

Utilizing the Funds of Knowledge Approach to Teach Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Learners: Theory, Research, and Practice

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Introduction

Numerous scholars have explored the importance of aligning educational programs and curricula with the assets and needs of culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) learners. Cho et al. (2019) defines culturally and linguistically diverse students as “learners who are part of an ethnic and/or language group considered to be different from that of the majority population” (p. 54). Sprott & Msengi (2019) contend that this population is comprised of “individuals or a group whose culture, language, and ethnicity are different from the dominant group” (p. 166). One important commonality among these definitions is that the term principally refers to those learners who vary from the White, middle-class, mainstream prototypical students in some form or fashion. This is particularly important since the majority of teachers in primary and secondary schools are White monolingual females and therefore “many White, middle-class...teachers assume that they do not have a particular language,



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culture, or history that is remarkable or particularly worth sharing” (Haddix, 2008, p. 261). Thus, because these educators see and experience their own cultural behaviors, references, values, etc. demonstrated and represented everywhere, they often are unaware of their own cultural identity and/or conclude that culture is uniquely something that “others” possess: “lack of cultural understanding reinforces Euro-American teachers’ sense of ‘us’ and normal...and ‘them’ as abnormal...” (Florio-Ruane, 2001, p. 26). As a result, educator preparation “must begin by locating issues of multiculturalism and multilingualism *within* the experiences of white, monolingual...teachers and not outside them” (Haddix, 2008, p. 268; emphasis in original).

Additionally, other academics have highlighted the importance of familiarizing pre-service teachers with effective methods and approaches for teaching CLD as an essential component of educator preparation. For instance, Zhang-Wu (2017) specifies that culturally and linguistically response (CLR) pedagogy constitutes “an educational approach that takes CLD learners’ diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds into consideration in order to provide instruction that is responsive to the needs of students” (p. 34) and affirms that educators should focus their teaching on addressing students’ linguistic and cultural assets and needs due to the symbiotic and synergistic nature of culture and language. Hadjioannou et al. (2016) remark that, due to the increasing diversity of students in primary and secondary classrooms, “the need to prepare mainstream classroom teachers to work with culturally and critically diverse learners is at a critical juncture” (p. 23) and that teacher preparation programs must do all they can to equip pre-service teachers with the skills and strategies necessary to teach these students effectively. Coelho et al. (2011) stress the importance of implementing such instruction with teacher candidates since “new teachers receive minimal preparation for teaching children whose linguistic, cultural, racial, religious, or social backgrounds are different from their own” (p. 56). Dunham et al. (2022) explain that culturally sustaining teachers should possess four essential characteristics, First, they should strive to become culturally competent by learning about the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of their students. Second, they should balance maintaining high standards for all students while simultaneously

integrating their pupils' understandings, abilities, and skills into the classroom. Third, they should advance critical thinking by exposing students to important political and social issues affecting them, their communities, and their world. Finally, they should foster an inclusive environment in which all students feel valued, understood, and respected. Most importantly, Dunham et al. (2022) contend that culturally sustaining educators must endeavor to "...embrace a pluralistic approach that explicitly values multiple cultures and languages and decenters English dominant practices" (p. 682). In other words, rather than sustaining and upholding pedagogical conventions that promote White ideals and behaviors, such teachers must affirm the linguistic and cultural backgrounds of their students and defend their educational rights in the classroom. Coelho et al. (2011) agree with this perspective and maintain that "it is important to ensure that all students attain academic success regardless of their origin, language or individual characteristics" (p. 53).

Culturally Relevant, Responsive, Affirming, and Sustaining Pedagogies

When exploring research concerning the effective teaching of CLD learners, four interrelated terms often appear:

culturally relevant pedagogy, culturally responsive teaching, culturally affirming education, and culturally sustaining pedagogy. Although there are essential similarities between these terms in that they all strive to underscore the importance of adjusting and tailoring instruction to address the strengths and meet the needs of these students, there are also fundamental differences between them. Thus, it is crucial to briefly review the definitions of these terms in order to better understand their advantages and their limitations.

