Uruguayan EFL Teachers' Experiences of the Role of SEL in Diverse Classrooms

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Abstract: *The impact of COVID-19 exacerbated the need to integrate social emotional learning (SEL) for equitable instruction in English as a Foreign Language Classrooms (EFL). This case study explored the integration of SEL in Uruguayan classrooms and its influence on educational practice. Thirteen teachers from public and private schools completed a Cultural Awareness Survey and answered open-ended questions before, during, and after viewing a professional development video on SEL. Findings document that participants recognized the diversity in their classrooms and the relationship between cultural values and interpersonal respect. All participants indicated that their pedagogy focuses on SEL activities, but their responses did not reflect the integration of SEL concepts into the EFL curriculum.*

Keywords: *Culturally responsive instruction; English as a foreign language; social emotional learning; Uruguayan Teachers*

INTRODUCTION

The rapid pace of globalization, economic pressures, and the socio-political events across the globe have led to increased migration, the reshaping of societies and the creation of racial and ethnic disparities that contribute to inequalities across the world and specifically, in the Americas (Cabella & Porzecanski, 2015; Kuhlman & Knezevic, 2013). In Uruguay, as in many parts of Latin America and countries in other continents, unprecedented demographic changes have had implications for the educational system and resulted in classrooms of students who are more culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) than in the past (Caumont, 2020; Montiel, 2020). The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020 posed additional educational challenges for already vulnerable immigrants (Ares et al., 2021; Caarls et al., 2021; OECD, 2020; Sukirman, 2023). The country of Uruguay, in contrast with many other nations, moved quickly into online instruction due to its prior implementation of the Plan Ceibal initiative (CEPAL, 2020), which ensured that every student enrolled in the public education system received a school-issued computer with free internet connection (Plan Ceibal, n.d.). However, what at first glance appeared to be technology readiness was only evident in hardware availability. Deficits in educators' preparation to teach online, and their lack of training and experience working with migrant children, exacerbated educational inequity in Uruguay (Middleton, 2020).

CASEL (The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2022) explains that the infusion of social emotional learning (SEL) in the

curriculum helps students develop key foundational skills for subjective well-being, engaged citizenship, academic success, and educational equity. The intersection of culture and SEL is important for CLD as well as mainstream students for several reasons. Joining these concepts leads learners to master positive behaviors of respecting and learning from other cultures (Gay, 2013), it helps to prevent the privileging of the rights of some students over others' (Hastings & Jacob, 2016; Hawkins & Norton, 2009; Kincheloe, 2008), and bridges the inequalities underserved minority communities face (CASEL, 2022; Jagers et al., 2018). Effective SEL implementation has been documented to support educators' efforts to create learning environments that identify cultural diversity as a strength and the right of all citizens (Jagers et al., 2018).

Growing attention from economists and international organizations such as the World Bank have generated discussion about the importance of promoting the development of SEL skills in Latin American schools (Busso et al., 2017; Huerta, 2019). While evidence of SEL implementation is scarce in this region (Berniell et al., 2017; Instituto Nacional de Estadística, 2019; Revista Educación, 2017), the Uruguayan national curriculum for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) at the middle school level, explicitly mentions SEL and encourages the development of critical thinking, empathy, autonomy, collaboration, and internal monologue strategies that help create supportive learning environments and promote a sense of belonging in students (ANEP-CES, 2016). Two studies have examined SEC development among Uruguayan secondary school students based on the PISA 2012 results (Instituto Nacional de Evaluación Educativa, 2015; Rivero, 2019); however, no research was found to assess the actual implementation of SEL practices in Uruguayan secondary school classrooms. To date no official framework or standards have been developed nor articulated in any way to coordinate Uruguayan EFL educators' efforts to address SEL and promote social and emotional competencies (SECs) in the classroom.

