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# DESIGNING ESL/EFL TEACHERS' ONLINE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS IN INDIANA AND BEIJING, CHINA: "CROSSING THE RIVER BY FEELING THE ROCKS IN THE RIVERBED"

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The manuscript describes the designs of two teachers' online professional development (PD) projects to support teachers of English-as-Second/Foreign Language in Indiana and in Beijing, China. We provide descriptions of each of the contexts; judgments and decisions we made along the way; the contextual/cultural and pedagogical factors we took into consideration; and finally, the design countenance of the projects that emerged from our efforts. In designing the projects, we took a sociocultural "post-method orientation" in that contextual/cultural factors determined the projects' pathways of practice. Thus, they were context-sensitive and based on local understandings; they involved the collaboration of an interdisciplinary group of individuals knowledgeable in the discipline and the medium of instruction. Nevertheless, as designers, we kept a steady focus on our own perspectives of teaching and learning inclusiveness through Culturally Responsive Teaching, differentiated and scaffolded instruction, and the need to enact online presences in online PD courses. The manuscript describes how we approached the enactment of these perspectives differently in each PD's design.

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### **INTRODUCTION**

We describe the designs of two teachers' online professional development (PD) projects to support teachers of students of English-as-a-Second/Foreign Language (ESL/EFL). The projects were developed to address the needs of two different populations in two different settings. The first group consisted of Indiana content-area teachers who had in their classrooms, English learners (ELs) whose first language was not English. The second group consisted of EFL Chinese teachers working with students of diverse backgrounds in China. In this paper, we provide a description of each of the contexts; judgments and decisions we made along the way; the pedagogical and cultural factors we took into consideration in each of the designs; and finally, the design countenance of the projects that emerged from our efforts.

In designing the projects, the first author decided upon a "post-method design orientation." She arrived at it informed by challenges in her disciplinary field of second/foreign language teacher professional development, and her experiences as an international educator. The famous quote in the title from Deng Xiaoping, China's former Chairman, "Crossing the river by feeling the rocks," (Bruce & Li, 2009) reiterates the case that for the implementation of ideas to take hold effectively, the factors that are in place must be taken into consideration or else, they will be swept away by the current of resistance. Thus, in the descriptions below, it will be seen that the designers strove to design in ways that were context-sensitive and based on local affordances and constraints. That knowledge is in tandem with the experiences

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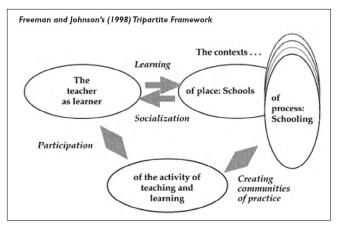


FIGURE 1. From Freeman & Johnson (1998). Reprinted with permission.

and expertise of an interdisciplinary group of designers knowledgeable in both the contextual factors, the medium of instruction, and the subject matter. Our design thinking is best represented in our design thinking framework in Figure 2, which is based on Freeman & Johnson's (1998) sociocultural Tripartite Knowledge Framework (see Figure 1).

In this adapted framework, design knowledge is based on designers' knowledge of themselves and what they bring to the design; on their knowledge of the context in which their work is undertaken; and on the knowledge of the communities of practice/users/beneficiaries of their design.

### INDIANA AND DEVELOPING A CULTURALLY AND LINGUISTICALLY INCLUSIVE (CLI) ONLINE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT COURSE

#### **Context and Rationale**

We designed a professional development program in collaboration with the Indiana University's Office for School Partnerships (OSP) which received a grant from the Indiana Governor's Emergency Education Relief (GEER) Fund for the purpose of helping institutions address "the challenges associated with distance/remote learning..." (Grants Office, LLC, 2022, para 7). OSP issued a call for proposals to develop online courses and course materials to which we responded. The first author saw an opportunity to submit a proposal to OSP to support English Language Learners (ELs), through the professional development of their teachers. During the COVID Pandemic, ELs were severely disadvantaged when the Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT) mandate came into place in March of 2020, in part, because, 70% of teachers, (including EL teachers), had no prior experience with teaching EL students online (Hodges et al., 2020). Nationwide 96% of teachers in all subjects, were forced to use some form of virtual instruction with little support for curriculum development or preparation for the differences between online

