Learning to Braid: Integrating Multilingual Pedagogies, Antiracism, and Disciplinary Instruction in Elementary Teacher Education

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K–7 classrooms are diverse spaces where students and teachers navigate cultures, languages, and (racialized) identities as they engage in disciplinary teaching and learning. They are also spaces harmfully impacted by raciolinguistic ideologies and a persistent separation of language and content instruction. Consequently, critical teacher education scholarship advocates for more systematic integration of antiracism, multilingual pedagogies, and disciplinary content in preparation programs. Aligned with such calls, this critical action research project outlines four teacher educators' attempt to integrate these priorities across two mandatory courses focused on language arts and supporting multilingual learners at a large Canadian university. In turn, we ask: How did elementary teacher candidates (TCs) attempt to braid these priorities in designing read-aloud lessons? Along a continuum of learning, what characteristics distinguished more and less tightly braided attempts? Key lesson-design tasks included selecting read-aloud texts, establishing content and language objectives, planning content–language scaffolds, and reflecting on design choices. Thematic analysis of 30 small-group assignments and reflections by 122 TCs indicates that critical (disciplinary) consciousness and contextualized language supports were distinguishing features of more tightly braided lesson plans. We conclude with a discussion of these findings and their implications for teacher education knowledge, curriculum, and program design.

Les salles de classe de la maternelle à la 7e année sont des espaces diversifiés où les élèves et les enseignants naviguent entre les cultures, les langues et les identités (racialisées) lorsqu'ils s'engagent dans l'enseignement et l'apprentissage d'une discipline. Ce sont également des espaces qui subissent les effets néfastes des idéologies raciolinguistiques et d'une séparation persistante entre l'enseignement de la langue et du contenu. Par conséquent, les études jetant un regard critique sur la formation des enseignants préconisent une intégration plus systématique des pédagogies antiracistes et multilingues et du contenu disciplinaire dans les programmes de formation initiale. S'inscrivant dans la lignée de ces appels, ce projet de recherche-action critique décrit la tentative de quatre formateurs d'enseignants d'intégrer ces priorités dans deux cours obligatoires axés sur l'enseignement des langues et le soutien aux apprenants multilingues au sein d'une grande université canadienne. En retour, nous posons les questions suivantes : comment les

futurs enseignants au primaire ont-ils tenté d'intégrer ces priorités dans la conception de leçons de lecture à haute voix? Sur un continuum d'apprentissage, quelles sont les caractéristiques qui distinguent les tentatives d'intégration plus ou moins poussées? Les principales tâches liées à la conception des leçons comprenaient la sélection des textes à lire à haute voix, l'identification des objectifs linguistiques et de contenu, l'inclusion de l'échafaudage de contenu et de langue, ainsi que la réflexion sur les choix de conception. L'analyse thématique de 30 travaux en petits groupes et des réflexions de 122 futurs enseignants indique que la conscience critique (disciplinaire) et les supports linguistiques contextualisés étaient des caractéristiques distinctives des plans de cours qui intégraient davantage les priorités établies. Nous concluons par une discussion des résultats et de leurs implications pour la formation et les connaissances des enseignants, les programmes de formation et leur conception.

K-7 classrooms in Canada are diverse spaces where students and teachers navigate cultures, languages, and (racialized) identities as they engage in disciplinary teaching and learning. The richness of student diversities has grown over the last decade (Statistics Canada, 2021), and diversities in the general population are projected to continue growing in the decade ahead. By 2036, almost half the population is estimated to be immigrants or children of immigrants, nearly 40% will be racialized minorities, and more than a third will have mother tongues other than English or French (Song, 2020; Statistics Canada, 2017). With an understanding that diversities are intersecting and that there is much diversity even within each of these (Li et al., 2021), such richness means that elementary classrooms have great potential to be places where young learners' differences are validated, affirmed, and engaged as flexible resources for additional language learning, disciplinary discovery, growth, artistry, critical thinking, and innovation (e.g., Frieson & Scalise, 2021; Martínez, 2018; Stille & Prasad, 2015).

Yet the realization of this potential for many multilingual learners is unacceptably, harmfully constrained by raciolinguistic ideologies and a persistent separation of language and content instruction (Bale et al., 2023; Gebhard & Accurso, 2023; Khanam et al., 2021). Consequently, critical teacher education scholarship advocates for more systematic integration of antiracism, multilingual pedagogies, and disciplinary content in preparation programs. Aligned with such calls, the critical action research project reported here outlines how four teacher educators at a large Canadian university attempted to integrate these priorities across two mandatory courses focused on language arts and supporting multilingual learners. We ask the following questions: How did elementary teacher candidates (TCs) attempt to braid these priorities in designing read-aloud lessons? Along a continuum of learning, what characteristics distinguished more and less tightly braided attempts?

Key Concepts

Following Flores and Rosa (2023, p. 422), we define raciolinguistic ideologies as those that "frame racialized populations and persons as communicatively deviant and deficient in advance of their linguistic production." By extension, deficit orientations toward students' racialized identities and language practices often result in deficit orientations toward the knowledges they bring into the classroom, as well as lower

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expectations and levels of learning support. For example, long-time elementary English language teacher Shelby Perez (2023) traced how raciolinguistic narratives at her school contributed to generalist teachers and administrators expecting less of multilingual students and providing them with "little support to develop literacy practices needed to excel in math, science, social studies, and language arts" (p. 141). While some might see these as individual instances of bigotry, Perez highlighted how raciolinguistic ideologies are systemic in nature, reinforced across multiple levels of society. For example, testing mandates in her context also served to "reinforce white, middle-class, English-only norms and therefore provide 'evidence' of my students' linguistic deficits, not their many assets" (p. 137). Studies in middle and secondary contexts have similarly shown how intertwined assumptions about race and language can impact students' placement in remedial or substantially separate programming, effectively limiting their access to rigorous disciplinary learning (e.g., Schroeter & James, 2015; Sung, 2018). Equally concerning are the emotional and psychological impacts of raciolinguistic ideologies. Over three decades, studies have documented outcomes such as immigrant students' experiences of alienation and discrimination leading to social withdrawal, anxiety, loss of a sense of belonging, and the development of an inferiority complex (e.g., Dovchin, 2020; Yau & Toronto Board of Education, 1995). It is long overdue that much more needs to be done at multiple levels systemically to counteract these harmful ideologies.

The effects of these ideologies are compounded by long-standing conceptual and practical separations between teaching content and teaching language that have left many teachers unprepared to effectively work with multilingual learners (e.g., Villegas et al., 2018; Webster & Valeo, 2011). Historically, disciplines have been treated as bodies of knowledge separate from the language that constructs them, and, in turn, this conceptual separation has manifested in practical separation within educational systems. Both teacher education programs and elementary schools have operated under models of separation between so-called "regular" teachers and language teachers (e.g., Penfield, 1987) and, consequently, "regular" students and those designated as language learners (Colombo et al., 2018). However, several decades of influential work in educational linguistics combined with advocacy work by bridge-building educators has led to more inclusive models built on the notion that children learn a new language best when they are using it to *do* something, such as doing disciplinary thinking and learning (e.g., Cummins & Early, 2015; Halliday, 1993; Schleppegrell, 2004; Snow et al., 1989). As a result, many elementary teacher candidates in Canada now receive some preparation for thinking about disciplinary language and how to support multilingual learners in the mainstream classroom, despite this practice not yet being considered part of the core curriculum for initial teacher education (Gambhir et al., 2008).