First, Ladson-Billings (1995) explains that an essential strength of culturally relevant pedagogy is that it "helps students to accept and affirm their cultural identity while developing critical perspectives that challenge inequities that schools (and other

institutions) perpetuate” (p. 469) and asserts that such teaching “must provide a way for students to maintain their cultural integrity while succeeding academically” (p. 476). The term *relevancy* implies a strong connection between two entities; within the realm of education, this word implies learning that is “personally and/or contextually salient” (Joordens, Kapoor, & Hofman, 2019, 231-232) for students. Thus, culturally relevant pedagogy seeks to align a given course, curriculum, program, etc. with the abilities, expertise, knowledge, skills, etc. of students.

Second, Gay (2002) defines culturally responsive teaching as “using the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students as conduits for teaching them more effectively” (p. 106). Vavrus (2008) contends that such teaching “acknowledges and infuses the culture of [marginalized] students into the school curriculum and makes meaningful connections with community cultures” (p. 49) while also “using meaningful cultural connections to convey academic and social knowledge and attitudes” (p. 49). The word *responsive* tends to connote that a given entity is flexible and able to be adapted to its targeted audience; thus, culturally responsive pedagogy conceivably consists of adapting one’s teaching to the capabilities, knowledge, proficiencies, etc. of one’s students.

Third, Allen et al. (2013) clarify that culturally affirming education “is committed to the positive self-concept and racial identity development of students by honoring the legacy, and historical and contemporary contributions of their racial groups” (p. 124) so that “one’s background, culture and experiences are viewed with high regard and esteem” (p. 124). In other words, one of the essential goals of this style of teaching is to facilitate and promote minoritized students’ understanding of who they are, their past heritage, and their future legacy. Williams et al. (2022) confirm that culturally affirming education consists of “a culturally engaging environment that [is] humanizing and validating...” (p. 1075) for students from minoritized populations that focuses on “centering [their] personal experiences within the educational enterprise” (p. 1075). Thus, educators who align with this pedagogy endeavor to substantiate and incorporate the cultural and linguistic backgrounds, histories, and trajectories of their students in a supportive and empathetic environment.

Lastly, Paris (2012) argues that, although the terms culturally relevant pedagogy and culturally responsive teaching have played a pivotal role in helping educators better understand, value, and appreciate the cultural and linguistic assets that students from marginalized populations possess, these terms may not necessarily be adequately suited to advance the political and social action necessary to establish and maintain a truly plurilingual and pluricultural society. In their place, Paris (2012) proposes the term *culturally sustaining pedagogy* and states that such instruction “requires that [our teaching] support young people in sustaining the cultural and linguistic competence of their communities while simultaneously offering access to dominant cultural competence” (p. 95). Paris & Alim (2017) maintain that culturally sustaining pedagogy “seeks to perpetuate and foster – to sustain – linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism as part of schooling for positive social transformation” (p. 1). The term *sustain* often connotes the simultaneous preservation and advancement of one or more aspects of a person’s identity or position. Consequently, educators should not simply ensure that instruction is relevant to learners’ backgrounds or that it responds to students’ learning aims and needs; instead, such teaching should bolster their linguistic and cultural identities while also promoting their endeavors to question and challenge those systemic structures that maintain the educational, political, and social status quo.

Despite the commonalities and distinctions between these three terms, they nevertheless emphasize the necessity of considering CLD learners’ backgrounds when planning and delivering instruction. First, lessons must be culturally relevant so that students grasp the connections between the content and their linguistic/cultural identities. Second, lessons should be culturally responsive to support the relevancy of the content to their families and communities. Third lessons need to be culturally affirming so that pupils’ linguistic and cultural ancestry and legacies are appreciated, respected, and valued. Lastly, lessons ought to also be culturally sustaining so that their abilities, expertise, skills, talents, etc. form the basis of their educational pursuits.

