They provide clear and detailed descriptions of what learners can do in the target language, making it easier to evaluate their language skills accurately (Cabral, 2017). For example, novice low learners speak in lists and memorized phrases whereas intermediate low learners speak in complete sentences. According to Cabral (2017), a common question that arises in language teaching is how to help students progress to higher proficiency levels. To answer this question, Cabral looks to the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL)'s developed Text Types that outline the specific language functions and forms produced by novice, intermediate, and advanced language learners. By using these Text Types, teachers can design learning activities and assessments that are tailored to learners' proficiency levels, thereby supporting their language development. Using this information, teachers can create various assessment tools such as proficiency tests, self-assessment, or engage in teacher evaluations to determine learners' current level of proficiency. It is important for students to understand the types of language able to be produced

according to the various levels of proficiency and be able to self-assess how they can move up in proficiency. Villarreal (2013), a world language chair person, discussed how one of their teachers created a presentation for K-5 language learners that uses video game language to teach proficiency levels. Students "level up" by expanding their language skills to fill an ice cream cone with cartoon characters. This approach helps students take ownership of their learning and understand the importance of proficiency levels.

Another way to assess students' proficiency levels is to use ACTFL's Proficiency Placement Test (APPT). The ACTFL Proficiency Placement Test (APPT) is a language assessment tool designed to measure a person's ability to comprehend spoken and written language, as described in the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines. The APPT assesses general language proficiency, rather than what is learned in a specific language program or curriculum, and provides separate proficiency ratings for listening and reading skills. The ratings range from Novice Low to Advanced Low, serving as indicators of overall language proficiency to assist with course placement. The APPT assesses the Interpretive Listening and Interpretive Reading modes. The listening section evaluates a person's ability to spontaneously understand spoken language, while the reading section measures how well a person can comprehend written texts. Rather than assessing what a person knows about the language, the APPT evaluates how well a person can understand the language. For language teachers, the APPT is a useful tool for assessing learners' proficiency levels and placing them into appropriate language courses. It provides objective and standardized ratings based on the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines, which are widely recognized in the field of language teaching. By accurately assessing learners' proficiency levels, language teachers can design effective language programs and tailor instruction to meet the specific needs of their students. The APPT can also help learners to set realistic goals and track their language development over time. Once learners' proficiency levels

have been identified, educators can set learning goals that align with students' level of proficiency. Differentiating instruction and providing feedback are also important aspects of creating effective input for learners (Brown, 2015). By understanding student proficiency levels, teachers can design differentiated instruction that addresses individual students' strengths, weaknesses and learning styles which aligns with culturally responsive teaching. This approach ensures that all students are appropriately challenged and supported in their language learning journey. Teachers can also identify individual students' strengths and areas for improvement accurately. By employing various formative and summative assessment strategies tailored to students' proficiency levels, teachers can provide timely feedback and support continuous growth and learning.

The Compelling Input Principle suggests that language learners acquire language best when they are exposed to input that is both comprehensible and interesting or compelling (Vanderplank, 2011). Therefore, teachers need to provide input that is not only understandable but also engaging and relevant to the learners' lives (Ellis, 2008). According to Bex (2019), the importance of connection in language classes is paramount. The focus should be on communication rather than solely covering the curriculum or targeting specific grammar constructions. Comprehensible input is crucial for language acquisition and our brains are designed to acquire language. Teachers should provide repeated exposures to vocabulary and constructions, but not at the expense of interrupting communication. As long as the conversation is comprehended, tangents are okay to follow. Students' brains can use the language if it is comprehensible, and the focus should always be on communication. As noted by Bex (2019), the best input is so compelling that the acquirer may even forget that it is encoded in a foreign language, meaning that the input connects with learners at the necessary level so that their affective filter is lowered and they can meaningfully engage with the content. Research has

shown that learners who receive compelling input tend to make more progress in their language learning (Ellis, 2008). For example, Patrick (2019) allowed their Latin students to choose their favorite fable categories to read, which made the input compelling, and they found it engaging. The importance of learner choice cannot be underestimated, as it can lower the affective filter, making it easier for students to understand the input (Patrick, 2019). Learner choice is an important aspect of culturally responsive teaching, as it emphasizes the importance of valuing and incorporating students' diverse backgrounds, experiences, and interests into the learning process. When students have a say in what and how they learn, they are more likely to be engaged and invested in their learning (Nieto, 2013).