As sociocultural education scholarship has evolved to understand all these pieces as part of one dynamic teaching and learning ecology, critical teacher educators have advocated for more systematic integration of antiracism, multilingualism, and disciplinary content in preparation programs (e.g., Bale & Rajendram, this issue; Ojha et al., 2024; Stillman & Palmer, 2024). Several models for integration have been proposed, with scholarship documenting attempts at integration underway. Though each foregrounds different priorities, all advocate for joint attention to language and content while fostering teacher candidates' criticality. For example, García (2012) argued for the integration of multilingual pedagogies in all teacher education coursework as an essential step toward content–language integration (see also de Jong, 2021; de Jong & Naranjo, 2019). In the Canadian context, where diversification of the teaching force has not kept the same pace as that of students and families served by public education (Ontario College of Teachers, 2023; Ryan et al., 2020), Sterzuk (2021) similarly focused on nurturing mainstream teacher candidates' critical dispositions toward language and positive orientations toward multilingual learners. Baker-Bell (2020) took a more disciplinary approach, calling for teachers to be prepared with antiracist pedagogies that normalize and value linguistic diversities in the discipline of language arts (see also Porcher, 2023). Baker-Bell's model focused on preparing mainstream teachers to incorporate marginalized Black language practices into the curriculum, with extension to other marginalized multilingualisms (see Accurso & Mizell, 2020; McMurtry, 2021). Further, in response to documented emotional and psychological

fallout, some scholars have foregrounded attention to social-emotional well-being in critical content–language integrated teacher education (e.g., Heineke & Vera, 2022).

Nurturing teachers' critical consciousness undergirds all of these efforts (Freire, 1973). Applied to North American education, Gay and Kirkland (2003) define critical consciousness as justice-oriented knowledge and awareness about "what is to be taught, how, and to whom" (p. 181). Their key indicators of critical consciousness include teachers (a) bringing marginalized cultures, experiences, and perspectives into the classroom as the basis for teaching knowledge and skills; (b) unpacking unequal distributions of power and privilege; (c) demonstrating an understanding that equity and excellence are deeply interconnected in public education; (d) questioning their knowledge and assumptions; (e) teaching students cultural competence about themselves and each other; and (f) practicing reflection. In language education more specifically, such consciousness is often termed critical language awareness or attention to the role of language in reproducing, maintaining, and challenging bias, power, and in/equity (e.g., Alim, 2010; Stillman & Palmer, 2024).

Understanding the urgency of critically braiding antiracism, language, and content teaching, and yet not being aware of any prior research that reports on attempts to systematically integrate all of these strands in elementary generalist teacher education, we position the following study as exploratory and seeking to contribute to future critical teacher education programming.

The Study

Teacher Education Context

This study took place during the 2023–2024 academic year in an 11-month post-baccalaureate teacher education program in Western Canada. The program enrolls approximately 350 TCs each year to earn a Bachelor of Education degree and certification to teach grades K–7 or 6–8. Students are grouped into cohorts of approximately 36 TCs around specific educational themes or pedagogical approaches (e.g., social-emotional learning, Indigenous and outdoor education, inquiry-based learning). Cohorts complete two terms of initial coursework (seven months); dedicated student teaching (three months); and a final term of coursework (one month). Courses use pass/fail grading, meaning that assignments are evaluated according to a "meets criteria" threshold, rather than more nuanced qualitative distinctions.

In the first term, eight cohorts simultaneously take two language and literacy courses, which are the focus of this study. Course 1, "Elementary Classroom Discourses," is an English language arts methods course. Course 2, "Teaching and Learning English as an Additional Language," focuses on understanding disciplinary language demands and supporting multilingual learners. These are multi-section courses, meaning that each has a standard syllabus and set of recommended assignments designed by core faculty. These materials are then distributed to instructors who adapt and enact the syllabi according to their styles, priorities, and cohort themes. As co-authors (listed alphabetically on this article by last name), we are the two faculty members responsible for designing Course 1 and Course 2 and coordinating the instructor teams (Kathryn and Margaret), as well as two graduate researchers who served as teaching assistants, supported course design work, and also taught some cohorts (Jonathan and Giovanna). All four of us have experience teaching one or both courses. In this study, Kathryn and Giovanna taught Course 1, and Margaret and Jonathan taught Course 2.

Collaborative Course (Re-)Design

We began working toward alignment and integration of Course 1 and Course 2 in 2020, each bringing different understandings and experiences of the priorities we were attempting to integrate. Kathryn is a White, predominantly English-speaking American woman, a researcher, teacher educator, and public-school parent of three elementary students in Canadian language-immersion programs. She formerly taught K–12 multilingual learners, and her scholarship focuses on disciplinary literacies, multilingual/multimodal genre-based pedagogies, and the practice of antiracism in language and literacies instruction. Margaret is a White, English-speaking Scottish/Irish immigrant Canadian settler, a researcher, and a teacher educator. She is a former K–12 mainstream and ELL[1] teacher who now works in critical disciplinary literacies and multilingual/multimodal pedagogies toward ideals of equity, diversity, inclusion, and decolonization (EDID). Giovanna is a White Latin American female and a settled multilingual immigrant in Canada who has taught multilingual newcomers and students with other learning designations in the United Kingdom and Canada. Her research focuses on broadening the concept of children's literature and investigating how multimodal storytelling can be integrated in elementary classrooms to prompt collaboration, facilitate learning, and foster a sense of community. Jonathan is a White Latin American male and a resettled multilingual immigrant in Canada, with considerable experience teaching English as an additional language in Brazil and Canada. He draws on multimodalilty/multiliteracies and culturally sustaining pedagogies to examine equitable and justice-oriented approaches to teaching and assessing multilingual learners in K–12 classrooms.

In early 2020, Kathryn and Margaret recognized some common beliefs and grappling points: TCs need to be knowledgeable about cultures, languages, (racialized) identities, and disciplinary teaching and learning; these elements are present, intertwined, and influenced by raciolinguistic ideologies and histories of separation; teacher educators must model openness, agility, and critical commitment when considering these elements in curriculum design. Recognizing intense competition for "time" across courses in a heavily scheduled 11-month post-baccalaureate program, we discussed redesigning/aligning Course 1 and Course 2 to enhance efficacy and integrate critical language awareness and antiracist praxis.

In these discussions, we understood antiracist praxis as that which challenges logics of separation, hierarchy, and exclusion and how they operate at a systemic level within (teacher) education (e.g., Chan & Coney, 2020). Accordingly, braiding antiracism into courses about disciplinary instruction and multilingual pedagogies meant increasing representation—visual, linguistic, ontological, epistemological—to challenge exclusion and interrupt curriculum violence and institutional preference for whiteness (e.g., Jones, 2020). It meant attempting to shift racialized educational structures such as overreliance on monolingual written texts and teacher-centred instruction by asking TCs to plan more inclusively and doing so ourselves. And it meant complicating taken-for-granted binaries, including the siloing of subjects.[2] We could not require instructors to collaborate across the two courses, but we hoped to re-design them in ways where that would be feasible for those interested.