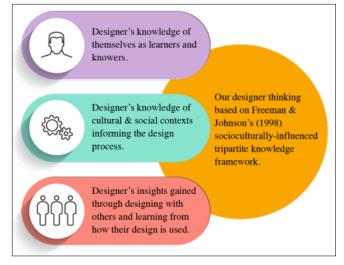


FIGURE 2. Our Adapted Designer Thinking Framework.

pedagogy and in-person teaching (Hodges et al., 2020). The proposal was thus one means to begin to address this need for EL teacher preparation and professional development.

#### **Engagement Pathway**

Before proceeding, however, the first author had to make a case for the eligibility to apply for the funding. OSP's grant priorities did not initially include teachers of EL students. Upon her inquiries, OSP agreed to consider a proposal for EFL teachers under the general heading of "Accessibility and Inclusivity in Virtual Instruction," which also included the teaching of students with different learning disabilities. The first author pointed out to OSP that to do so would perpetuate the contested practice of placing ELs and special needs students' instruction under the same category, as well as exacerbate the situation in which there is an over-representation of ELs in special education courses (Umansky et al., 2017). OSP accepted the argument, and the first author became the Principal Investigator (PI) of the project to develop a culturally and linguistically inclusive (CLI) online teaching professional development (PD) course under its own heading and category.

### **Design Decisions**

### Design Team

Given the urgency of getting teachers prepared to teach online at the time of the funding, OSP placed a compressed time limit of six weeks to complete the course development, namely from the end of December to mid-February of 2021. OSP also stressed that the program had to be self-paced so as not to unnecessarily burden teachers. Given the quick turnaround time and the non-moderated specifications, the first author decided that a team effort involving multiple individuals was needed. The team members were identified based on their pedagogical knowledge and experience in teaching culturally and linguistically-diverse learners as well as in online teaching and course design.

The team consisted of the first author who is an ESL/EFL PD professor of Malayo-Polynesian descent, an African American instructor, a Caucasian ESL public school teacher, and two Chinese and one Taiwanese associate instructors. We capitalized on the first author's two decades of scholarship experience in ESL/EFL onsite and online PD research and experience; the African-American instructor's expertise as an inclusion consultant as well as an online adult educator; and the ESL teacher's grounded experience in the public school and in collaborating with content area teachers. On the part of the Chinese and Taiwanese associate instructors. we capitalized on their instructional systems design and learning sciences skills and knowledge base. These East Asian associate instructors also brought with them their respective experiences and knowledge in learning multiple foreign languages. In addition, in the case of two of them, one taught Chinese in Brazil and the other, in the US public school system.

#### Contextual Factors and the Targeted Audience

The first author decided that content area teachers (CATs) were to be the course's primary audience. She based her decision on her experiences in working with CATS who had large numbers of ELs in their public-school classrooms. Although ELs may initially be taught by ESL teachers (ESLTs), they spend most of their time in subject matter courses with CATs (Markos & Himmel, 2016). However, a majority of CATs lack training in working with ELs (Villegas et al., 2018). One of the reasons for this is that these teachers are often responsible for a wide range of students with multiple needs and are not always able to set aside time to pursue EL-specific professional development. Moreover, during the past 25 years, there has been a 142% increase in ELs in public schools nationally while the number of certified ESLTs has remained stagnant or declined (Villegas et al., 2018). In Indiana, for example, ESL license certifications have declined from 421 new ESL-licensed teachers in 2015-16, to194 in the pre-pandemic school years of 2019-2020 (IDOE, 2021). Moreover, of the 1,259 ESL-licensed teachers who served 67.500 students in Indiana school districts in 2019-20, over half were concentrated in just fifteen out of 291 school districts (McCormick, 2019). CATs thus have to struggle with teaching their ELs subject matter content along with related English language skills and content for their EL students. In order to guickly increase the number of teachers knowledgeable in working with ELs, CATs needed to be provided with ESL professional development—an endeavor that the first author found impactful through previous federal-grant funded projects.