In order to achieve this compelling input, world language teachers should plan instruction for comprehensible input, sourcing and developing materials designed specifically for language learners. Teaching proficiency through reading and storytelling is a valuable approach to language learning, particularly in world language classes. This method provides compelling input, necessary for teaching comprehensible input, and aligns with culturally responsive teaching methodology. Storytelling is a great way to provide comprehensible input because it captures learners' attention, is memorable, and provides a rich context for language input (Krashen, 1982). According to Krashen (1982), storytelling provides a source of input that is engaging and compelling for learners. This is because storytelling is a natural human activity that has been used for centuries to pass on cultural knowledge and values. Storytelling allows learners to connect with the language on an emotional level, which can help them remember it more easily. For example, a story about a character who overcomes a challenge can help learners understand the meaning of words and grammar structures in context. This type of input is more memorable than rote memorization of vocabulary lists or grammar rules. Teaching proficiency through reading and storytelling also aligns with culturally responsive teaching methodology.

Culturally responsive teaching is an approach to teaching that recognizes the importance of the cultural background of learners and uses this as a resource for learning. This approach values diversity and promotes inclusivity in the classroom (Ladson-Billings, 2014). Using stories that reflect the cultural background of learners can help them connect with the language and feel more engaged in the learning process. This approach also allows learners to see their own culture reflected in the curriculum, which can promote a sense of pride and belonging. Additionally, stories that incorporate cultural elements can help learners understand the values and beliefs of the culture, which is essential for intercultural communication (Byram, 1997).

Novels and readers also provide a wealth of comprehensible input for language learners. Reading novels in the target language exposes students to a wide range of vocabulary, sentence structures, and cultural context. This exposure to language in context helps students to internalize the language more effectively and to develop their communicative competence (Nation, 2017). By reading works of literature written by authors from different cultures, students can learn about the perspectives, beliefs, and values of people from different backgrounds. This type of learning is essential for promoting cultural competence and understanding. Furthermore, it can help students to develop empathy and respect for different cultures, which is essential for building a more inclusive and just society (Ladson-Billings, 2014). There are many ways to incorporate novels and readers into the world language curriculum. Pre-reading strategies are crucial for students to engage with a text before diving into the reading process. By introducing pre-reading activities such as predicting what the text will be about based on pictures or the title of a chapter, teachers can set the tone for what the students will read and help them to make connections with prior knowledge. Predicting what the text will be about based on pictures or the title of a chapter is a common pre-reading strategy used in language arts classrooms. This activity allows students to make predictions about the content of the text, activate prior knowledge, and set goals for their

reading. Before reading a chapter, the teacher can provide students with a picture or the title of the chapter and ask them to make predictions about what they think the chapter will be about. This can be done through group discussion or individual writing. As a result, students will be more engaged with the text and be able to make connections with prior knowledge, making it easier for them to understand the text. Another pre-reading strategy that can help students to engage with the text is going over important vocabulary that will be found in each chapter. Teachers can create a list of vocabulary words and definitions that will be found in the upcoming chapter and go over them with the class. This can be done through a variety of activities, such as using flashcards, playing vocabulary games, or creating a word wall in the classroom (Bex, 2022). By doing this, students will be more familiar with the vocabulary used in the text and be able to comprehend the text more effectively. Furthermore, this strategy can also help students to build their vocabulary, making them more proficient in the language.

Bex (2022) emphasizes the importance of post-reading activities in language learning to enhance reading comprehension. Various post-reading activities can be implemented, such as the "Rewind" technique where students read a section of the text and fill in blanks by selecting from two options that best fit the sentence. Drawing can also be utilized to demonstrate understanding, and sequencing events from the text can be a valuable activity. Short videos highlighting the concepts covered in the text can be used for class discussions. The teacher can initiate a discussion that covers various aspects of the text, including its themes, characters, and cultural context. This discussion can aid in teaching vocabulary and grammar in context by asking students to identify and analyze different sentence structures or verb forms found in the novel. Furthermore, the teacher can encourage students to express their opinions about the novel and how it relates to their own experiences. These post-reading activities can facilitate a deeper understanding and appreciation of the text, as well as aid in language learning.