Concrete re-design began in May 2020, when the pandemic necessitated online course development anyway. Jonathan was a Course 2 TA at this time. We began to schedule joint instructor meetings to

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[1] Throughout the article, we use the terminology of "English language learner" or "ELL" ethnographically, where it was used in particular school districts to refer to students or teachers. Otherwise, we prefer the term "multilingual learners" for its asset-orientation.

[2] In using a braiding metaphor throughout this paper, we do not intend to co-opt its Indigenous symbolism. Our meaning is distinct. However, we do recognize a shared value in the more holistic approaches to research and education promoted by many Indigenous scholars and epistemologies (e.g., Kimmerer, 2013; Simpson, 2017).

communicate that both courses shared EDID and language-related priorities and to encourage steps toward instructor collaboration across the two courses. In 2021, we used a Department Antiracism Toolkit to amplify principles and practices of social justice, antiracism, and anti-coloniality.[3] We designed new modules for Course 2 and added an explicit antiracist layer to an existing mid-term language awareness assignment (Accurso & Mizell, 2020; Gibbons, 2015).[4] Giovanna joined the team as a Course 1 TA at this time. In 2022, we made minor adaptations based on feedback and reflection and piloted a joint end-of-term lesson-plan assignment, which included a model and lesson-plan templates for interested instructors. Separately, Course 1 required a complete read-aloud lesson plan and reflection for its final assignment, while Course 2 asked TCs to demonstrate language awareness and support through a series of before-, during-, and after-reading tasks and reflections. In combining the two, our hope/intention was that antiracist understandings from Course 2's revised mid-term assignment would be carried over. In 2023, Course 1 readings and modules were further re-designed to better echo themes of equity, social justice, and multilingualism, and to respond to contemporary reading/literacy policies and debates (e.g., Clark et al., 2023; Morrow et al., 2023). We piloted a further revised joint end-of-term assignment, which is described in the next section.

Joint Assignment: Language-Supportive Read-Aloud Lesson Plans

The joint assignment asked TCs to design language-supportive read-aloud lesson plans in small groups of two to four based on practicum grade levels (see Table 1). First, to promote well-being, they needed to choose a grade-appropriate picture book or (graphic) novel that supported community-building, cultural competency, or social-emotional development (Clark et al., 2023). They were asked to identify the author(s) and illustrator(s), taking into account issues of representation. And in preparation for language scaffolding, they were asked to identify text purpose, organization, and key language features. Second, they were required to create a composite class profile based on the characteristics of their various practicum classrooms and course goals. Groups were instructed and encouraged to include multilingual learners and a diversity of languages in their lesson plans. Third, they described which First Peoples Principles of Learning (FNESC, 2006) were reflected in their selected text or subsequent lesson activities.[5] TCs then needed to plan a read-aloud lesson, including a sequence of before-, during-, and after-reading activities with language–content supports for multilingual learners. Responding to nationwide concerns around reading instruction (e.g., Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2022), TCs were to select at least one reading

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[3] See https://blogs.ubc.ca/antiracistcaucuses/antiracist-self-reflection-tool/.

[4] In the modified mid-term Course 2 assignment, TCs identified language demands in "official" school texts from across the curriculum and then similarly analyzed language choices in a countertext they selected to reflect minoritized authors' experiences and knowledges and capture perspectives missing in dominating school curriculum. Understanding the racialized nature of traditional school texts, TCs imagined different kinds of texts that students could produce from an antiracist viewpoint to understand a curriculum topic in new ways (e.g., digital stories; letters; diary entries; graphic, musical, dual-language, or multimodal texts). The focus was to analyze how different texts construct "facts," judgments, emotions, and attitudes, so that, in turn, TCs could support learners to similarly engage in this work as part of guided reading and writing activities.

[5] First Peoples Principles of Learning are a set of nine principles articulated by Indigenous Elders, scholars, and knowledge keepers to guide curriculum development in our province, and most provincial lesson-plan templates include a space for teachers to reflect on these principles. They are taught and referenced in multiple courses throughout our teacher education program as part of efforts toward reconciliation.

Table 1

Joint Assignment Description and Resources

Shared priorities	Joint assignment criteria	Resources for braiding
Disciplinary literacies Diverse representations in children's literature Multilingual/multimodal pedagogies Critical consciousness Practices of antiracism, reconciliation, and social justice in curriculum, instruction, assessment Student well-being, social-emotional health	Language-supportive read-aloud lesson plan (designed in grade-level groups of two to four) • Choose a 2010 or later picture book or (graphic) novel; identify the author(s) and illustrator(s), text purpose, organization, and a few key language features • Imagine a composite class profile that includes designated ELLs • Describe the First Peoples Principles of Learning reflected in the text and/or lesson activities • Identify a reading comprehension strategy to model during the read-aloud (Morrow et al., 2023) • Plan before, during, and after reading activities with language supports for multilingual learners • Identify content, social justice, and social-emotional objectives • Write language objectives that align with the planned activities and other objectives • Identify carryover coaching opportunities to support students' use of the modeled reading comprehension strategies when they read other texts • Brainstorm remix/extension activities • Identify additional texts for exploring lesson themes • Identify assessment strategies for lesson objectives • Write reflections on decisions made relative to key concepts from Course 1 (*multiliteracies, critical literacies, multimodality, multilingualism, equity/justice in reading instruction*) and Course 2 (*genre, language features, scaffolding language use for learning and communicating, normalizing multilingualism, using countertexts for antiracist language teaching*); must incorporate the voices of all group members	**Course Texts** • *Best Practices in Literacy Instruction* (Morrow et al., 2023) • *Read-Alouds with Heart* (Clark et al. 2023) • *Scaffolding Language, Scaffolding Learning* (Gibbons, 2015) **Models** • Assignment template • Complete sample assignment **Lesson Objectives** *Content objectives* • Provincial curriculum (https://curriculum.gov.bc.ca/ *Language objectives* • Language objectives 'how-to' (Himmel, 2012) • YouTube videos (Echevarria, 2012; Lee, 2016; Williams, 2019) *Social justice objectives* • *Making Space: Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice throughout the K–12 curriculum* (BC Education & Training, 2008) • *Antiracism: A Guide for Teachers* (Ministry of Education & Child Care, 2023) • *Teaching Tolerance Anti-Bias Framework* (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2014) *Social-emotional objectives* • *Read-Alouds with Heart* (Clark et al., 2023) • Provincial core competencies (https://curriculum.gov.bc.ca/competencies) • CASEL framework (CASEL, 2020)

comprehension strategy from Course 1 to pause and model during the lesson activities (e.g., activating background knowledge, predicting, relating, etc.; see Duke & Martin, 2023).