The Funds of Knowledge Approach

Theory

Although a number of strategies and techniques have been explored over the years to make education more linguistically and culturally relevant, responsive, affirming, and sustaining, one effective means for doing so that has gained traction over the last several decades is the funds of knowledge approach. González et al. (2005) define funds of knowledge as “...historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or individual functioning and well-being” (p. 72). In a similar vein, Esteban-Guitart (2016) explains that funds of knowledge constitute a “repertoire of cultural and intellectual resources...that households accumulate and use to maintain their welfare and quality of life” (p. 81) and contends that “...abundant resources can be found in any household regardless of the ethnic, linguistic, or sociocultural background of the people living there” (p. 39). The approach began to initially gain traction in the late 1980s and early 1990s through the work of Dr. Carlos Vélez-Ibáñez and Dr. James Greenberg (e.g., Vélez-Ibáñez & Greenberg, 1989; Vélez-Ibáñez & Greenberg, 1992) and was subsequently extended and expanded predominately by such scholars as Dr. Norma González and Dr. Luis Moll, among others (i.e., Gonzalez et al., 1993; Gonzalez et al., 2001; Moll et al, 1992). The approach was primarily intended to respond to the deficit thinking (Valenzuela, 1999; Valencia, 2010) typically associated with students from minoritized populations at the time. In essence, it was commonly thought that the achievement gap between White students and non-White students was due in large measure to the linguistic and cultural socialization they received in their home communities which deprived them of certain academic experiences and understandings that they were expected to have/know. This misguided perspective concerning minority students was a logical but fallible conclusion due to the inaccurate and inequitable comparison of the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of White students to those of their non-White counterparts. Consequently, instead of conceptualizing minoritized learners as lacking specific expertise and proficiencies, the funds of knowledge approach produced a substantial paradigm shift in the

educational realm in that they were now considered from a strengths-based position (Bartlett & García, 2011). Johnson and Johnson (2016) concur with this perspective and affirm that the approach assists in “...leveraging the historically accumulated sociocultural biases that continue to drive practices in mainstream American classrooms” (p. 117).

González et al. (1994) explain that the funds of knowledge approach consisted of a partnership between primary teachers and university scholars and that consisted of an investigative project in which teachers visited the homes of several students in their classes and conducted ethnographic research in order to document and understand the funds of knowledge possessed and demonstrated by these students’ funds of knowledge which were subsequently incorporated into their lessons. The project also fostered collaboration between educators and academics through after-school labs during which teachers shared the results of their home visits and designed future lessons for these students. Instructors consistently commented on how the project helped them conceptualize culture beyond the stereotypical components of food, festivals, folklore, etc. and guided them in truly understanding the nature of the linguistic and cultural assets of these students and the households in which they lived. In a nutshell, one of the more fundamental outcomes of this investigative enterprise is that “teachers have come to view their students as competent participants in households rich in cognitive resources, and have consequently raised their expectations of their students’ abilities” (p. 5).

Research

Numerous researchers have explored the role of integrating the funds of knowledge approach into a variety of educational contexts. The intention here is not to provide a comprehensive or systematic review of the related research in this area but to highlight several important investigations concerning this domain in a variety of educational settings.

Individual Studies

A number of scholars have empirically investigated the role that the funds of knowledge approach plays in CLD learners' education. For example, Moje et al. (2004) conducted a research study intended to examine the role of disciplinary knowledge and discourses in the education of 12-15-year-old Latinx students attending an urban school in the northcentral United States and the contribution of this knowledge/discourse to the literacy practices demonstrated by these students in the science classroom. The goal of the investigation was to identify the funds of knowledge possessed by these students, the discourse circles in which they were circumscribed, and the ways in which students drew on these understandings when reading science texts. Findings from the study showed that, while students drew predominantly from the funds of knowledge concerning a variety of areas that their families exhibited, they also utilized funds of knowledge obtained from experiences in other social and peer communities as well as in various popular culture outlets due to the fact that they inhabited multiple social circles in their personal and academic worlds. Based on these results, Moje et al. (2004) surmise that "teachers, researchers, and curriculum or text developers [should] develop curricula and texts that draw from and respond to the many different knowledges, Discourses, and texts that young people bring to school" (p. 65).