Another powerful strategy is calendar talk, also known as calendar chat. According to (Elliott, 2021), “Calendar talk is an input-based activity where you talk to your students about the weather, the date, and important events that are happening in their lives and in the world. It’s not only compelling but also comprehensible.”. Aside from this being an easy activity to implement in the world language classroom, there are many benefits to using this instructional strategy. Calendar talk builds community as it provides opportunities for students to get to know each other based on their discussions of what is occurring in their lives. It also provides compelling input because conversations are focused around real world events and the members of the classroom. Social media, tv, community events, etc. can be built into calendar talk activities. It is important to remember to make this compelling input comprehensible with visuals and linguistic supports such as highlighting forms, providing emojis and sentence starters (Elliott, 2021).

Calendar chat can be done each day in the world language classroom with various themes throughout the week. For example, weekend chats can become a staple part of world language classes on Mondays. Mikkelsen, (2017) shared, “Weekend chat is a consistent routine in my classroom. Every Monday, I like to spend some time with my students talking about their weekends and what we did without Spanish class all weekend.”. Mikkelsen notes that it is important to scaffold the activities for students and differentiate with a range of levels of difficulty such as by providing them a quizlet set of expressions to use in the “yo forms”, and by providing illustrations to match questions. Prior to having students complete their weekend chats or prior to having them share their responses, teachers should model their responses to students to facilitate student participation. By modeling the desired language behavior and providing feedback, students can learn to use the language more effectively and confidently (Swain, 2011). By modeling your own weekend chat, you can show your students how to talk about their own

experiences in the target language and provide them with a template to follow. Incorporating visuals about your life into your weekend chat can also make you more relatable and human to your students. For example, you could share photos of your family, pets, or hobbies and talk about them in the target language. This can help students to see you as a person with a life outside of the classroom, which can increase their motivation to learn the language and create a more positive and engaging learning environment. The weekend chat prompts and activities can be presented to learners through a variety of approaches such as by posting various weekend chat prompts on the wall in a gallery walk to promote kinesthetic learning, by playing the game “mentiroso”, (two truths and a lie) based on students weekends, human bingo or find someone who which also gets students up out of their seat and moving. It also promotes class community by getting students to speak to each other about their personal lives (Mikkelsen, 2017). This is of the utmost importance for culturally responsive educators as it promotes cultural understanding and appreciation of one another amongst students.

Compelling input can also be taught through the use of authentic resources. Authentic resources are resources that were created in a target language by a target language speaker for other people who speak that target language (Gilmore, 2007). Examples of such can be infographics, movies, advertisements, websites, YouTube videos, articles, menus and much more. Through the use of authentic resources, it is possible to integrate the 5 C's of language learning, which include critical thinking, communication, collaboration, citizenship (global and local), and creativity. Access to authentic resources can provide students with exposure to real-life language usage by native speakers, including a range of accents and cultural elements related to the language (Everybody loves languages, 2021). When considering what resource to use, it is important to determine what students will find engaging and relevant as well as a material that provides class variety (Fischer, 2014). Teachers must also select materials that are

appropriate for learners' readiness levels. Once teachers have identified which authentic resource is appropriate for students, it is necessary to determine what strategies will be used to establish a context for the resource. An example of pre- reading/ listening or viewing activity could be having students predict what they might see, listen to or read based on the context. Another example is to create discussion questions about students' personal experiences and lives to make the topic relevant (Fischer, 2014). Once context has been established, the teacher can design a myriad of different interpretive, interpersonal or presentational tasks for students to engage with the authentic resource. Tasks can also be adapted on the same resource for varied levels of proficiency according to Bloom's taxonomy, for example remembering is considered the lowest level of thinking, students can be tasked with answering questions that begin with who, what, where, when or engage with true or false questions. Designing is on the opposite end of the spectrum, being the highest level of thinking. At this level, students can write an original story or generate answers to hypothetical questions about the authentic resource (Hedstrom, 2011).