This investigation is based on the premise that through a focus on SEL and culturally responsive instruction (CRI) in EFL classes, Uruguayan educators could promote academic success and equitable education for all learners. Infusion of the SEL goals will allow educators to raise awareness of social issues such as power relations, inequities in social justice visions and realities, and covert discriminatory behaviours. Such efforts would support the Uruguayan General Law of Education (Ley General de Educación No. 18,437), approved in 2008, which emphasized the development of the learner and a consideration of the affective domain (Dirección Nacional de Impresiones y Publicaciones Oficiales – IMPO, 2020). This exploratory case study examined 13 Uruguayan public and private school EFL teachers' perceptions of the integration of SEL and CRI in their classrooms. The overarching research question guiding this inquiry was how Uruguayan EFL teachers describe and explain their integration of SEL and CRI in the EFL curriculum.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND CONTEXT

This study used the CASEL Five Core Competencies SEL Framework. CASEL (2022) is a United States (U.S.) not-for-profit organization that is the world's leading organization advancing research and programs for the integration

of SEL in classroom instruction and school environments. CASEL defines SEL as the process through which individuals acquire and apply knowledge, attitudes, and skills within five SECs (self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making) for positive health practices, engaged citizenship, and school success. Decades of research have found that the better developed students' social and emotional skills are, the greater success they experience in school and life (Bisquerra, 2003; McKown, 2017). The SEL framework encourages a partnership between schools, families, and communities that creates nurturing, participatory and equitable learning environments that will equip students to thrive in times of crisis, to feel empowered, be able to recognize power dynamics and implicit bias, to develop cultural sensitivity, and advocate for themselves and others (CASEL, 2022; Jagers et al., 2018).

Culturally Responsive EFL in Uruguay

Culturally responsive pedagogues create student-centered instructional environments (Bourdieu, 1987; Fránquiz et al., 2019; Gay, 2010; Kuhlman & Knezevic, 2013; Roffey & McCarthy, 2013). Reflection drives caring educators to validate families' cultural norms and traditions (Bartolomé, 1994; Gay, 2013; Goodman, 2011; Ladson-Billings, 2014) and to plan lessons that demonstrate respect for learners' diverse funds of knowledge (González et al., 2005; McIntosh, 2009; Norton & Toohey, 2004). Such educators work to create rather than reproduce dominant societal norms (Giroux & Silva, 2010; Goodman, 2011). They allow students to experience leadership and a philosophy of caring in their teachers (Gay, 2013). In EFL classrooms, teachers bring the emotional state of learners from CLD backgrounds to the foreground (Gay, 2013; Hadjioannou et al., 2016; Kuhlman & Knezevic, 2013). The TESOL Organization (TESOL) emphasizes respect for diversity, advocating for the language rights of multilingual and multicultural students and teachers of English (TESOL, 2006).

Humanizing pedagogy is needed in Latin America (Bartolomé, 1994) and more so in Uruguay, a country that has established lofty goals for improving students' academic achievement (ANEP-CES, 2016; URUTESOL, n.d.). Freire (1970) stressed that humanizing pedagogy is political, whether its focus is to domesticate or liberate. The current EFL curriculum used by all teachers in Uruguay was developed based on TESOL's standards and five domains of knowledge and applications to practice: culture, language, instruction, assessment, and professionalism (Kamhi-Stein et al., 2017). Uruguay's EFL teacher preparation curriculum stresses that professionalism must be at the core of culturally responsive teaching. The challenge in Urtuguay is to traverse the space between domestication to liberation so EFL instruction will serve as a path that empowers students to develop critical consciousness "conscientização" (Freire, 1970, p. 26). Cultural responsiveness will be achieved when teachers educate themselves and their students to develop their SECs (González et al., 2005; McKown, 2017). This investigation utilizes Freire's socio-cultural theory for examining the challenges of teaching SEL infused EFL in Uruguay.

The current influx of immigrants in Uruguay from Latin America nations (Argentina, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, and Venezuela) and from the country of Syria, has required Uruguayan educators to familiarize themselves with

students' sociocultural contexts in order to reach desired academic goals and help them adapt to life in a new country (Caumont, 2020; Montiel et al. 2020; UNICEF Uruguay, n. d). As families' socioeconomic (SES) conditions play an important role regarding resources for children and families, immigrant students are less likely to have access to a quiet place of study, experience homework assistance at home, be familiar with recent technologies used in education, or be as proficient using technology applications (Ares et al., 2021; OECD, 2020), making online learning more challenging. Schooling protocols in Uruguay continue to include remote technologies after the pandemic as sometimes the teacher is off site and the teacher's aide will be at a school to support the instruction that is delivered through the world wide web.