#### Contextual and Pedagogical Factors

The design steps evolved alongside the contextual/cultural and pedagogical factors that emerged when we began to work together as a team. As we got to know each other, and as we discussed our knowledge and experiences in ESL teacher professional development, it became clear that it would be most efficient to create three working groups based on our expertise and experiences. The first author was a member of each group as a means for her to keep all three groups informed of each other's work.

The first design group: Our attention was first drawn to the fact that 93% of Indiana public school teachers, including CATs, are white (Lindsay, 2020). Given this demographic, most EL teachers do not share similar cultural and linguistic backgrounds with their students. Thus, the African-American team member and the first author took the lead in identifying materials and activities that were within the sociocultural framework of Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) (Gay, 2000). CRT's sociocultural views emphasize that learners need to see themselves culturally and linguistically included in online courses if they are to be engaged and motivated to learn. Thus, in the PD program, we provided guidance to teachers to engage their students with activities that were aligned with CRT percepts as seen in Gay (2000, p. 29), namely, those that:

- acknowledge the legitimacy and legacy of cultural heritages of different ethnic groups
- bridge home and school experiences
- utilize myriad and varied instructional strategies to make room for different learning styles
- engage students in knowing and praising their own and the cultural heritages of others
- incorporate and utilize information, resources, and materials from multicultural sources across all disciplines

There were two caveats in CRT components that struck a chord with our own teaching experiences using the approach. First, to engage in CRT, teachers needed to be aware of their positionality toward those with backgrounds and experiences that were different from their own (Hammond, 2014). Second, students might feel insecure to engage in CRT activities as they could entail students sharing information that they might not be used to sharing publicly. Teachers thus needed to take the lead in the activities and to be the safe starting point.

**The second design group:** This group consisted of the public school teacher, the associate instructor from learning sciences, and the first author, who worked together to identify differentiated and scaffolded teaching and learning pathways for teachers to ESL students in their online classroom to access language and content simultaneously. As attested by the public school teacher team member,

every ESL teacher knows that the defining feature of ESL classrooms is the wide range of mixed-ability learners. This is not just the case in Indiana but around the globe (Markos & Himmel, 2016). Furthermore, English language proficiency is not the sole determining factor in ESL students' abilities because the students' learning is mediated by myriad and often traumatic lived and schooling experiences resulting from their status as immigrants, migrants, refugees, and so on. In addition, these students are often placed into Englishmedium content-based classrooms before they could achieve full proficiency in academic English, a long-term 5 to 7 year-process (Cummins, 2013). Thus, the ESL/EFL field is heavily focused on sheltered/scaffolded and differentiated instruction to support the students' content acquisition while they learn English at the same time (see Short et al., 2018). As a group, we worked together to identify differentiated and scaffolded teaching and learning pathways for teachers to support ELs in their online classrooms. We took the perspective that differentiated instruction was not a modification or simplification. Rather, it was about identifying and creating multiple pathways for students to access and engage in language and content simultaneously and as well as multiple pathways to demonstrate their achievements. Finally, although scaffolding in ESL/EFL is a familiar concept, the team as a group was informed also by the instructional systems technology perspective that holds the view that scaffolding consists of two components. Namely, they consist of "soft scaffolding" or just-in-time support for students through interactions with peers and/or more knowledgeable others and "hard scaffolding" (Saye & Brush, 2001), i.e. a multitude of built-in tools, guides, and resources embedded in the lesson planning.

The third design group: At the height of the pandemic, less than half of ELs who had access to online learning programs actually logged into their online classes (Sugarman & Lazarín, 2020). Consequently, the EL failure rate jumped from 34% to 50% in high-density districts (U.S. Department of Education, 2021). Exacerbating the situation is the fact their teachers had limited experiences to draw from to support the learners online (Hodges et al., 2020). Thus, the third group of three including the first author were individuals who had taught and designed online courses extensively. We framed the program using the concept of teaching, cognitive, and social presences from the Community of Inquiry (Col) framework (Garrison et al., 2001), which are fundamental in teaching effectively in the online medium. We also included Shea and Bidjerano's (2010) learning presence that was relied upon heavily by self-directed and successful learners as demonstrated in 2022 research led by the first author. Most of all, the fact that the program was to be self-paced and non-moderated made it more important that we designed the program in ways that the four presences were enacted so that our participants know how to proceed without us and on their own. They can be understood in the following ways:

- Teaching presence is the design and facilitation of student engagement, as well as teacher- directed instruction in the online classroom.
- Cognitive presence is engagement in the online classroom that takes students through the stages of intellectual challenge and inquiry exploration, construction, integration, interrogation, and validation of ideas.
- Social presence is the extent to which students and teachers can project, while online, "realness" in their identity as a person, in the purpose of communication, and in building relationships with others.
- Learning presence is about students self-directing and monitoring their own learning in the online medium (Shea et al., 2014, p. 10).

	Module 1: Overview & Contextualization of Practice (Complete All Items)	) 🛛 +	:
# •	Module 2: CRT & Creating Online Pathways to Know Students Complete All Items	• •	:
8	Module 2: Point of Reflection	ø	:
8	Module 2: Overview & Objectives	ø	:
8	Building Strong Personal Connections with Teachers as a Starting Point: Teacher Self Storying	ø	:
8	P Creating pathways for students to contextualize identity	ø	:
8	Creating multimodal ways for students to express personality	Ø	:
	$\textcircled{\sc p}$ Gamifying self-introductions for interactivity & invested engagement	ø	:
8	Module 2: Selected References	0	:
	Module 2: Positionality, Contribution, and Content Self-Checks 6 pts   Score at least 5.0	0	:
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**FIGURE 3.** Screenshot of the Overview of CLI course and an Overview of a Sample Module.

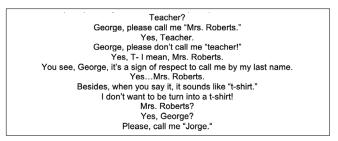


FIGURE 4. Screenshot of the Reflective Prompt: A poem by Medina & Broeck (1999).

Weight IAT	<i>Weight</i> ('Fat - Thin' IAT). This IAT requires the ability to distinguish faces of people who are obese and people who are thin. It often reveals an automatic preference for thin people relative to fat people.
Gender-Science IAT	<i>Gender - Science</i> . This IAT often reveals a relative link between liberal arts and females and between science and males.
Asian IAT	Asian American ('Asian - European American' IAT). This IAT requires the ability to recognize White and Asian-American faces, and images of places that are either American or Foreign in origin.
Gender-Career IAT	<i>Gender - Career</i> . This IAT often reveals a relative link between family and females and between career and males.
Religion IAT	<b>Religion</b> ('Religions' IAT). This IAT requires some familiarity with religious terms from various world religions.
Race IAT	<b>Race</b> ('Black - White' IAT). This IAT requires the ability to distinguish faces of European and African origin. It indicates that most Americans have an automatic preference for white over black.
Presidents IAT	<b>Presidents</b> ('Presidential Popularity' IAT). This IAT requires the ability to recognize photos of Joseph Biden and one or more previous presidents.
Arab-Muslim IAT	<b>Arab-Muslim</b> ('Arab Muslim - Other People' IAT). This IAT requires the ability to distinguish names that are likely to belong to Arab-Muslims versus people of other nationalities or religions.
Skin-tone IAT	<i>Skin-tone</i> ('Light Skin - Dark Skin' IAT). This IAT requires the ability to recognize light and dark- skinned faces. It often reveals an automatic preference for light-skin relative to dark-skin.
Weapons IAT	<i>Weapons</i> ('Weapons - Harmless Objects' IAT). This IAT requires the ability to recognize White and Black faces, and images of weapons or harmless objects.
Transgender IAT	<i>Transgender</i> ('Transgender People - Cisgender People' IAT). This IAT requires the ability to distinguish photos of transgender celebrity faces from photos of cisgender celebrity faces.
Age IAT	<i>Age</i> ('Young - Old' IAT). This IAT requires the ability to distinguish old from young faces. This test often indicates that Americans have automatic preference for young over old.
Native IAT	<i>Native American</i> ('Native - White American' IAT). This IAT requires the ability to recognize last names that are more likely to belong to Native Americans versus White Americans.
Disability IAT	<i>Disability</i> ('Physically Disabled – Physically Abled' IAT). This IAT requires the ability to recognize figures representing physically disabled and physically abled people.
Sexuality IAT	Sexuality ('Gay - Straight' IAT). This IAT requires the ability to distinguish words and symbols representing gay and straight people. It often reveals an automatic preference for straight relative to gay people.