Movie talks are another great way to engage students with authentic resources through scaffolding. It uses visual images to provide comprehensible input, allowing students to understand language structures without relying on written translations. This approach is also a method of differentiated instruction as it can be adjusted to meet the varying language abilities of students. Instead of a reading or a story with live actors, you are circling and discussing what is visible on the screen in the short film (Bex, 2013). Teachers can pause the video while narrating what is on the screen, providing several opportunities for students to engage with targeted high frequency words. After narrating, teachers can check for comprehension in various ways such as asking true or false questions, having students organize the events in the order they occurred, drawing statements taken from the script and much more. After learners have engaged with comprehension check activities, learners can watch the video with sound, without the teacher

narrating their developed script. Subsequently, the teacher can engage learners in post activities such as discussing cultural elements shown in the video to fulfill New York State cultural standards (NYS Education Department, 2021).

Teaching with telenovelas in world language classrooms has also been identified as a promising approach for providing compelling comprehensible input and promoting culturally responsive teaching (Weyers, 1998). They are authentic materials and offer engaging and meaningful content as they take place in countries where the TL is spoken and reflect the culture and values of these communities. Telenovelas often deal with universal themes such as love, family and social justice. For example, "Betty la Fea," a Colombian telenovela, portrays the beauty standards and gender roles prevalent in Latin American society. Teachers can have students draw connections with students and the TL culture by engaging in discussions that promote empathy, understanding, and respect for diverse perspectives presented in telenovelas. It is important to note that the telenovela itself may not be fully comprehensible and that the content should be used in a variety of ways to promote language acquisition including discussions, predictions and character analysis (Chase, 2018).

In conclusion, implementing comprehensible input and culturally responsive teaching in the world language classroom offers several benefits for both students and teachers. Some key advantages include an inclusive and equitable learning environment. Culturally responsive teaching recognizes and values students' identities, languages and backgrounds. It creates an inclusive and equitable learning environment where all students feel seen, heard and respected. By meeting students at their proficiency levels language teachers demonstrate a commitment to recognizing and valuing students' identities and backgrounds. This understanding helps to build trust and rapport between teachers and students as it shows that teachers acknowledge and appreciate the linguistic diversity present in the classroom. Strong teacher- student relationships

contribute to a supportive learning environment and can enhance students' motivation and engagement (Hammond, 2015). By providing meaningful comprehensible input, teachers support students' language acquisition as students are more likely to engage with the language when they can understand and make connections to the content. This approach promotes natural language acquisition and helps students develop their communication skills more effectively. These approaches also promote cultural competence and intercultural understanding. Culturally responsive teaching also helps improve motivation and engagement as students feel more connected and engaged in the learning process. The use of authentic materials such as YouTube videos, real-life situations, music, etc., helps students see the relevance and purpose of language learning (Gilmore, 2007). Students are more motivated to participate actively, take risks and explore the language and culture, leading to increased language proficiency. By integrating culturally relevant content and perspectives, teachers expose students to different cultural practices, traditions and perspectives. This exposure fosters empathy, respect and appreciation for diversity, preparing students to navigate a multicultural and globalized world (Ladson-Billings, 2014).

Curricular Planning:

Lesson #1

The unit of instruction is a Spanish world language lesson for novice-mid to intermediate-low level learners in grade 9. The lesson is aligned with the New York State themes and topics for world language: Celebrations, Customs and Traditions and focuses on engaging learners in the various modes of communication: interpretive, presentational and interpersonal while also engaging them in cultural standards: relating cultural practices and products to perspectives. The first lesson is designed to take 40 minutes and is on the seventh day of the unit. The main essential question is What is it like to be 15 years old?, though there are several other essential questions explored in this lesson. Other essential questions include: How was your weekend? What did you do this weekend? Who did you spend time with? Where did you go? What did you eat? When did you do those things? What can you deduct from the front cover of the book? What do you see? What do those images tell you? What is the introduction of the book about? Who is mentioned in the introduction? What cultural practices or products are mentioned in the introduction? What does it mean to be 15 years old?