To anchor their planned activities, TCs were asked to identify or write braided lesson objectives drawing from provincial documents and supplemental resources (see Table 1): English language arts competencies and content objectives; language objectives that aligned with the planned activities and content objectives; social justice objectives; and social-emotional learning objectives. They were also asked to comment on how they might assess whether their language and content objectives had both been met. To support instruction beyond the lesson activities, TCs were expected to identify carryover coaching opportunities to support students' use of the modelled reading comprehension strategies when they read other texts, brainstorm remix and/or extension activities following on from antiracist work in the mid-term assignments from Course 2, and/or identify additional texts that could be used to continue exploring themes from the read-aloud text. Lastly, they were asked to write reflections on how their lesson-planning decisions related to key course concepts from Course 1 (multiliteracies, critical literacies, multimodality, multilingualism, equity/justice in reading instruction) and Course 2 (genre, language features, scaffolding language use for learning and communicating, normalizing multilingualism, antiracist language teaching with countertexts).

In Kathryn's cohort, this assignment was further combined with activities for a third required course, "Indigenous Education in Canada." In that course, TCs identified and evaluated Indigenous children's literature, determined background knowledge that an educator would need in order to use the literature in the classroom, and how it could be used to further decolonization, reconciliation, or Indigenous self-determination goals. As a result, students in this cohort were required to use one of these Indigenous-authored texts as the basis for the joint assignment. Moreover, since they had time in three courses to work on the assignment, they were asked to plan a series of three read-aloud lessons with different foci based on the selected text, whereas other cohorts planned one lesson each for their selected texts. Additionally, this cohort was invited to reflect on how their lesson-planning decisions reflected concepts from the third course (e.g., Indigenous worldviews, perspectives, pedagogies, decolonization, reconciliation) alongside the concepts from Course 1 and Course 2.

Together, these invitations constituted the assignment criteria, and TCs were expected to complete all of them to earn a "pass" on this assignment. They worked on planning over the course of four weeks. Scaffolds included a lesson plan template; a complete sample assignment; and targeted workshops on critical text selection, reading comprehension strategies, read-aloud praxis, writing language objectives, and integrating/scaffolding language and content instruction. Following workshops, TCs had in-class time to work on these aspects of the joint assignment and receive formative feedback from course instructors and/or TAs. TCs had the option for additional feedback on completed drafts before final submission. We did not use a rubric for evaluation in this pilot; rather, each instructor provided several rounds of feedback before assessing assignments as pass/fail using the criteria provided.

Across eight cohorts taking Course 1 and Course 2 simultaneously, five pursued this joint assignment. Data from the four cohorts taught by one or more of the co-authors are included in this study.

Our Approach to Inquiry in Teacher Education

We used critical action research methods (Hinchey, 2016; Kinsler, 2010) to explore the effectiveness of our collaboration by looking closely at how TCs attempted to braid priorities in their lesson designs and what characteristics distinguished more and less tightly braided attempts. Critical action research in teacher education aims to understand and improve educational practices while promoting social change (e.g., Burrell Storms, 2015; Gebhard et al., 2013; Shank Lauwo et al., 2022; Souto-Manning, 2012). It is iterative

and ongoing, pursuing cycles of curriculum design → teaching/learning → observation → analysis → reflection → sharing → curriculum (re)design (e.g., Gebhard & Accurso, 2023).

Data Collection and Analysis

Data for this study included 30 assignments, comprising 44 lesson plans written by 122 TCs in small groups. Table 2 provides a descriptive summary of these data. Fifteen additional assignments were excluded from the data set because one or more TCs in the small group who produced them chose not to participate in this study. Participating TCs had practicum placements in urban and suburban elementary schools across our major metropolitan area. They encompassed a range of self-described identities, including various genders, languages, ages, racial identifications, ethnicities, and personalities.

Before beginning analysis, we gathered to discuss observations, wonders, and issues that lingered after the term. We observed that though all assignments met the "pass" threshold (i.e., attended to the stated criteria), we each had an internalized sense of which assignments in our respective cohorts more tightly braided the criteria. We became interested in whether our sense of TCs' attempts at braiding aligned and in how we could describe these attempts along a continuum of learning. Accordingly, we engaged in a reflexive thematic analysis of TCs' assignments (Braun & Clarke, 2019). Reflexive thematic analysis was a suitable choice for interrogating these questions as a team because the approach complements the goals of critical action research, values researchers' subjectivities as resources for knowledge development, encourages joint interrogation of assumptions within a project, and provides an organic and flexible approach to surfacing themes, or rich, nuanced "stories about particular patterns of shared meaning across [a] dataset" (Braun & Clarke, 2019, p. 592). Our analytical process included cycles of individual and joint reading, rereading, coding, discussion, and interpretation. We used online shared documents and spreadsheets to track codes, patterns, and (re)interpretations.

We approached open coding individually, each taking on two cohorts' worth of data. Deductively, we generated codes related to the quality of different assignment criteria, such as text selection, lesson objectives, language scaffolds across reading activities, and mindfulness of multilingual learners' English proficiency levels. We each placed assignments along a continuum of more and less tightly braided. Inductively, we generated codes related to TCs' reflections to better understand their priorities in braiding multilingual pedagogies, antiracism, and disciplinary instruction (or not). Subsequently, we met to discuss our placements along the continuum and consolidated and refined our initial codes for a second round of coding. In the second round, we worked in pairs to (re)read and code the remaining data, further identifying patterns in TCs' design choices, relatively stronger and weaker attention to different priorities (e.g., connections between language objectives, language scaffolds, and reading activities), and integration of priorities (e.g., the relation between text selection and languages and cultures represented in the classroom). We then discussed overarching themes regarding what patterns of choices distinguished assignments along the continuum. During this stage of analysis, we came to a shared awareness of three "groups" of assignments, which we began to talk about as representing phases of TCs' learning along a *critical braiding continuum.* We further tracked and checked codes associated with each group of assignments through another round of individual and paired (re)reading to identify emergent themes in TCs' priority integration and to note possible implications. Finally, through three more group discussions, we clarified and confirmed emergent findings and discussed implications for our own practice, teacher education in general, and across multiple levels (e.g., course design and implementation, program-level).