FIGURE 5. Screenshot of Implicit Bias Check Resource: Implicit Association Test https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html.

### **Design Praxis**

In this section, we illustrate several examples from the seven components of the online CLI PD program and the rationale/ decisions that underlay them. They demonstrate our "praxis" in the post-method orientation where contextual realities and theories guided our work to help teachers develop, select, evaluate, and reflect on their practices. Accordingly, the examples also demonstrate that we suggested rather than prescribed activities as the post-method orientation leaves it to the teachers and their situated knowledge in deciding the steps that are most practical, possible, and plausible (Kumaravadivelu, 2001) to adopt in their environment. We began the course in Module 1 by contextualizing and explaining the core premises of CRT, differentiated and scaffolded instruction and, assessment (see Figure 3).

In the subsequent modules, we linked the theories and frameworks to suggested practices. However, we stressed that the viability of the practices could only be derived from teachers' self-awareness of their positionality as per the CRT's principles. In this regard, every module began with a reflective prompt.

For example, with regards to CRT, in Module 2, we began with a poem to engage teachers in reflecting with us the

teacher's, (Mrs. Robert's), "blind-spot" in which she had failed to notice her student, Jorge's, perspective (see Figure 4).

For the same purpose, every module also ended with a reflective self-check on specific implicit biases. We used as guidance, Harvard University's Implicit Association Test (https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html). The self-check is important because as Staats et al. (2017) point out, as humans, we all carry implicit biases, and thus our job, as teachers is to be aware of our own implicit biases based on our assumptions about our students' learning behaviors and abilities based on their identities and/or backgrounds. Such assumptions can negatively impact our students' growth. Although tests such as the Harvard test, do not identify the teachers' biases directly, they can be useful to bring to the surface those that may be difficult to acknowledge (see Figure 5).

In the sociocultural post-method orientation, "teacherly thinking" (Golombek, cited in Johnson & Golombek, 2016, p. 8) and teacher insider knowledge determine what is practical and possible in their setting as well as the extent to which theoretical frameworks apply and/or need to be modified. Thus, in each module, we suggested rather than prescribed strategies. This is evident in the examples provided in Figures 6 and 7.

Our suggestions also included encouraging teachers to utilize the connectivity affordances of the online medium to differentiate and scaffold learning. For example, in Module 7, our suggestions of alternative assessments derived from differentiated (Tomlinson, 2001) and scaffolded instruction (Short et al., 2018), were situated in the flexibility provided

# Suggested Online Activities and Tools

## Activity 1: StoryMapping

StoryMapping enables you to narrate not only with pictures but also with maps. It is storytelling that provides your students with a perspective of who you are and the influences that you have had in a visual and spatial sense. The maps enable you to situate yourself geographically and serve as invitations for students as well to do the same.

Suggested Tools

ArcGIS <u>StoryMaps</u> <sup>⊿</sup> can be used.

Examples can be seen here:

- <u>Ms. Cleveland</u>
- Mrs. Esberger

FIGURE 6. Screenshot of a suggested StoryMapping activity.