As students enter the room, they will be greeted with the Do Now board. This board contains important information such as the date, topic, learning targets, Do Now prompt, and homework or reminders. By reviewing this board at the beginning of class, students can quickly orient themselves to the day's activities and expectations. To facilitate student participation and engagement, the instructor may circle the information on the Do Now board and ask questions in the target language. For example, the instructor may ask, "¿Cuál es la fecha de hoy? Es enero o diciembre?" By engaging students in this way, the instructor can reinforce key vocabulary and concepts while also encouraging active participation and discussion. After reviewing the Do Now board, the instructor may lead the class in a "weather chat" activity. In this activity, students view an anchor chart on the board with visuals and vocabulary related to different types of weather. They then use this information to engage in presentational speaking, answering the

question "¿Qué tiempo hace hoy?" (What's the weather like today?). This activity provides an opportunity for students to practice using weather-related vocabulary and structures in a meaningful context, while also building their confidence and fluency in the target language.

After engaging in calendar and weekend chat, students will complete a weekend chat activity in Google Classroom, which involves writing two complete sentences in Spanish about their weekend. This task is designed to develop their presentational writing skills, and they will be provided with an anchor chart to help them. They can level up their response by adding the time of day in their sentences. The teacher will model the response by sharing information about her weekend with visuals. This task is aligned with the interpretive and presentational modes of communication. Incorporating visuals about your life into your weekend chat can also make you more relatable and human to your students. For example, you could share photos of your family, pets, or hobbies and talk about them in the target language. This can help students to see you as a person with a life outside of the classroom, which can increase their motivation to learn the language and create a more positive and engaging learning environment.

Next, the learners will engage in interpersonal communication about their weekends with a partner. They will engage in a turn-and-talk activity where they will discuss their weekends and share their experiences based on the presentational writing they did. The teacher will circulate and listen to the conversations, providing feedback and comments on their shares. Learners will then volunteer to share their responses with the class, and the class will engage in discussions, identifying who did the same thing, if it was fun or boring, and the class will build on their responses. This task is aligned with the interpersonal and presentational speaking modes of communication.

Afterwards, learners will be introduced to the new book they will be reading and will begin working with the text by analyzing the cover of the book *Fiesta Fatal*. They will use a

graphic organizer to analyze the information they gather, filling in information about who, what, and other details. They will use word walls posted around the room to help their writing in Spanish. The teacher will review the analysis of the book cover with the class, going over what they see on the cover page, sharing possible answers for each section of the graphic organizer and asking learners to share their findings.

After reviewing the analysis of the book cover with the class, the teacher will guide the learners in analyzing the introduction of the reading. This analysis aims to provide learners with an understanding of the context of the text they will be reading in the target language. The introduction, which is in English, will provide background information about the story's setting and themes. The introduction discusses how it is not easy to turn 15 and how it may feel like being in limbo between childhood and adulthood. It then discusses why quinceañeras are important and deeply treasured. It then discusses the backdrop of Morelia in the state of Michoacan, Mexico and how this state experiences continual civil unrest. The teacher will display an image of Morelia for students to visualize.

Lastly, at the end of the lesson, students will engage in a culminating activity by working on an exit ticket that requires them to answer the question, ¿Es fácil tener quince años? Students will utilize sentence starters to formulate their responses. The teacher will review the responses and learners will fill in a Venn diagram, indicating reasons why it is easy or difficult to be fifteen. The teacher will also provide model responses to the question and engage the students in a conversation about the topic. By engaging in discussions about topics that are relevant and relatable to students, such as the challenges and opportunities of being a teenager, teachers can create a learning environment that is meaningful and engaging to learners.

For homework, learners will translate the expressions for chapter 1 and they will then choose out of four options to further demonstrate their understanding of the vocabulary. First,

they can draw a sketch that represents the meaning of the expression. This option provides a visual representation of the expression's meaning, which can aid in comprehension and retention. Second, learners can write a sentence using the expression in context, using their own words. This option allows learners to apply the expression to a real-world situation, which can aid in their comprehension and retention of the expression. Third, learners can provide a synonym or expression that matches the vocab. This option encourages learners to develop their vocabulary and language proficiency by identifying related expressions that share a similar meaning to the target expression. Finally, learners can complete three quizlet activities related to the expressions they translated, which will reinforce their understanding and retention of the expressions. These activities may include flashcards, matching, and multiple-choice questions, which provide learners with different modalities to engage with the content. Providing choices in homework allows learners to personalize their learning experience, which can lead to greater satisfaction with the learning process.