Table 2

Descriptive Summary of 122 TCs' Language-Supportive Read-Aloud Assignments (30 assignments, comprising 44 lesson plans)

Imagined multilingual class profiles	
Grade Levels ● 47% grades K–2 (14 assignments) ● 37% grades 3–5 (11 assignments) ● 16% grades 6–7 (5 assignments) **Designated ELLs** ● 63% included 2–5 ELLs (19 assignments) ● 23% included 7–10 ELLs (7 assignments) ● 10% included 11–16 ELLs (3 assignments) ● 3% included no ELLs (1 assignment)	**English proficiency levels** ● 53% of imagined ELLs identified as having beginning, developing, or expanding proficiency (levels 1–3) ● 14% identified as consolidating or bridging (levels 4–5) ● 33% unspecified **Home languages** ● 57% of class profiles named student home languages (17 assignments) ○ In order of frequency: Mandarin, Punjabi, Farsi, Spanish, Korean, Tagalog, Ukrainian, Hindi, Arabic, Cantonese, Vietnamese, Russian, Japanese, Czech, Turkish, Swahili ● 43% did not mention student home languages in the class profile (13 assignments)
Representation in text selection	

Authorship[a]
● 50% chose IBPOC[b]-authored texts (15 assignments); 10 of these featured IBPOC illustrators
● 50% chose White-authored texts (15 assignments); 1 featured an IBPOC illustrator
 	
Languages
● 33% chose texts with multilingual representations
  ○ More Indigenous languages than student home languages (Cree, Ojibwe, Wichita, Inuktitut, Michif, Coast Salish languages such as Spe'eth, Tla-o-qui -aht, A'kwul' muxw, Lummi, Kwakwaka'wak)
  ○ French and Swedish appeared in two texts
	First Peoples Principles of Learning (FPPL)
	● Assignments identified 2–3 FPPL as relevant to their text selection; top choices included:
	  ○ 53% "Learning is holistic, reflexive, reflective, experiential, and relational (focused on connectedness, on reciprocal relationships, and a sense of place)" (16 assignments)
	  ○ 47% "Learning ultimately supports the well-being of the self, the family, the community, the land, the spirits, and the ancestors" (14 assignments)
	  ○ 40% "Learning requires exploration of one's identity" (12 assignments)

Disciplinary focus	

Provincial "Big Ideas"
● 80% focused on Big Ideas related to language arts (24 assignments)
  ○ 60% connections between text, self, community, and world (18 assignments)
  ○ 10% questioning texts (3 assignments)
  ○ 10% seeing stories as sources of individuality, creativity, and joy (3
	Target reading comprehension strategies
	● 43% relating (named in 11 lesson plans, implied through planned activities in 8 lesson plans)
	● 32% other strategies (questioning, predicting, visualizing, monitoring, inferring, summarizing/ retelling, activating prior knowledge; named or implied in 14 lesson plans)

KATHRYN ACCURSO ET AL.

assignments) ○ 3% attending to multiple perspectives (1 assignment) ○ 3% learning how language works (1 assignment) 20% focused on Big Ideas from other disciplines (science, social studies, physical and health education; 6 assignments)	● 25% unknown (not named or implied; 11 lesson plans)
Language supports	
Overall ● Average of 10 language supports per lesson (ranging from 4–19 supports per lesson plan) **Type and frequency** ● See Appendix	**Multilingual supports** ● 23% of lesson plans encouraged students' use of home languages during lesson activities (10 lesson plans), ● 9% included provision or creation of home language dictionaries (4 lesson plans) 5% made use of multilingual texts (2 lesson plans)

[a] One cohort was required to choose texts by Indigenous authors (7/30 assignments), and five of these texts included multilingual representations. Among other cohorts, where text selection was left open to TCs, one in three groups independently prioritized the selection of texts with IBPOC authors or illustrators (8/23 groups), and one in five selected a text with multilingual representations (5/23 groups).

[b] IBPOC stands for Indigenous, Black, and People of Colour.

Findings: A Critical Braiding Continuum

Through reflexive thematic analysis, we better understood TCs' different phases of learning along a critical braiding continuum when asked to demonstrate critical language awareness and infuse their read-aloud lessons with language supports, and attention to social justice, antiracism, and social-emotional learning. Though all groups met the overall "pass" criteria, some TCs approached the assignment as a compilation of independent components, some loosely braided, and some more tightly braided (Table 3). The more tightly braided assignments were distinguished by two key features: critical (disciplinary) consciousness and contextualized language supports. We further describe and illustrate these findings below.

Critical (Disciplinary) Consciousness

By critical (disciplinary) consciousness, we mean attention to bias, power, privilege, and in/equity in disciplinary decision making. The parentheses around the word "disciplinary" indicate that critical consciousness can and does exist separate from disciplinary decision making but that we are nuancing existing terminology to reflect a subtype of critical consciousness that we observed where the two intersected in our data. During data analysis, TCs' criticality was initially most evident in the written reflections at the end of their lesson plans. Assignments coded for critical reflection, as opposed to more general reflection, recounted careful intentions in text selection, dispositions toward diversity, the degree to which TCs saw their lesson design elements as integrated, and whether they had taken an antiracist or otherwise equity-seeking approach in their thinking and disciplinary decision making. We quickly observed that all of the 11 assignments placed at the more tightly braided end of the continuum had also been coded for the presence of critical reflection. At that time, our emergent interpretation was that critical reflection itself might be the core of learning to braid, influencing TCs' understanding and planning

Table 3

A Critical Braiding Continuum

Attention to independent components	Loosely braided	More tightly braided

• 8 assignments, comprising 8 lesson plans
• Emergent disciplinary consciousness
   o Tended to lack critical reflection
   o Most chose texts by White authors/ illustrators
   o Some alluded to a target reading comprehension strategy (no explicit mention)
• (De)contextualized language supports
   o Average of nine supports per lesson
   o Supports tended to be disconnected from both the class profile and the disciplinary goals
   o Supports did not engage students' home language as a resource
	• 11 assignments, comprising 17 lesson plans
	• Emergent critical (disciplinary) consciousness
	   o Less frequent critical reflection
	   o Equal representation of White and IBPOC authors/illustrators
	   o Just over half named or alluded to a target reading comprehension strategy
	• Emergent design of contextualized language supports
	   o Average of nine supports per lesson
	   o Supports tended to connect well with class profile and engage multilingualism
	   o Unclear connection between selected language supports and disciplinary goals
		• 11 assignments, comprising 19 lesson plans
		• Demonstrated critical (disciplinary) consciousness
		   o Most chose texts by IBPOC authors/ illustrators; selected for their potential to explore or resist the effects of ideologies of domination
		   o Most named or alluded to a target reading comprehension strategy
		• Presence of contextualized language support
		   o Higher average number of language supports per lesson
		   o Most were well connected to both the class profile and disciplinary goals of the lesson
		   o More likely to engage multilingual supports

KATHRYN ACCURSO ET AL.

regarding teaching language and disciplinary content. However, reflexive thematic analysis calls for a "continual bending back on oneself" to question and query assumptions made in interpretation (Braun & Clarke, 2019, p. 594). Through this kind of bending back, or revisiting of the data, we developed a clearer understanding that specific disciplinary decisions arose from small groups' collective criticality, including their dispositions toward diverse learners and intentions toward inclusion. As a result, we came to understand critical (disciplinary) consciousness as a somewhat broader and more complex construct than just critical reflection and a central strand of assignments that more tightly braided priorities.