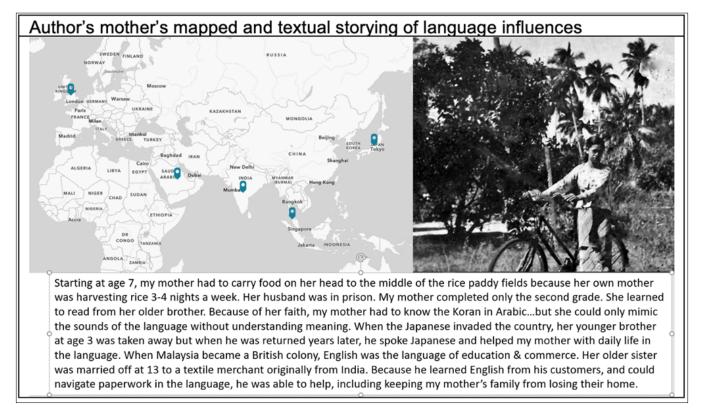


FIGURE 7. Screenshots of example of Suggested Online Activities & Tools (Module 2, Activity 1, Story Mapping).

Asynchronous Discussion Forums	Blogs	Wikis
<ul> <li>Brainstorming ideas</li> <li>Sharing early drafts</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Individual reflections on writing</li> <li>Collaborative reflections with teachers</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Collaborative writing with peers (versioning feature)</li> <li>Publishing venue for writing</li> </ul>

FIGURE 8. Screenshot of the Module 7: writing as a social process.

by online applications. We suggested that teachers adopt the approach of writing as a social process that involves the cyclical stages of an individual and collaborative process of brainstorming/prewriting, writing drafts, responding to comments, reflecting, editing, and publishing. Online applications provide built-in affordances to undertake such a process as seen in Figure 8 (Pawan et al., 2017).

In Figure 8, we pointed out to teachers that their students could choose their own different pathways to publish their writing using the available applications. There is no linearity in writing as a social process. We also demonstrated that the teachers and peers alike can scaffold/support each of the stages of the publishing process through their participation, feedback and assessment.

Our suggestions thus also demonstrated that online presences were fundamental in the design of this self-paced and non-moderated PD. The examples showcase our online teaching presence in that we strove to facilitate learning through theoretical and contextual framing, through providing multiple suggestions, and as demonstrated above, through brief and efficient microlearning components (as demonstrated above) so that teachers could access them quickly and efficiently when needed. In addition, we also enacted cognitive presence in the way we designed the PD for teachers to have choices in deciding their own appropriate learning challenge. For example, at the end of each module, there were self-assessments in the form of guizzes on the content of each module (content self-check). When teachers completed successfully 70% of all the quizzes, they received certificates of completion. There were no limits in terms of the number of times the teachers could take the guizzes to achieve the needed percentage (see Figure 9).

Another example is in the way we provided multiple options for tools. Thus, there was a range of applications at different levels of complexity for teachers to try, depending on their comfort level, and familiarity with online tools.

# Certificate of Completion

Congratulations on completing the *Culturally and Linguistically Inclusive Online Teaching* workshop in the GEER Resources for Supporting Online Learning series. Please click the certificate (hyperlinked) to get a downloadable pdf of your completion receipt.



Having trouble viewing your certificate?

- If you are taken to the **In Progress** tab in your Expand Student Dashboard, it is likely you have not successfully completed the course. Return to the Canvas course and make sure you have successfully completed all module criteria.
- If you are still having trouble, please contact <u>iuexpand@iu.edu</u>.
   Include the name of the course in the subject line of your message.

FIGURE 9. Screenshot of the Certificate of Completion.

Finally, the inter-connectedness between the social and learning presences came from the realization that the most fulfilling online PDs are those that take participants through the four stages of consumption, connection, creation, and contribution to each other's learning. We created ways for teachers to take the initiative to connect with each other and to "pay-it-forward" (Milligan et al., 2014). For example, although this course was a non-moderated course, we included two social features. In the contribution self-check, we reminded teachers that they could share ideas through the Inscribe feature we installed. This way, they would be able to nurture and grow the repository of ideas in the CLI course while at the same time, providing a means for teachers to help each other's learning. Another example of where we injected social and learning presences was in the positionality self-check we mentioned earlier. Teachers had the option to self-check and reflect individually and/or with trusted colleagues. Amongst other things, we also wanted to create room for the varying levels of readiness for teachers to surface their biases and blind-spots (see Figures 10 and 11)

The CLI course became a basis for the development of the online PD for new Chinese teachers of English-as-Foreign (EFL) language. In the following section we describe the modifications we made to the CLI course to reflect the particularities of the instructional and cultural context of Chinese EFL teachers.