Lesson #2

The second lesson in the unit is scheduled for 40 minutes and takes place on the eighth day. The primary focus of the lesson is to explore the question, "What is life in Morelia-Michoacán, México like based on chapter 1?" There are several other essential questions that will also be explored during the lesson, such as the cultural practices and products mentioned in chapter 1, the characteristics of the characters, what it means to be 15 years old, and any questions students may have for the characters.

At the start of class, students will be greeted with a Do Now board that contains important information such as the date, topic, learning targets, Do Now prompt, and any homework or reminders. Reviewing this board at the beginning of class will help students quickly understand the day's activities and expectations. To encourage participation and

engagement, the instructor may circle the information on the Do Now board and ask questions in the target language. Following the Do Now review, the teacher may lead the class in a "weather chat" activity. Students will view an anchor chart with visuals and vocabulary related to different types of weather. They will then use this information to engage in interpersonal speaking by answering the question, "¿Qué tiempo hace hoy?" amongst each other. This activity will serve as a change from the previous day's presentational communication about the weather.

After the "weather chat" activity, students will participate in a vocabulary review game using whiteboards. The teacher will introduce the game and students will be divided into heterogeneous groups of four. They will be presented with a photo on the board and will race to be the first group to write the appropriate vocabulary expression that best matches the image, based on their homework from the previous night. As the students play the game, the teacher will pause to review the vocabulary expression after each turn. The use of visuals in conjunction with written words can aid in improving students' retention of the content. Additionally, through collaboration with their peers, learners can effectively overcome comprehension difficulties. Games and competitions can make learning more fun and engaging for students. This can lead to increased participation and a more positive attitude towards learning. The competitive nature of the activity can create a sense of urgency and excitement, motivating students to work harder and perform better.

After this review game, the teacher will pose the question: ¿Dónde toma lugar el capítulo 1 del libro, según la introducción? With the added scaffold of the defined question word. After reviewing that the location is Morelia in Michoacán, México, the teacher will review the task, that they will be analyzing Morelia and "walking" through the town, gathering observations. As learners navigate through the streets of Morelia using Google Maps, they will engage in interpretive communication by answering the questions "¿qué ves?" and "¿cómo es el pueblo?"

Access to authentic resources such as Google Maps en español can provide students with exposure to real-life language usage by native speakers, including a range of accents and cultural elements related to the language. This exposure helps learners to make connections and comparisons to the target culture and their own. The teacher will provide scaffolding activities, such as the use of sentence stems, to support learners in expressing their ideas. By scaffolding activities, learners can build upon their existing knowledge and skills while feeling confident and engaged. After the activity, learners will engage in a class discussion to share similarities and differences between Morelia and their own town. Through this activity, learners can practice their interpretive communication skills, cultural awareness, and critical thinking.

The teacher will then introduce the following activity, the reading of chapter 1. In order to facilitate comprehension and engagement with the text, the teacher will employ Total Physical Response (TPR) techniques during the reading of chapter 1 of the book titled "Zapatos". Students will be instructed to arrange themselves in a comfortable position around the room and follow along with their fingers as the teacher reads aloud. Additionally, the teacher will use gestures, such as making a love heart when the expression "adoraba" appears or making a question expression when a question word is used in the text, to reinforce the meaning of the text. These gestures are intended to be a form of nonverbal communication that helps students to interpret the information being presented.

After the completion of reading the text, learners will participate in an interpretive listening post-reading activity called "Cierto o Falso" (True or False). During this activity, students will listen to five statements and signal their agreement or disagreement by raising their thumbs up or down, with their heads down. The teacher will then review each statement and provide an explanation as to why it is true or false. The statements for this activity are as follows:

Vanessa is an unattractive and organized girl. (False - she is attractive and disorganized) Vanessa and Julieta have a conflicted relationship. (True) It is Vanessa's wedding day. (False - it is her quinceañera) Vanessa wanted her shoes. (True - she was searching for her shoes) Jorge, Vanessa's father, worked for the cartel. (False - he worked for the police, as a secret detective investigating the cartel.) These statements will be said in the target language. By engaging in this activity, learners will be able to enhance their interpretive listening skills, and by correcting any false statements, learners will be able to better comprehend the text.