SEL to Address Cultural Diversity in Uruguay

Research has demonstrated that professional development (PD) for teachers has to include preparation to teach SEL (Bisquerra, 2003; CASEL, 2022; Jagers et al., 2018; McKown, 2017). Through engaging and ongoing PD teachers reflect on how academic success is delineated by the classroom environment, the methods they select to use, and on how the learners see their families' histories mirrored in the curriculum (Gay, 2010; Krashen, 1982; Ladson-Billings, 2006; Paris & Alim, 2017; Pentón Herrera, 2020; San Pedro, 2018; Szelei et al., 2019). Teachers' perceptions of their own culture and awareness of how cultural norms influence their teaching are key factors for creating affirming classroom environments for diverse contexts (Giroux & Silva, 2010). All teachers deserve supportive training that enables them to address the SEL needs of children (Gilliam & Shahar, 2006).

The 2008 Uruguayan General Law of Education (Ley General de Educación No. 18,437) positioned education from an integral perspective, going beyond the teaching of subject matter content (Dirección Nacional de Impresiones y Publicaciones Oficiales-IMPO, 2020). In addition, Uruguay's increasing immigration has set the stage for effective implementation of the Uruguayan EFL curriculum, with an added emphasis on the development of SECs among students (Gregory & Fergus, 2017). In support of the rights of all students, Uruguayan educational stakeholders are searching for ways to equip teachers with the necessary knowledge and skills to create learning environments that address diversity as a strength. In this culturally responsive context, the PD provided in the present study explored Uruguayan EFL teachers' perceptions of the integration of SEL and CRI in Uruguayan.

RESEARCH METHOD

The researchers, native Spanish speakers from Uruguay, Ecuador, and Cuba, have previously collaborated with the Department of Education in Uruguay. As the result of a Zoom meeting with the EFL National Supervisors in Uruguay (NSU), the researchers prepared a project to meet the needs expressed by the NSU for EFL teachers. These EFL teachers were available to be part of the convenience sample for the study. The PD-based research complied with the mandate of preparing EFL teachers to incorporate SEL in the curriculum with an intervention that addressed comments expressed by teachers related to the need for EFL educators in Uruguay to expand their knowledge of SEL and its integration in the

classroom. This exploratory qualitative case study utilized a convenience sample to collect answers to open-ended questions from a total of 13 Uruguayan EFL educators who agreed to participate in the study. The following research questions guided the study:

1. How do EFL Uruguayan teachers integrate SEL into instruction?
2. How do Uruguayan EFL teachers address cultural diversity in the curriculum?

Procedures after Obtaining Institutional Approval

Upon approval from the University's Institutional Review Board in the U.S. and the Department of Education in Uruguay, the EFL NSU posted a Qualtrics survey link on their official social media accounts inviting EFL teachers to participate in the study and offered them a certificate of lecture completion as an incentive. The post remained public and active for three weeks on the social media platform; 28 teachers accepted participation in the study, but only 13 female teachers with 5 to 20 years of teaching experience working in urban public (n=10) and private (n=3) schools across Uruguay responded to all the questions they were asked.

Data Gathered Before and During the Intervention

Prior to the beginning of the PD/intervention, the teachers completed a Cultural Awareness Survey Questionnaire (CASQ) (See Appendix 1) that provided demographic information and explored the teachers' understanding of culture. After the CASQ instrument was developed, face validity was established with the EFL NSU and content validity was established with three experts in the field of multicultural education (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019).

Six open-ended questions were asked of the participants before, during and after they viewed a researcher-developed PD video focused on SEL and CRI. The viewing of the video plus the time to answer questions, was anticipated to take the teachers between 45-60 minutes. The researchers created the video after determining the teachers' SEL needs as identified by the EFL NSU. The supervisors requested the video be prepared in English to allow the teachers the opportunity to develop the lexicon to discuss SEL with their students in the target language of instruction.