# Positionality, Contribution, & Content Self-Checks

#### Complete the following self-assessments:

#### **Positionality Self-Check**

Reflect upon and/or discuss with a colleague, the results you obtained from taking <u>Harvard's Project</u> Implicit Test @.

#### **Contribution Self-Check**

<u>Contribute an idea, reading, resource, or activity to</u> <u>the course learning community</u> *e*.

#### **Content Self-Check**

Complete the Quick Check questions below.

# **QUESTION 1 OUT OF 7**

Did you contribute an idea for a reading or an activity

for this module?

○ Yes

O No

**FIGURE 10.** An example of self-checks for positionality, contribution and content



FIGURE 11. Sharing through Inscribe.

### BEIJING AND DEVELOPING A TEACHER RESPONSIVENESS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT COURSE

#### **Context and Rationale**

One of the reasons that the first author became involved in

the People's Republic of China (PRC) was the fact that there are between 440-650 million English learners (ELs) in the country (Hansen, 2017). This means that there are more ELs in China than the combined population of countries where the language is spoken natively, namely in Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the UK, and the U.S. For the past five years, the first author has been collaborating with colleagues from the Center for Teacher Educational Research (CTER) at Beijing Normal University (BNU), an institution that plays an influential role in setting educational policy that guides practice in China. The collaboration is in the preparation and professional development (PD) of CTER's pre- and in-service teachers in Beijing. Most attention is paid to addressing the Ministry of Education's (MoE) emphasis to move away from subject-centered instruction to the holistic and overall development of students. More specifically, in terms of English language learning, instead of the sole focus on language skills and knowledge, the MoE standards now call for teachers to target as well, students' affective, cognitive and intercultural development (Pei et al, 2017). CTER has engaged the first author in its "experimental graduate classes" to share ideas and approaches from an international perspective, as means to enrich their efforts to guide their Beijing teachers toward those goals.

With the pandemic, the first author's travel to China was not possible. However, in late spring of 2021, two months after the completion of the Indiana CLI project, she was asked to put together an online version of the experimental PD classes to be taught in May of that year.

#### **Design Decisions**

#### Engagement Pathway and Targeted Audience

The first author had major concerns about her ability to put together the online teacher professional development program quickly. However, her experiences with both the Indiana CLI course and her knowledge of CTER teachers' context assured her that she could proceed using the Indiana CLI course as a precedent. Besides the invaluable fact that a precedent is the basis of learning for good design, there were three other main factors.

First, upon a close revisit of the Chinese Ministry of Education's (MoE's) English language teaching standards, she saw room for her to incorporate culturally and linguistically (CLI) inclusive approaches and strategies with the standards' focus on teaching students with diverse backgrounds. Specifically, she saw that she could align CLI with the "responsiveness" and "transformation" emphases in the Chinese MoE's standards in preparing the Chinese EL teachers selected to be in the project. The teacher participants were either already teaching or would assume positions in different parts of the country in rural or urban areas with high concentrations of diverse students. They could be assigned to rural areas as part of the Guo Pei national teacher training plan. (These areas are usually in the vast Western and Southwestern inland parts of the country where there are 55 ethnic minority groups in the country consisting of about 9% of China's total population of approximately 1.5 billion people). On the other hand, the teachers could also be assigned to work in urban school districts with migrant children whose parents obtained the "hukou" (local work and school registration) permissions. China has the largest ruralto-city migration patterns in human history involving, almost 300 million people (Qi, 2019).

Second, the first author also saw the request as an opportunity to explore the Chinese teachers' familiarity with the online medium given the fact that its use has been part of Chinese MoE policy since 1999. The policy labeled, "Education Promotion Plan of Action for the 21st Century" emphasized the development and use of online teacher resources and models of effective practices, particularly by teachers and students in remote and rural areas. It led to the establishment of the Chinese Distance Education Project for Rural Schools (DEPRS), considered at the time as one of the largest Information and Communications Technology (ICT) projects in the world (McQuaide, 2009).