To illustrate critical (disciplinary) consciousness as a characteristic of more tightly braided assignments, we offer excerpts from one group's well-braided work. These four TCs designed a series of three Grade 6/7 read-aloud lessons around "The Sharing Circle" by Theresa 'Corkey' Larsen-Jonasson (2016). They articulated that the lessons they designed were meant to "reflect an understanding of the important work of decolonizing our education system (that systemically perpetuates hierarchies of power)." They went on to further outline how this critical orientation influenced their text selection, their design of explicit instruction, and their contextualized decision making as linked to the needs of the classroom as a whole, as well as the inclusion of ELL students in particular. Regarding text selection:

> [We chose] a countertext that offers an Indigenous perspective about restorative justice practices and conflict resolution. Rather than focusing solely on the individual, it asks students to consider the question of how their actions affect others in the community…. It centers a [circle] practice that positions each member as an equal part of the community, rather than in a hierarchical way. Since this text is written as a narrative, it also demonstrated the powerful role that stories have in learning, particularly when it comes to learning about the experiences, perspectives, and identities of others…. This is in contrast to texts that relate only to the dominant cultural perspective…. [We also wanted] a text that spoke to the current needs of the classroom. [Our students] are a diverse group of learners that have experienced their fair share of group conflicts throughout the year thus far. (Assignment A.67)

Here, the TCs drew on the justice-oriented notion of countertexts, or texts by minoritized authors that reflect their experiences and capture perspectives missing in dominating school curricula (Accurso & Mizell, 2020), which they had learned about in Course 2. However, they did not choose a countertext just for the sake of diversifying the curriculum (though that may be a worthy pursuit, as well). They identified a topic of relevance to their learners and thought critically about how their students could benefit from a perspective on this topic they might not encounter in dominating school curriculum.

Regarding the influence of critical consciousness in planning equitable and inclusive reading instruction, these TCs reported that they "focused on explicitly naming and teaching literacy strategies" so that all students could have access to the sometimes "hidden" skills that strong readers put to use in building comprehension.[6] They wrote that by pairing "the strategies of relating, questioning, summarizing, retelling, and inferring … with a text that spoke to the current needs of the classroom … [we] encourage students to read critically and with intention … bringing in their own cultures, values, and knowledge." Moreover, they demonstrated an asset-orientation toward multilingual learners as students who already have immense "literacy knowledge" and who can "lean into their home languages throughout the learning process, while working to develop … proficiency in English." They attended to offering "a variety of scaffolds that can enable the ELL students in our class to access the texts and activities in a meaningful way." Across their three lessons, scaffolds included vocabulary lists translated into students' home languages, peer support in strategic small-group settings, modelling of reading strategies and lesson activities followed by joint construction, encouraging the use of home languages during lesson activities,

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[6] For more on "hidden" skills in reading comprehension, see Rose (2004).

visual supports, and sentence starters, among others. In other words, critical (disciplinary) consciousness manifested for this group in their attempts to shift dominating power dynamics in various integrated ways as they designed a disciplinary curriculum for a particular group of students and to make sure *all* of them were included in lesson activities.

This example illustrates larger patterns in the data set. Anchored in similar demonstrations of criticality, all of the more tightly braided assignments were planned around texts that had been carefully selected for their potential to explore or resist the effects of ideologies of domination (11 assignments). Three-quarters of those featured texts by Indigenous or other authors/illustrators of colour (IBPOC) to counter long-standing representation imbalances in classroom literature (8 assignments). Three other more tightly braided assignments featured texts by White authors/illustrators that had the potential to support inquiries into issues like censorship, homelessness, and bigotry. In contrast, loosely braided assignments less frequently featured critical reflection, and only half featured IBPOC authors/illustrators (6/11 assignments). Assignments with more independent components tended to lack critical reflection (7/8 assignments), and only one featured a text with an IBPOC co-author.

Most tightly braided assignments also included reflections that revealed TCs' dispositions toward increasing access to the disciplinary curriculum and participation among marginalized learners, including designated ELLs and others whose languages and literacies may not be centred on traditional curriculum, instruction, and assessment. TCs with critical reflections showed an understanding that because of past (and present) inequities and exclusions, there is a need to increase not just representation and a wider variety of perspectives and lived experiences in the curriculum but also students' access to this curriculum by starting from their needs and understanding what supports must be put in place to scaffold their learning.

In this pursuit, as the example above illustrated, tightly braided assignments were more likely to name or allude to a particular reading comprehension strategy they were trying to teach or model (e.g., relating, questioning, summarizing, retelling, inferring; see Table 2) (8/11 assignments). In contrast, about half of the loosely braided assignments did so (6/11 assignments). Lesson plans with more independent components never explicitly stated a reading comprehension strategy to be modelled; however, half alluded to using a particular strategy in their lesson activities (4/8 assignments). We certainly do not intend to imply that any time a reading comprehension strategy is clearly listed in a lesson plan indicates critical consciousness. However, thinking of scholarship that draws connections between explicit instruction and equity—such as Margarita Calderón and colleagues (2011), who argue that strategies teachers explicitly name are those they are more likely to scaffold and transparently, fairly assess—in the context of our practice and data set, perhaps it is no surprise that lesson plans that more clearly reflected critical (disciplinary) consciousness were more likely to also be explicit in their plans for reading strategy instruction.

Contextualized Language Support

Contextualized language supports are curriculum, instruction, and assessment decisions designed to increase multilingual learners' access to and participation in disciplinary teaching and learning. They are aligned with a teacher's class profile and their disciplinary goals. Our analysis revealed that the presence of contextualized language supports was a second key feature of more integrated assignments. Early in data analysis, we wondered if assignments at the more tightly braided end of the continuum would be those that paid more attention to language, engaging more language supports, or more of a specific type of language support (see Appendix Table A for a full list of language support types and frequencies). Ultimately, our analysis revealed that more tightly braided assignments did have a higher number of language supports per lesson, on average, and that the choice of supports was more likely to include

KATHRYN ACCURSO ET AL.

students' home language as a resource. This fit with a further point of distinction between assignments along the critical braiding continuum, which was the overall degree to which the language supports included in each lesson responded to the needs of a particular class profile and were clearly linked to disciplinary goals, such as teaching a particular reading comprehension strategy during the lesson. On average, more tightly braided assignments included 12 language supports per lesson plan. Importantly, these supports tended to be well connected to both the class profile (16/19 lesson plans) and the disciplinary goals of the lesson (12/19 lesson plans). Eleven of the more tightly braided assignments engaged multilingual supports (e.g., translation, encouraging use of home language, home language dictionaries, or multilingual texts).

To illustrate, we return to the Grade 6/7 assignment introduced earlier, focusing on one of the three lessons they designed around "The Sharing Circle" (Larsen-Jonasson, 2016). In this read-aloud lesson, TCs aimed to move a class of 28 students toward the following objectives: (1) Content objective: I can summarize the problem and resolution experienced by the characters in the book (target reading comprehension strategies: summarizing/retelling); and (2) Language objective: I can use writing to summarize/retell the problem and resolution using a graphic organizer. In their class profile, they highlighted that "7 students are learning English as an additional language (i.e., ELL designations ranging from Level 1 to 5) and receiving pull-out ELL support on a weekly basis" (Assignment A.67). As shown in Table 4, the group planned before, during, and after reading activities that included supports and avenues for all to participate. For instance, beginning and developing ELLs, like all students, could benefit from the inclusion of visuals, wait time, home language buddies, labelled graphic organizers, and process/product supports (e.g., sentence stems, modelling, joint construction). Expanding ELLs could engage with those same supports to expand their ideas in small groups. The needs of consolidating and bridging ELLs were additionally attended to through attention to discourse patterns in the text's genre, space for them to activate and use prior knowledge, and peer support (BC Ministry of Education, 2017, pp. 51–52). Significantly, these supports corresponded to the class profile and the stated content objective around summarizing the story content.