The video outlined CASEL's SEL framework, the definition of CRI, the relationship between culture and SEL, and provided literature on the need for effective implementation of culturally responsive SEL. The video was shown to teachers to ensure their awareness of the scope of the study, to provide an explanation of the topic, and to explore their views on how SEL and CRI could be applied in their educational context. The participants responded to three open-ended questions during the viewing of the video (1. What three terms define CRI?, 2. What are three main components of SEL that you could integrate in your classroom?, and 3. What is the connection between CRI and SEL?). They were able to stop the video to reflect and then record their answers. They also responded to three additional open-ended questions after watching the video (1. What is your definition of

culture? 2. How would you apply culturally responsive SEL in your classroom? and, 3. What else would you like to know about SEL and its implementation in the classroom?). The participants were asked to pause the video to respond to the questions as they appeared.

Collection and Analysis of Participants' Responses

The qualitative responses collected via Qualtrics were downloaded and analyzed by the three researchers utilizing thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The analysis process consisted of the researchers familiarizing themselves with the raw data by reading the information three times. Each researcher generated initial codes and then compared the codes with the other researchers to ensure interrater reliability. Once the codes were established and grouped, the labels of the themes were developed and reviewed during several meetings to further triangulate the findings. This process allowed a meaningful reduction of codes into themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007). Analysis of developed codes and repeated themes helped determine the participants' understanding of SEL concepts in a CLD educational setting.

FINDINGS

SEL Definition

The responses shared by the participants during and after viewing the video about SEL were used to assess their understanding of SEL concepts. Responses to the question asking the participants to use three terms to describe SEL, led to identification of two themes: competency development and SEL instruction. The teachers' concern with SEC development reflected their beginning understanding of the purposes of SEL. Some participants (8 out of 13) referred to SEL as a stress-reduction approach to obtain emotional balance. These participants did not use SEL-related terminology, suggesting they had not delved deeply into the benefits of focusing on SEL but used terms that do relate to the objective of emotional education, which is the development of emotional competence (Bisquerra, 2003). They selected terms that were broad and vague, such as "motivation," "control of stress," "awareness of attitudes," and "emotional balance."

Bisquerra (2003) defines emotional education as a "continuous and permanent educational process, which aims to enhance emotional development as an essential complement to the cognitive development, constituting both the essential elements of the development of the integral personality" (p. 243). It appears the teachers began to discover how SEL is the process through which children and adults develop the five SEC (CASEL, 2022) allowing them to (1) recognize and manage emotions, (2) develop skills and abilities, (3) communicate effectively, (4) negotiate conflict and care about others, and (5) make responsible decisions. The teachers used the terms self-awareness, self-management, responsible decision-making, and relationship skills. Social awareness was not mentioned.

The second theme was SEL instruction. Effective SEL instruction requires that teachers have knowledge and understanding of their students' social,

emotional, and cognitive development (CASEL, 2022; Schonert-Reichl et al., 2017; Waajid et al., 2013). The participants defined SEL by referring to the knowledge teachers need to effectively integrate SEL in the classroom, such as "students' emotions," "cultural backgrounds," and "needs." Some of the terms the participants selected were "students' interests," "for all," "approach students as a whole," and "set goals." They seemed to sense that teachers who integrate SEL foster personal and academic development because they see the student as a whole individual (McCaughtry, 2004). Such teachers design instruction that provide students tools to develop their SECs and consider factors that influence academic and personal development such as students' prior knowledge, learning experiences, emotions, and backgrounds (Durlak et al., 2011; Schonert-Reichl et al., 2017; Taylor & Larson, 1999).