Johnson & Johnson (2016) summarize a study they completed in which they documented the incorporation of English learners' funds of knowledge into content-area lessons they taught to their classmates. The goal of the investigation was to help students identify both out-of-school and in-school funds of knowledge that may be relevant when designing and delivering a language arts lesson and a science lesson to their primary-level student colleagues. Participants in the study were two elementary-age English learners whose first language was Spanish. Results from the investigation indicate that both students incorporate both personal and academic funds of knowledge in their lessons, which not only demonstrated their own expertise in various areas but also contributed to the relevancy of the lesson for their classmates. Teaching the lessons also had a positive effect on participants' views of

themselves and their overall motivation for learning. The authors contend that incorporating students' funds of knowledge into instruction "...is a powerful step towards leveling the historically accumulated sociocultural biases that continue to drive practices in mainstream American classrooms" (p. 117). In other words, the approach challenges the deficit perspective from which students from minoritized populations have traditionally been viewed by affirming and valuing the cultural and linguistic assets these students possess.

Kiyama (2010) carried out a research study in order to uncover the contribution of the funds of knowledge produced and disseminated by the families of Mexican American college students to these learners' perspectives on higher education. The objective of the investigation was to determine the funds of knowledge of these households and specify the role they play in learners' views in regards to their conceptualizations of college. Participants in the study included first-generation college students enrolled in a community outreach program who both identified as Mexican American and came from lower socioeconomic classes. Findings from the study illustrate that learners' knowledge in regards to college emanated not only from their families but also from a variety of interpersonal connections with others who had either attended or graduated from college and consisted of both motivations and aspirations for attending college but also the identification of potential obstacles that may impede students from successfully completing their undergraduate studies. These results suggest that the funds of knowledge demonstrated by families of Mexican American first-year college students are not acknowledged or appreciated, "parents may not realize their own resources, may not develop the confidence to help their children with educational processes, and may fail to tap into their own experiences to help their children succeed" (p. 351).

Literature Reviews

In addition to individual studies, several scholars have also reviewed and commented on the current state of the field in regards to the funds of knowledge approach. For

instance, Hogg (2011) explores over fifty scholarly texts in which the approach was employed in a variety of contexts and identified a number of interesting patterns that emerged from her analysis. First, the majority of the studies were completed within the United States, and relatively few publications examined the utilization of the approach in international venues. Second, the studies included in the review took place in various settings that were both educational and non-educational in nature. Third, initial publications focused on the relevancy of the approach to building students' literacy, while subsequent research explored the connections between the approach and other larger educational and societal issues. Fourth, the authors that completed initial work in this area (i.e., Norma González, James Greenberg Luis Moll, Carlos Vélez-Ibáñez) initially conceptualized funds of knowledge as areas relating specifically to households that serve to promote their existence and advance their cultural wealth. However, succeeding academics contend that funds of knowledge involve additional areas and communities beyond merely households, including (but not limited to) peer social groups and larger interpersonal and educational entities. Additionally, while early scholars in this area centered on the social nature of funds of knowledge, intellectuals in later times emphasized the applicability of these cultural and linguistic resources at the individual level, somewhat akin to Esteban-Guitart and Moll's (2014) identification of funds of identity, which they define as "'historically accumulated, culturally developed, and socially distributed resources that are essential for people's self-definition, self-expression, and self-understanding" (p. 37). In other words, funds of knowledge are inherently social in origin, possessed and exhibited by social groups which subsequently become transformed into funds of identity when people subsequently incorporate them into their character and see them as essential characteristics that constitute their own self. Fifth, while many academics have viewed funds of knowledge in positive terms, scholars such as Zipin (2009) argue that certain funds of knowledge may be considered "dark" in relation to experiences that relate to larger educational, political, and social ills but that, rather than being ignored, the expertise that emerges from such experiences should be acknowledged and incorporated into curricula and programs just as "lighter" funds of knowledge not