To conclude the lesson, learners will be given the opportunity to demonstrate their understanding by writing a question directed to one of the characters in the book, such as Vanessa, Jorge, Julieta or the Cartel. The teacher will model a few sample questions before reminding learners of the available supports, including a booklet set for reviewing the chapter and a quizlet set for reviewing question words and expressions. Learners will be encouraged to share their questions with the class. The teacher will then display the Do Now board once again and commend students for their achievements during the lesson. The teacher will also inquire if the lesson objective was met, encouraging learners to reflect on their own learning.

As a homework assignment, learners will receive a vocabulary worksheet aimed at preparing them for the vocabulary that will arise in chapter 2. The worksheet will review significant expressions, and learners will utilize the quizlet set to locate their translations. They will then be given the opportunity to demonstrate their comprehension of the text in a format of their choosing. This can include options such as sketching the expression, composing a sentence using the expression in context, writing a synonym expression, or completing three quizlet activities.

Lesson #3

The third lesson of the unit, scheduled for the ninth day and lasting 40 minutes, focuses primarily on exploring the characters in the story based on the text. Several other essential questions will also be explored, including cultural practices and products mentioned in chapter 1, character traits, the significance of being 15 years old, life in Morelia, Mexico, and potential student concerns. At the start of class, students will be presented with a Do Now board containing pertinent information such as the date, topic, learning targets, Do Now prompt, and any homework or reminders. Reviewing the board at the outset of class will help students quickly comprehend the day's activities and expectations. To encourage participation and engagement, the teacher may circle the information on the board and pose questions in the target language. Following the Do Now review, the teacher may lead a "weather chat" activity wherein students view an anchor chart with visuals and vocabulary pertaining to various types of weather. They will then employ this information to engage in presentational speaking by answering the question, "¿Qué tiempo hace hoy?" aloud.

Following the weather chat and calendar activities, the teacher will introduce an interpretive vocabulary review game using Blooket. The game will focus on reviewing Chapter 1 of the text, as well as important expressions from Chapter 2, using visual aids. During the review of Chapter 1, learners will complete sentence stems by selecting the most appropriate ending. This activity serves as both a review of the text and a practice exercise for sentence structure within a fun and competitive game setting. The learners will be grouped in homogeneous pairs, allowing the teacher to move around and provide assistance to any students who may be struggling.

After completing the vocabulary review game, learners will participate in a post-reading review activity. Individually, they will answer the posted review questions in the target language on their activity sheet, which includes questions such as "What did Vanesa want?" "What did

Julieta want?" "What did Jorge want?" and "What did the cartel want?" This activity provides an opportunity for learners to review the expression "quería" in a meaningful context and utilize sentence stems to assist them in answering the questions. The teacher will move around the classroom to provide assistance to students as necessary. Once sufficient time has passed, the teacher will review the questions on Google Slides, utilizing visuals to enhance students' understanding. This review serves as a helpful refresher prior to moving on to the next chapter.

Prior to actually reading the chapter, the teacher will engage the learners by having them view the chapter title and photo. She will ask them to make predictions about the upcoming events in the chapter based on what they see. Then, she will ask learners to visualize the chapter by closing their eyes for a moment, and after visualizing, she will ask them to share what they saw. This activity will help learners activate their prior knowledge and make connections to the text. After this, the teacher will engage the class in the reading, using TPRS, gestures, intonation, and other strategies to enhance comprehension and engagement.

To incorporate kinesthetic learning, the teacher will post copies of chunks of the text from chapters 1 and 2 around the room and engage learners in movement as they work on their character analysis sheets. This will not only break up the monotony of sitting in one place for an extended period but also give learners the opportunity to physically engage with the text. As they move from one text chunk to another, learners will be able to see the different ways that the characters are portrayed and develop a deeper understanding of their traits. By encouraging learners to use their bodies to engage with the material, the teacher is providing an opportunity for students to learn in a way that is meaningful and memorable. Prior to having students engage with the activity, the teacher will introduce the activity by going over the instructions and by modeling the activity by providing an example from a book they read in English class, the Hunger Games. She will then ask if learners have any questions and let them move around the

room gallery walk style with their character analysis sheets. She will circulate the classroom to assist learners with their character analysis sheets. Learners will also have the support of a defined character traits vocabulary list to help.