Culture Definition

When the participants were asked to answer the CASQ survey that served to determine how they define culture, three themes were identified: respect for other groups, interaction with other groups, and culture as self-identification. Identified themes were analyzed utilizing the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions' (IFLA, n.d.) definition of multiculturalism, which "is the co-existence of diverse cultures, where culture includes racial, religious, or cultural groups and is manifested in customary behaviours, cultural assumptions and values, patterns of thinking, and communicative styles" (para. 1). Some participants referred to culture as the differences among people or communities that must be respected. These communities include groups, and each group has its own patterns of behaviour, beliefs, and values. The participants emphasized respect and acceptance of different ways of being. They proposed that culture means sharing the same interests within a community and accepting others' interests and life perspectives. The participants stated, "Culture could be defined as having your own set of norms and behaviour…to live and respect others in a society." They agreed that culture "involves respecting others no matter their background, beliefs, religion or way of thinking." Respect and acceptance of others' norms, behaviours and perspectives of life are necessary to "co-exist". Chouinard and Cram (2020) suggest that culture includes themes such as "culture [is] defined as a structure/pattern in terms of a system of ideas, behaviour, or symbols" and "culture [is] conceived as group membership in terms of place or belonging" (p. 20). For the participants, culture was an evolving system for individuals and communities to constantly evaluate the cultural patterns of groups. This evaluation allows individuals to understand their connectedness to other people holding similar ideas and behaviours and eventually learn from each other (Willging et al., 2006).

The second theme reflected the participants' agreement that culture is an embracing term that not only implies respecting differences in other communities but also learning from and being welcoming and nurturing of those with different backgrounds and worldviews. Some respondents agreed that culture involves "sharing and exchanging" and stated that "sharing and caring for others empowers cultures." Some described culture as a process involving "respecting and learning from those who have a different background." Several answers showed that respect of others who are different from what Uruguayans consider acceptable societal

norms is important. Chouinard and Cram's (2020) definition of culture includes the theme related to "culture as an ongoing process and social construction" (p.20). The participants' answers seem to indicate they view culture as a dynamic system in which individuals and communities continuously learn from each other to produce knowledge and to understand others (Rosaldo, 1989).

The third theme resulted from the participants broad interpretation of culture. The teachers understood culture as a set of norms, behaviours, beliefs, and experiences identified within a group or community, and they shared what these norms represent inside and outside the group. They explained that culture is what defines a person, what people feel and believe, what they respond to, and even how people treat each other. Some emphasized that culture is "everything that we do as humans" and "what unifies us." One participant said, "Culture is where we belong regarding our behaviour, attitude, customs and institutions that define who we are." Chouinard and Cram (2020) used the theme "culture as a function of group based-power or ideology" (p.20) referring to the person's interactions with other groups, including people with different backgrounds, within a diverse community. Differences include ways of thinking, feeling, acting, celebrating, habits, and participation in different political parties and religious groups. The participants' responses captured the intertwined relationship between culture and ideologies regarding the values each group holds and how individuals are impacted by politics, power, and privilege (Seidman, 2004).

SEL Integration to Address the Demands of a Culturally Diverse Classroom

Two main patterns were identified in the participants' responses about the connection between SEL and culturally responsive teaching: emotional needs and pedagogical activities. Emotional needs refer to challenges students may face at home. The participants agreed that both SEL and CRI address students' emotions and promote development of students' skills recognizing and controlling their emotions, feelings, and attitudes (CASEL, 2022; Gay, 2018; Jagers et al., 2018). One participant explained, "*In both cases you are trying to integrate students, developing empathy and working on the [students'] abilities… to improve their academic results based on their emotional learning." S*ome teachers added that a culturally responsive SEL approach considers how emotions and cultural differences in the classroom may impact students' learning (Jagers et al., 2018). Teachers advocate for a student-centered approach and emphasize the need to consider the whole student, educating the mind, the body and the emotions (CASEL, 2022; McKown, 2017). One participant responded, *"Students' background, family connections, emotions and beliefs will affect their learning. If teachers become aware of that… we can help them handle emotions effectively so that they won't interfere with* their [the students'] *learning process*." The participants acknowledged the importance of the SEL skills to support the students' ability to manage their own emotions to perform academically (CASEL, 2022; Montiel et al., 2020; UNICEF Uruguay, n. d). The participants indicated that "*SEL and CRI complement each other because SEL provides the framework to work on cultural aspects from a healthy emotional environment," "CRI is the way to ensure that the principles of SEL are being apply correctly,"* and "*consider the students'*

background and interests to stablish clear goals in order to engage and motivate students, creating a comfortable environment to learn."