associated with certain emotional, physical, or psychological trauma. In this sense, problems affecting students' out-of-school lives should be recognized and managed so that students not see the relevancy of educational outcomes to their personal lives but are also equipped with the strategies and techniques necessary to process and find solutions for these dilemmas. Lastly, the field has experienced some discord in regards to which audiences can legitimately possess and disseminate funds of knowledge. Initially, it was believed that funds of knowledge were connected uniquely to students' out-of-school abilities and skills, but later research has enlarged this view to include not only in-school aptitudes and proficiencies that learners develop within school but also personnel that contribute to these scholastic resources (e.g., educators, administrators, counselors). Ultimately, despite the divergent visualizations of the approach that these and other scholars have promulgated, the power of the funds of knowledge framework is that it "challenge[s] teachers to reconsider their conceptualization of knowing their students" (Hogg, 2011, p. 673) by encouraging educators to truly understand their students in comprehensive and holistic ways.

Maitra (2017) outlines a number of studies that have been conducted within the realm of funds of knowledge in five principal areas: the identification and documentation of the funds of knowledge exhibited by members of various social circles and the contribution of this knowledge to students' education, the integration of students' linguistic funds of knowledge into educational curricula, the relevancy of learners' funds of knowledge to their academic and literacy skills in the mathematics classroom, the importance of providing students with the necessary time and space to share their personal and academic biographies and establishing connections between these stories and school learning, and the pertinence of a given community's shared funds of knowledge to the literacy practices in which members of the community practice. After furnishing an overview of numerous studies in these five areas, Maitra (2017) remarks that the funds of knowledge approach "...can be a beneficial tool for culturally diverse... students..." (p. 99) because it centers their linguistic and cultural assets as the foundation of instruction

and “...offers...fantastic potential to connect students’ home environments with their academic education” (p. 100) since it not only integrates their expertise, proficiencies, skills, etc. into the classroom while also showing them the applicability of their learning to the outside world.

Additionally, Moll (2019) reviewed four studies conducted in Australia, New Zealand, Spain, and Uganda in which scholars implemented the approach with students from minoritized populations in these locations in order to address the educational inequities experienced by these learners while also centering instruction on the linguistic and cultural assets of these students. In the first study, scholars worked with preschool students to identify the funds of knowledge families of these students inculcated and transmitted to them before they entered school and discovered that learners utilized these funds of knowledge as emerging theories to better understand their experiences and the world around them. In the second study, investigators employed a variety of activities designed to help families of immigrant students living in Spain document their funds of knowledge which were subsequently used to support their developing understandings of themselves as they negotiated their cultural and linguistic identities. In the third study, the funds of knowledge of students from economically-disadvantaged neighborhoods were integrated into schools in order to help them establish connections between their lives in school and their lives outside of school. In the fourth and final study, researchers sought to better understand the role of school in child-headed households in which one or both parents died from HIV and/or AIDS and found that the school functioned as an essential entity to validating these students’ funds of knowledge but also provided them with economic and social resources to support themselves and their families. In the third study, Moll (2019) concludes that the ultimate outcome of these projects was to view “...families and students as resourceful...” (p. 137) and to “...help educators arrange environments that are academically sound and strongly oriented to building on such resources for learning” (p. 137). In other words, these studies demonstrated that employing the approach with these students supported them in achieving high academic standards and also guided teachers in perceiving these students from an asset-based perspective.

The publications highlighted above, whether they be individual studies or literature reviews, highlight the large number of academic, researchers, and scholars across multiple contexts who contend that the funds of knowledge approach is one viable and effective means for understanding the “whole” student through the validation and integration of minoritized students’ cultural and linguistic strengths into educational programs and curricula and centering these learners’ experiences in order to promote education that is culturally relevant, responsive, affirming, and sustaining.