Lesson plans in more loosely braided assignments still included language supports, an average of nine per lesson. Like assignments at the more tightly braided end of the continuum, the language supports tended to connect well to the class profile (12/17 lesson plans), and several lesson plans engaged multilingual supports (7/17 lesson plans). However, connections between the selected language supports and disciplinary goals were often unclear in loosely braided assignments. Only a quarter of loosely braided lesson plans were coded as well connected to reading comprehension goals (4/17 lesson plans). Independent component lesson plans still included language supports, an average of nine per lesson. Nevertheless, in three-quarters of these assignments, the language supports were disconnected from both the class profile and the disciplinary goals. Moreover, these lesson plans never included drawing on students' home language as a resource. This surprised us, because TCs who authored these assignments were among the most likely to name specific student home languages in their imagined class profile (7/8 assignments), but they failed to leverage these languages as resources for learning.

Discussion

Our findings resonate with Gay and Kirkland's (2003) conceptualization of critical consciousness in education. Indeed, the first and last of their indicators—teachers bringing marginalized cultures, experiences, and perspectives into the classroom as the basis for teaching knowledge and skills; and teachers practicing reflection—surfaced in all of the most tightly braided assignments in our data set, with several other indicators present to varying degrees. We are heartened to see their call for movement

Table 4

Contextualized Language Supports in a Read-Aloud of "The Sharing Circle" (Larsen-Jonasson, 2016)

Before Reading	Language Supports
• Show the students the cover of "The Sharing Circle" by Theresa Corkey' Larsen-Jonasson using a document camera. • Give students a moment to think and share about what the story might be about and where else they may have seen a sharing circle. • Have students "Think, Pair, Share" about the prompt: *Think back to a time when you might have hurt someone or they hurt you. Was there a resolution? If so, how was it resolved?*	• **document camera** to display the book • **thinking prompt** written on board for reference • **sentence stems** to support the sharing of ideas verbally (e.g., One example from my experience is...) • **pair/group work** to discuss ideas in English or home languages
During Reading	**Language Supports**

• Ask students to turn and face the front of the room while the story is being read on the document camera. Tell students to look closely at the pictures throughout the book while it is being read.
• As you read (tell students):
    o Observe the characters' interactions with each other across the pages
    o Notice how the characters' interactions and emotions change throughout the story
    o Notice how the conflict between the foxes impacts the rest of the community
    o Notice the points in the story when the characters were further apart or closer together
• Places to pause (for teacher):
    o **Page 5**: Tell me what happened from each of the foxes' perspectives? How might they be feeling as a result of it?
    o **Page 7**: How did the fight between the two foxes impact the community? How do you think the situation will play out based on how the community is responding right now?
    o **Page 19**: What strategies does the sharing circle use that could help the community resolve the conflict?
	• **document camera** to display the graphic organizer
	• **graphic organizer** to scaffold thinking in small groups
	• **peer support** to discuss ideas
	• **modeling** to show how to effectively use and think through a graphic organizer
	• **sentence stems** to scaffold written language output for Q1 and Q2 (e.g., In this story… OR In my experience...)
	• **technology** to allow for alternative ways to demonstrate their understanding (e.g., students can verbally share their response to Q1 or Q2 using an iPad)

After Reading
 	
• Introduce students to a graphic organizer that includes places to record:
    o overarching events in the story (i.e., the storyline)
    o action/impact moments (i.e., what happened and what was the effect)
• As a class, discuss events that students might include in their construction of the storyline. Ask: *At what points in the story were the characters farther apart or closer together? How did they get there?*
• As a class, complete one impact/action section
• Small-group work: Ask students to move into small groups to complete the rest of the graphic organizer and discuss Q1. Provide	

students with access to the physical book, in order to gather ideas for their graphic organizer.
• Afterwards, invite students to free-write in their journals about the following prompts:
     o *Q1: Where were the characters further apart or closer together? How did they get there?*
     o *Q2: Think of a time you had a conflict with a peer or friend that was not resolved. Who was involved? What were the different perspectives? What would have been a possible resolution? How does this book influence your perspective on how the conflict could have been resolved?*	

"beyond general awareness toward specific instructional actions that challenge prevailing conventions" (p. 184) evident in these assignments. However, such dispositions were less prominent in assignments at the other end of the continuum. In the latter, disciplinary consciousness allowed TCs to pick a grade-appropriate book and connect it to some provincial curriculum standard, but their planned instructional actions did little to challenge prevailing conventions. Therefore, in line with Gay and Kirkland's call, our findings suggest that it remains crucial that as teacher educators we continue working together to foster TCs' critical inclinations *and* support them in moving from inclination to integrated action (see also hooks, 1994). In this way, critical (disciplinary) consciousness must not be an abstract concept that TCs learn about in teacher education coursework but rather a motivation, a process, and a practice (Liu, 2015)—a driver of concrete decisions in the daily, hourly, moment-by-moment work of disciplinary planning and instruction TCs are learning to do.

This is, of course, easier said than done. As Liu and Ball (2019) point out, critical scholars in education have issued more than 50 years of calls for changes to teacher education programming in the service of better preparing new educators for racial, ethnic, and linguistic diversity in schools, in particular by supporting critical reflection that transforms teaching and learning (see also Jemal, 2017). Yet renewed calls remain necessary, as our study and this special issue demonstrate.

Our findings have also prompted us to reflect on the tensions in teacher education that make this so, such as tensions between flexibility and structure (e.g., de Jong, 2021). For example, we observed that TCs who selected children's literature by IBPOC authors and justified the text selection for its contribution to broader social justice goals produced more tightly braided lesson plans. Ideally, TCs' critical consciousness would lead them to this kind of decision on their own, preserving a sense of intrinsic motivation and teacher autonomy (Pantić, 2015) and avoiding potential pitfalls like TCs essentializing racialized identities or seeing social justice in lesson planning as a box-checking activity (e.g., Ryan et al., 2020). Nevertheless, given the intense time constraints we are under in an accelerated 11-month program, we have certainly considered whether we ought to delimit TC text selection in the future, requiring them to engage with IBPOC literature rather than just strongly recommending it. After all, two-thirds of groups in this study who had the flexibility to choose did not take us up on the recommendation (see also Accurso & Mizell, 2023). As we desire and pursue social change through our collaborative efforts, we wonder whether TCs can practice their way into changed consciousness. Or must the changed consciousness precede changed practice?