The second pattern related to pedagogical activities to integrate SEL in a culturally diverse classroom. The participants agreed that both SEL and CRI address educational inequity and CRI supports the effective integration of SEL by promoting a safe classroom environment (CASEL, 2022; Gregory & Fergus, 2017; Jagers et al., 2018). The following comments support these ideas; "*culture is highly related with emotions*"; "*spotting differences among cultures in the classroom, but always emphasising that uniqueness is ok, will make students feel at ease in the classroom with their peers*"; and "*CRI is teaching that bears in mind the cultural and social differences.*" Another participant suggested offering "*classroom activities such as videos to address cultural needs.*" Several mentioned the need to consider students' cultural needs (UNICEF Uruguay, n.d). One teacher said, "*CRI is the way to ensure that the principles of SEL are being applied correctly. For example, the teacher will consider the students' background and interests… to engage and motivate students, creating a comfortable environment to learn.*" Some participants agreed that SEL in a diverse classroom provides the framework to create a healthy emotional environment in which students feel comfortable and confident learning from their peers (CASEL, 2022; Jagers et al., 2018). They shared that "*through SEL students learn to be self-aware and to develop emotional intelligence, tolerance and respect*" and "*value each student's contribution to make of our classes more cultural diverse.*" The participants referred to culturally responsive SEL as a tool to validate cultural groups. One teacher indicated, "*It bears in mind the cultural and social differences and does not place one on top of the other, but helps empower all cultures for greater tolerance and mutual understanding.*" Many agreed that SEL strategies, if properly implemented, promote negotiation, communication, empathy and mindfulness in safe classroom environments that address all students' needs (CASEL, 2022; Giroux & Silva, 2010; Montiel et al., 2020; Pentón Herrera, 2020; UNICEF Uruguay, n. d).

DISCUSSIONS

Uruguayan teachers are experiencing the changing demographics in their country, especially at the elementary school level and in the capital city of Montevideo. This study's findings indicate that EFL Uruguayan teachers are aware of the influences of culture on learning, and they agree that respect in inter-personal interactions provides learners a vehicle to identify and validate their own and others' norms, behaviours, beliefs, and experiences (Chouinard & Cram, 2020). Regarding participants' SEL definition, the results demonstrated that the teachers understood SEL as a mechanism for stress-reduction within the emotional construct instead and not as a holistic approach for developing students' SECs. Participants' description of SEL was limited to a focus on students' emotions without considering the contribution of teachers' initiative to address students' social, emotional, and cognitive development in lesson design (CASEL, 2022; Schonert-Reichl et al., 2017; Waajid et al., 2013).

Another important finding was that the teachers acknowledged the interconnection between SEC and CRI. They shared the belief that SEL is contained

within CRI and that classroom activities should be developed to deliver content and also to utilize students' cultural background to better engage learners (Gregory & Fergus, 2017; Dirección Nacional de Impresiones y Publicaciones Oficiales-IMPO, 2020). The mandate to implement SEL within the classroom will not materialize without teachers' active role in the process. Participants' responses indicated they have a limited understanding of how to implement pedagogical activities and tailor instruction connecting students' cultural background to SEL concepts. Teachers need resources and supports to successfully implement instructional changes (Duckworth, 2006; Shulman & Sherin, 2004). It seems that the mandate to include SEL within lesson plans has been disconnected from the reality of educational mandates (Dirección Nacional de Impresiones y Publicaciones Oficiales-IMPO, 2020). The country's educational leaders have not considered resources such as PD, that teachers will need to effectively integrate CRI and SEL in their future work. Thus, appropriate training is needed to equip teachers to meet the social, emotional and linguistic needs of all students (Gilliam & Shahar, 2006).

SEL and CRI knowledge and skills taught in teacher preparation programs should be aligned with the policies of the Uruguayan Ministry of Education. This would provide teachers with pedagogical knowledge and opportunities for ongoing reflection that will likely increase successful SEL implementation. This will ensure that teachers have the right tools and resources to promote SEC development and bridge educational inequalities.