Practice

Numerous scholars have underscored specific methods and practices for incorporating students’ funds of knowledge into a variety of educational settings. As in the previous section, the purpose here is not to provide an exhaustive or comprehensive review of all publications in this area but merely highlight several studies which have done so successfully with various student populations. For example, Di Stefano (2017) outlines two procedures she utilized in her first-grade dual language immersion (DLI) Spanish/English classroom to help her more effectively identify her students’ funds of knowledge while also supporting their awareness and understanding of their own linguistic and cultural assets. The first technique was comprised of the culture bag activity in which students selected items from home that they felt best represented their cultural identity, placed these items in a paper bag, brought the items to class, and shared the items with their classmates. The teacher participating in Di Stefano’s (2017) study initially found that students demonstrated artifacts which largely represented mainstream American culture. In order to counter this hegemony of American products and values and also guide students in reframing their Latinx heritage, she then shared examples of items and experiences that represent her own cultural identity. After asking students to repeat the activity, the author found that students brought considerably more objects that represented their Latinx identity. In addition to the cultural bags, parents and community members were invited to her class to share various activities and

traditions that figure prominently in Latinx popular culture, including arts and crafts, cooking, games, and music. These activities not only extended students' perceptions of other cultures but also created and established a strong connection between school and community. Di Stefano (2017) affirms that such activities can “socially transform the classroom environment and have a long-lasting effect on...students, who can recognize that their heritage experiences are valued in both their school and home settings” (p. 48) as a way to bridge students' home and school communities.

Newman (2012) identified a method for facilitating student writing through the use of mentor texts, which are “those books, stories, poems, essays, and other writings that we come back to over and over again” (p. 25). Utilizing such texts as guides for students' writing highlights the importance of “using students' funds of knowledge and individual language to empower them to express themselves, to tell their stories, and to become lifelong writers and readers” (p. 25) which serve to not only affirm and substantiate learners' identities but also promote their literacy skills. In her study, students read a variety of publications written by Rene Saldaña and Sandra Cisneros as exemplars to frame their own writing, which afforded them opportunities to identify and promote their linguistic and cultural funds of knowledge when creating their own texts. These texts were chosen to demonstrate not only the universality of childhood experiences but also accentuate the unique qualities of childhood encountered by Latinx students. After reading these texts, learners participated in a variety of activities designed to help them think more deeply about the issues explored in the documents and also determine particular stylistic techniques employed by the writers, including writing territories, image palettes, and cubing. After engaging in these tasks, Newman (2012) observed that her young writers not only improved but incorporated numerous autobiographical details relating to their cultural and linguistic identities, thus crystallizing her conviction that “young adolescents have home-based language and home-based learning experiences that can be relied upon to generate powerful stories” (p. 30), which educators are strongly encouraged to be mindful of when creating and implementing activities in the writing classroom.

Dworin (2006) implemented a writing project with fourth-grade students in a bilingual classroom in which learners deployed their linguistic funds of knowledge to explore their familial biographies. Similar to the pedagogical intervention explored in Newman (2012), the author utilized two stories from Lulu Delacre's *Cuentos con sazón/Salsa Stories* as mentor texts to familiarize them with content that would likely resonate with their own life experiences in terms of content but also exposed them to bilingual texts in both Spanish and English and provided them with examples of ways to combine both languages when writing in terms of form. After reading the stories, students were encouraged to document, collect, and bring stories from their own families with them to school. They were assembled into groups of four to five learners, with each group providing members feedback on their writing in regards to both form and content. Students initially wrote their family stories in English and then subsequently worked to translate these stories into Spanish; these stories were eventually published as two books, one in each language. Among other benefits, the project helped acquaint learners with their familiar heritage, supported them in discovering important aspects of their cultural and linguistic identities, and encouraged them to understand the relevancy of their out-of-school abilities and intelligences to their in-school learning. The project ultimately sustained and reinforced their bilingual and biliteracy skills by clearly demonstrating that "biliteracy is an aspect of culturally relevant teaching that can expand learning possibilities by building upon the languages and cultural identities of Latino students" (Dworin, 2006, p. 511). Thus, incorporating minoritized pupils' linguistic funds of knowledge into academic programs and curricula is one consequential way to ensure that these learners receive a culturally affirming, relevant, responsive, and sustaining education.

