

Reflect Visual Arts Bilingual Education Through the Lens of Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy: An Autoethnography of Elementary, Middle School, and Teacher Education Instructors

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Summary

Taiwan has recently enacted a Bilingual National Policy which has sorely challenged educators. Currently, bilingual education in Taiwan predominantly follows the content and language integrated learning (CLIL) model. However, much of the existing research focuses on describing and applying this model, offering little in terms of strategies for teachers to navigate the practical challenges they face in bilingual visual art teaching. Under this policy shift, bilingual teachers often struggle with the tension between subject content and English language instruction, lacking clear direction. This highlights the disconnect between bilingual policies and curricula, a key issue identified by many teachers. While some studies acknowledge the difficulties faced by teachers, they do not delve into how educators can overcome these challenges in practice. Moreover, there is a notable absence of research that involves teachers as researchers sharing their first-hand experiences, making this study particularly timely and necessary.

This research adopts the perspective of visual arts education, positioning cultural learning at the core of interpreting bilingual visual arts education. The purpose of the study is to explore how culturally sustaining pedagogy (CSP) can facilitate bilingual art educators to reflect on their teaching

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practices. Through narrative analysis of three educators' experiences—in elementary, middle school, and teacher education contexts—this study examines how CSP can serve as a reflective lens for addressing the challenges of bilingual education. CSP, as proposed by Paris (2012), originates from the diverse racial and cultural landscape of the United States and emphasizes the importance, for educators, of employing effective strategies to critically reflect on their teaching. Paris (2021) identifies three areas for engagement in CSP research and practice: (1) The pedagogy is centered on sustaining a valuable way of life for students and communities of color; (2) the fluidity and dynamics of youth and community cultural practices and activities; and (3) the need for an inner gaze that can pedagogically deal with the destructive internalization and problematic beliefs and practices that exist in Taiwan's communities. The goal is to sustain the cultural identities of school and student communities, reinforcing their place within mainstream society.

This research is also grounded in Vygotsky's (1934/1986) sociocultural theory, which emphasizes the importance of considering social and cultural contexts in language learning. This study positions "culture" as the critical point of bilingual visual arts education. Meanwhile, by following Buffington and Bryant's (2019) advocacy for CSP art education, this research refers to their suggestion that visual arts teachers, when practicing culturally sustaining pedagogy, should start by examining whether the curriculum contains any "unconscious biases" (p. 24). Additionally, two strategies are recommended for application, including (1) reflection and curriculum, classroom analysis; and (2) open-ended questions and discussion strategies. In addition, researchers further explore cases and recommendations for implementing CSP within the field of visual arts education, advocating for a culturally-centered approach to bilingual teaching.

Through six months of autoethnographic writing and data collection using qualitative approaches such as semi-structured interviews and content analysis, this research employs a trioethnographic dialogue strategy among the three researchers to identify three main challenges in bilingual visual arts teaching: (1) there is a deficit of teaching theories that align with the core nature of visual arts in Taiwan's bilingual education; (2) language use in bilingual education often remains superficial, lacking deep cultural understanding; (3) the goals and content of bilingual education still require clarification. To address these issues, this research suggests: (1) Culture should be at the core of bilingual visual arts education, implementing teaching based on the CSP concept, reflecting on cultural elements in teaching, and viewing culture as a dynamic concept. (2) Understanding the current context through a cultural lens and enhancing international understanding. For future research, this study recommends referencing the concept of CSP to construct bilingual visual arts curricula and teaching standards.