The teacher will then facilitate a class discussion in which learners will share their findings on the various characters. As each learner shares, the teacher will write down the characteristics on the board. Learners will be encouraged to share whether they agree or disagree with their classmates' findings. Additionally, the teacher will ask learners to draw their own connections to the characters, whether they can relate to the characters or know someone who is similar to them. After the discussion, the teacher will review the Do Now board once more to ensure that students have met the learning targets for the day. For homework, students will receive a vocabulary worksheet that focuses on the essential expressions that will appear in chapter 3. They will use a Quizlet set to find the translations of the expressions. After that, they will have the option to choose how they want to demonstrate their comprehension of the text. They can either sketch the expression, write a sentence using the expression in context, write a synonym expression or complete three Quizlet activities.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, creating a culturally responsive classroom for world language classes that values inclusivity and fosters a sense of belonging for all students is crucial in enhancing

language learning outcomes. Through this study, it was disclosed that the implementation of culturally responsive teaching practices, along with comprehensible input, can significantly enhance language learning outcomes for students from diverse cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds. Furthermore, this review has emphasized the significance of utilizing culturally responsive teaching practices that promote equity, inclusivity, and a sense of belonging for all students. By incorporating culturally responsive teaching practices that consider students' cultural backgrounds, interests, and proficiency levels while providing comprehensible input, language educators can promote a positive and inclusive learning environment. This literature review has highlighted the importance of tailoring the curriculum to be relevant and meaningful to students' cultural backgrounds, using instructional strategies that are culturally relevant, and creating a classroom environment that respects and values cultural diversity.

The pedagogical implications of the implementation of this topic for language learners are significant. It is important to recognize that not all students learn in the same way, are compelled by the same material, or have the same background knowledge. This means that teachers need to create a learning environment that is inclusive and responsive to the diverse needs of their students. Language educators should focus on tailoring the curriculum to be culturally responsive and relevant to the students they teach. It is also crucial for teachers to ensure that they meet their students at their proficiency levels and provide appropriate scaffolds to support their learning journey from input to output. By recognizing and addressing the different levels of proficiency in the classroom, teachers can provide appropriate support to help students engage with the material and progress at a pace that is suitable for them. This also means that teachers should use language and materials that are challenging for students, but not so difficult that they cannot understand them. Teachers must also take the time to get to know their students and their cultural backgrounds. One way to achieve this is by incorporating

opportunities for students to draw connections and comparisons between their own experiences and the lessons taught in the curriculum. This allows teachers to make the material more meaningful and relevant to students' lives, while also providing opportunities for students to feel seen and heard.

As part of my instructional approach, I will be utilizing this three-day unit to introduce my students to the novel, "Fiesta Fatal." During this unit, I will facilitate classroom discussions that encourage students to explore the characters and plot of the novel, and make connections to their own lives. To further support my students' language acquisition, I will incorporate the various scaffolding techniques in this three-day unit, including the use of sentence starters, defined vocabulary lists, modeling, and more. I will not expect learners to produce language that is significantly above their proficiency level as I understand that this will present several issues such as students struggling with understanding the task and may lead to them feeling overwhelmed and frustrated. This in turn can lead to a lack of engagement and motivation which will ultimately impede their learning progress. I will also not expect learners to engage in grammar drills that are out of context as I understand that these types of activities do not align with the Compelling Input Principle, in which learners are more likely to acquire language effectively when they are exposed to input that is both comprehensible and engaging. I understand that when learners are presented with language in a way that they can understand and find interesting, they are more likely to engage with material and internalize the language structures and vocabulary in context.

By incorporating these techniques, I will be aligning my instructional approach with the principles of comprehensible input and culturally responsive teaching. Based on this thesis, it is recommended that other Spanish teachers implement culturally responsive teaching practices and comprehensible input in their classrooms. They should tailor their curriculum to be relevant and

meaningful to students' cultural backgrounds, use instructional strategies that are culturally relevant and that meet the needs of all learners in their classrooms and create a classroom environment that respects and values cultural diversity. Ultimately, these strategies will enhance language learning outcomes and promote a positive and inclusive learning environment.

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