Street (2005) outlines a cognate project in which students in his urban secondary classroom utilized their personal experiences and competencies when completing class writing assignments. The intention of the project was to help students find their voices in their own writing via the exploration and examination of specific themes and topics that were of interest and relevancy to them. Consequently, the curricular

innovation proposed by the author (namely, the “Funds of Knowledge Writing Project”) was intended to not only substantiate these learners’ funds of knowledge but also empower them to identify and consider subjects that were of significant consequence for them while simultaneously providing the author with multiple opportunities to better understand and appreciate his students’ identities. Throughout the project, Street (2005) found that educational roles had progressively reversed in that his students became the teachers and he became the learner, a situation which ultimately led to a more democratic classroom in which authority and power were shared among everyone. As a result, the author was more familiar with learners’ strengths and assets and also with the successes and challenges they faced in their academic and personal lives, leading to the establishment of stronger and deeper connections with his students. One of the more important lessons that resulted from the project is that “tapping our students’ funds of knowledge...serve as an important educational tool that moves us toward the ideal of better connecting with the lived experiences of our students...” (p. 24).

Finally, Riojas-Cortez (2001) describes an investigation conducted in a preschool bilingual classroom in which she observed students during social playtimes and documented examples of familial funds of knowledge that they exhibited through their play. The purpose of the study was to better understand the backgrounds of the households in which these learners were being socialized so that their cultural identities could be recognized and appreciated. The study was also intended to move beyond a surface-level view of culture demonstrated merely through artifacts (i.e., flags, food) towards a more comprehensive perspective on culture displayed via specific behaviors representing important beliefs and values possessed by members of the students’ cultural community. In furtherance of these goals, the author conducted a microethnographic study during which, as preschool-age learners enrolled in a two-way bilingual classroom engaged in sociodramatic play, she recorded the funds of knowledge these learners demonstrated through their interactions with their classmates along with interviews with the children’s parents. Her analysis revealed that students manifested evidence of twelve categories of funds of knowledge, including (but not limited to) beliefs/values, education, household

chores, language, and traditions. This study shows not only the interdependent nature of play and culture but also offers a viable way for educators to validate the linguistic and funds of knowledge possessed and displayed by their students as part of a “culturally reflective curriculum” (p. 39) in which students’ understandings and experiences are recognized and supported.

The range of projects and student populations outlined in these studies demonstrate various ways in which learners’ funds of knowledge can be identified, documented, and appreciated in a wide range of academic contexts and settings, from cultural bags and popular culture to writing to sociodramatic play. The overarching goal of these studies was to acknowledge and validate the cultural and linguistic funds of knowledge of pupils from marginalized groups whose expertise, aptitudes, and proficiencies have traditionally not been recognized or valued in the educational enterprise.

Conclusion

As primary, secondary, and tertiary classrooms become more diverse linguistically and culturally, it is essential that educators respond to this situation by identifying and valuing the funds of knowledge possessed and exhibited by these students. The purpose of this chapter was to highlight fundamental characteristics of culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) learners and substantiate the importance of providing them with an education that is culturally affirming, relevant, responsive, and sustaining by not only incorporating their assets and strengths into educational programs but also centering their aptitudes, competencies, and resources as the foundation of such curricula. The chapter then outlined a legitimate yet cogent framework for doing so, namely the funds of knowledge approach by reviewing various theoretical principles that undergird the approach and by summarizing numerous publications which investigated the utilization of the approach into a variety of educational settings and which considered multiple projects designed to implement the approach in assorted contexts. It is hoped that the chapter inspires

teachers, administrators, and researchers alike to “break down barriers between home and school” (Street, 2005, 22) by showing minoritized students the relevancy of their cultural and linguistic assets and strengths to the educational enterprise in order to help both educators and scholars strive to establish and implement educational policies and practices that are equitable and just for all students.

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