CONCLUSION

The results of this exploratory case study provide information about Uruguayan EFL teachers' perceptions of the meaning of culture and of how SEL concepts intersect with CRI to meet the academic and emotional demands of learners in culturally diverse classrooms. Data that served to answer study question one revealed that teachers have limited understanding of how to infuse SEL instruction in the curriculum, and at this moment in time the teachers did not appear to have developed the knowledge and skills to support students' SEC development (Durlak et al., 2011; Schonert-Reichl et al., 2017; Taylor & Larson, 1999). Regarding the second study question of how Uruguayan EFL teachers address cultural diversity in the curriculum, the participants demonstrated an evolving grasp of the concept of culture and of the importance of incorporating activities that build SEL skills and strategies utilizing the curriculum as a medium to support students (Chouinard & Cram, 2020; Pentón Herrera, 2020; Rosaldo, 1989; Seiman, 2004). As diversity increases in Uruguay due to the influx of immigrants (Caumont, 2020; Montiel, 2020), the results of this study strongly suggest that teachers need more pedagogical tools to address the demands of a CLD classroom (Gay, 2013; Giroux & Silva, 2010; Norton & Toohey, 2004).

Findings will further discussion about online PD to prepare teachers to work with CLD students, uncovering ways to create affirming classrooms that enhance students' SEC development and valorize Uruguayan teachers' efforts (Freire, 1970). EFL teachers across the world will develop their expertise through PD that integrates CRI with SEL models (Gay, 2010; Franquíz et al., 2019). Future research might examine the effectiveness of PD to enhance Uruguayan teachers' knowledge of SEL and its impact on students' academic achievement in long-term research

protocols. Educators will act without fear of failure once they experience support from the EFL NSU (Bartolomé, 1994; Goodman, 2011). Mandates in the Uruguayan General Law of Education will be fully implemented when PD support for teachers is aligned with current educational policies. Future research could also analyze educational policies already in place and work to identify how mandates that do not include PD focused on SEL and CRI will be revised.

One of the limitations of this study is the small number of participants. The invitation to all EFL teachers registered in the Uruguayan education system to be part of the study yielded a low response rate. This may have been because the pandemic adversely affected teachers' work and increased day by day accountability for all Uruguayan educators. Showing participants a video outlining foundational knowledge about SEL and CRI may have resulted in socially desired response bias as the teachers knew the research was approved by the NSU. Administering the open-ended questions after the participants had opportunities to implement the skills they began to explore with students, may have better indicated the teachers' level of proficiency to incorporate SEL and CRI in the curriculum. This was a small project about SEL and CRI given the number of respondents, but it provided important information for Uruguayan educators to reflect on the country's current and future policies and how these could more efficiently address educational inequity in an increasingly diverse country (Caumont, 2020; Montiel, 2020).

CONCLUSION

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APPENDIX 1: CULTURAL AWARENESS SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Please complete the following information about you.
   a. What would you say is unique about being Uruguayan?

   _____

   b. What's your favorite type of music?

   _____

   c. What is your favorite national holiday?

   _____

   d. What's your family's favorite custom?

   _____

   e. What is the name of the community where you spent most of your childhood?

   _____

   f. Identify one or two positives due to growing up in Uruguay?

   _____

2. Based on your answers to items a-e, how do you define cultural diversity?

   _____
   _____

3. How would you describe diversity in the Uruguayan culture?

   _____
   _____

4. How do you identify individuals from other cultures?

   _____
   _____

5. How do you expose your students to the norms of other cultures?

   _____
   _____

6. In Uruguay we are experiencing an influx of immigrants from Venezuela, Colombia, and Syria, among other countries, how do you think this is influencing the Uruguayan culture?

   _____
   _____

7. How has your classroom dynamic changed as a result of the recent changes in demographics?

   _____
   _____

8. How do you tailor instruction based on your students' affective and cultural needs? Explain/Provide an example.

   _____
   _____

9. How do you tailor instruction based on your students' academic needs? Explain/Provide an example.

_____

_____

10. How do you define culturally diverse students?

_____

_____

11. How many years of teaching experience do you have?	12. Which school setting(s) have you worked in within the last five years? Mark all that apply.	13. What is your gender?
☐ 1–4	☐ Urban	☐ Male
☐ 5-9	☐ Rural	☐ Female
☐ 10-15	☐ Public	☐ Rather not say
☐ 16– 20	☐ Private	☐ Other (Pleas e specify)
☐ More than 20		