A similar tension exists in our thinking about language pedagogy. Our joint assignment required attention to language, and all TCs included multiple language supports. Other courses in the program, and even within our own Department of Language and Literacy Education, do not require attention to language or language learners in lesson planning. Instead, they remain flexible, leaving these aspects of curriculum and instruction up to TCs to address if they want to. Yet previous studies, even within our program, demonstrate that many TCs prioritize those planning components that are clearly required. For example,

one now-graduated TC explained how programmatic priorities informed her decisions: "Indigenous education, that's in the forefront because we have to put that in our lesson plan" (quoted in Shank Lauwo et al., 2022, p. 127). Even though she was capably multilingual and formerly an ELL student herself, she went on to say that because attention to language is not required in most lesson planning across the program or in her student teaching context, "therefore, that is gonna be missed."

Lastly, the reflexive part of our analysis raised some questions for us in terms of what we did not find. As we considered the assignments that presented more independent components, as well as the criteria that were less interwoven across *all* assignments, we turned a lens back on ourselves. Did we ask TCs to learn and integrate too many new concepts without sufficient scaffolding? Though TCs' range of successes heartens us, some of the shared values and practices we attempted to address through the joint assignment (see Table 1) were not reflected well in the assignments, which led us to question how we could have better supported this vital practice. For example, we asked TCs to write language objectives in a particular format for the joint assignment. However, only some TCs, no matter their phase of learning along the continuum, succeeded in writing strong language objectives. The results were so variable that we had no clear finding to report, and instead we saw more evident patterns around contextualized language supports. Moreover, there was almost no explicit mention of antiracism or critical language awareness in any of the assignments, despite TCs having done a prior assignment around antiracist language teaching in Course 2. Though we saw their attempts at braiding priorities in planning as one type of antiracist practice in its own right, challenging notions of separation and competition that suggest teachers can address only one top priority at a time, this interpretation could not be confirmed through clear articulations in the assignment reflections. This was another surprise, as we had anticipated that articulations of antiracism and critical language awareness might be more evident in at least some of the assignments. However, the language awareness we saw was often grammatical, and sometimes functional (e.g., Gibbons, 2015), but rarely critical.

Implications and Future Directions for Braiding Priorities in Teacher Education

Stillman and Palmer (2024)—challenged by the same calls for more systematic integration of antiracism, multilingualism, and disciplinary content in teacher education programs that motivated this study— suggest that the following questions guide our future directions: "What kinds of teachers do these multilingual children need? What experiences do we, as teacher educators, need to offer our TCs who are preparing to enter richly diverse, historically grounded schools? And, what will it take for us to offer them those experiences?" (p. 318). In response to their first question, this paper began with a vision of elementary classrooms as diverse spaces staffed by teachers who validate, affirm, and engage learners' differences as resources for learning language/s, disciplinary discovery, growth, artistry, and critical and creative thinking. We return to that vision here in light of Stillman and Palmer's second and third prompts, to consider how this study's findings might contribute to its realization, in our own practice and beyond.

As we continue our action research cycle for the year 2024–25, our findings indicate that TCs would benefit from additional modelling of critical (disciplinary) consciousness and what contextualized decision making entails in lesson design. In this, we return to the tensions between flexibility and structure. For instance, if text selection is crucial to providing a sound basis for elegantly braided lesson design, should we *require* TCs to choose books by IBPOC authors that incorporate multilingualism and/or lend themselves well to an antiracist perspective and social justice explorations? Minimally, we will provide instructors with curated children's literature, foregrounding IBPOC authors, to exemplify and model a critical selection process. In our own cohorts, we will aim to implement joint construction of a tightly braided lesson plan, including think-alouds where we make visible our critical disciplinary motivations, processes, and practices. As the TCs engage in joint construction, we will be more measured and purposeful, over

extended time, in sharing and modelling for TCs our design and redesign thinking, as instructors in and across the two courses, not only about text selections but also about critical multilingual awareness of language features, text organization, and how language works to construct and/or challenge dominating ideologies.

We will further clarify expectations and provide opportunities for critical feedback by providing updated example assignments and, importantly, utilizing the critical braiding continuum to make a lesson-planning rubric that scaffolds critical reflection as a course expectation. The rubric could ask specific reflection questions such as these: (a) Who is the author? (b) How does the text speak back to oppression/s against particular groups of people? (c) What language features are to be focused on to illuminate how the text is constructed to "speak back" to oppression? (d) What is the specific reading comprehension strategy being taught? (e) What carryover coaching opportunities exist beyond this lesson? and (f) What is essential for us, as instructors, to know, in these (and other) regards from the TCs' critical reflections? Finally, framing these rubric criteria will require our collaborative efforts to resolve potential tension, creating more structure in our template while affording flexibility.

Our action research clearly demonstrates some crucial needs at the program level, including the following: (a) to further buttress TCs' critical language awareness across the curriculum and their ability to design and implement language supports; (b) to collaborate with our colleagues in other content areas to require consistent attention to language objectives/intentions and carryover learning opportunities; and (c) to intentionally support multilingual learners in disciplinary lesson/unit design. Our team will make greater efforts to collaborate with at least one other disciplinary methods instructor teaching in our same term (e.g., math, social studies, science). Collectively, we could encourage TCs to build on lesson plans for their continuing coursework to add on, deepen, and think critically about more aspects addressed later in their program (e.g., assessment, digital tool/literacies)—that is, possibly reduce the number of discrete lesson plans required across the program and ask TCs to return to their lesson plans with new attention and intention. Beyond single collaborations with content-area colleagues, we can advocate for a requirement to teach (and scaffold) critical reflection as a core program component and then consistently expect it in and across courses (e.g., Gay & Kirkland, 2003; Ukpokodu, 2007).

We realize that some of the suggested future directions will require time and structural, systemic support. There are limits to the kinds of transformative experiences we can provide by working within individual, or even combined, courses (Stillman & Palmer, 2024). However, currently, within our home institution's teacher education program, there is a perceived need and commitment to address issues related to equity, diversity, inclusion, and decolonization and also to bring closer alignment across the courses and requirements of the intense and demanding 11-month program. In this context, we will present our study's insights, implications, and invitations to continue with ongoing action research and knowledge sharing.

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Appendix

Table A

Language Supports TCs Planned, in Order of Frequency

Language Support	% of lesson plans (*n* = 44)	Language Support	% of lesson plans (*n* = 44)
Pacing (i.e., planned pauses)	98%	Strategic pairing	20%
Multimodality	82%	Technology	20%
Use of visuals in text	75%	Gesture (e.g., pointing)	18%
Word bank/vocabulary list	73%	Summarizing	16%
Pair/group work	61%	Joint construction	14%
Calling attention to semiotic resources	59%	Home language dictionaries	9%
Sentence starters/frames	48%	Scribing student contributions	9%
Modeling reading strategy or activity	45%	Checking understanding	7%
Projector/document camera	43%	Recall before moving on	7%
Visuals in addition to text (e.g., image bank)	43%	Text re-organization activities	7%
Embodiment	39%	Use of multilingual texts	5%
Build background knowledge before reading	36%	Amplifying ELL contributions	2%
Repetition	34%	Collaborating with ELL teacher	2%
Pre-teaching vocabulary	32%	Cross-cultural exploration of topic	2%
Explicit language instruction	27%	Lesson preview	2%
Graphic organizers	27%	Text deconstruction	2%
Translation	25%	Wait time	2%
Encouraging use of L1	23%		