Finally, the project provided an opportunity for the first author and her team to reflect on the various ways cultural and contextual factors seeped into the design decisions. The following discussion thus is a detailed description of the factors and the decisions we made along the way as we took the factors unique to China into consideration.

#### Design Team

In assembling the design team, the first author considered the types of scaffolding available when she taught face-toface in Beijing in a classroom of 15-25 students of varying levels of English language proficiency. CTER always had one or two student assistants and professors in the classroom with her to support translation and engagement logistics. Thus, she decided that a similar support infrastructure had to be in place online. The first author then reached out to two Mandarin-speaking members from the original CLI team, to join her as teaching assistants (TAs) in the Beijing project.

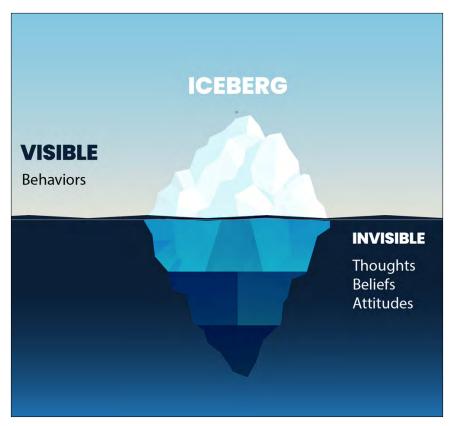
As the course proceeded, we noticed, particularly during the synchronous sessions, that the TAs were invaluable not just in scaffolding and assisting the participating teachers with the English language. The TAs' familiarity with the Canvas Learning Management System (LMS) enabled them to scaffold the teachers' navigation of it. We also noticed that the TAs were asked a lot of questions about American norms in the classroom and thus were helping the participants to be aware of and to navigate U.S. classroom expectations. Above all, the fact the TAs had "lived experiences" in using and designing online instruction as well as in overcoming challenges in pursuing graduate studies through a foreign language, reinforced them as role models to the participants.

#### Contextual and Pedagogical Factors

We clearly saw that the factors we took into consideration were a combination of contextual and pedagogical factors informed by our disciplines, cultural factors, and the affordances of the online platform. The field of second/ foreign language teaching has often been criticized for the one-size-fits-all approach, the hegemony of Western language pedagogical ideas, and the reluctant acceptance of post-colonial and glocalization approaches. Cognizant of the criticisms, as a team we reflected on the appropriacy of the U.S.-based CRT we used in the Indiana CLI project, in the Beijing project. We thought about the saying that one of our participants had shared, which was, "what is good in your soil, may not be good in ours." Although, as designers, we saw the relevance of CRT to frame the teaching of diverse learners, it was not our role to espouse CRT to our participants. CRT, nevertheless, played a role in guiding the process in which we engaged teachers as they reached toward instructional inclusivity.

Our first design move was to take a problem-based learning (PBL) approach as a way to mitigate the notion of us as external designers imposing external values and expectations on the Beijing participants. Helping the teachers approach teaching in such a way, made it possible for us designers to create opportunities for teachers to identify for themselves, areas of needed change. To do so, we looked for the common thread between CRT and PBL. We honed in on reflective practice as a pedagogical perspective underlying both of them. We engaged teachers in a critical evaluation of their values and beliefs about teaching and learning second/foreign languages. In doing, we strove to help teachers identify how those beliefs might have negatively impacted their teaching approach. We then proceeded with PBL's principle of the utility of authentic information gaps in learning (Evensen & Hmelo-Silver, 2000). These were gaps that needed to be filled, using teachers' own understandings and experiences. We used the Beijing teachers' struggle to connect meaningfully with diverse students as a dilemma to be pondered upon and to find solutions to, through the PD.

As we got to know the teachers, we realized that the Beijing teacher participants shared a unique but challenging experience with many second/foreign language teachers. Most of the teacher participants had limited opportunities and resources to visit culturally diverse areas within the country, let alone overseas. Thus, much of their cultural information was from second-hand sources. Because that was the case, similar to other second/foreign language teachers in their position, the Beijing teachers often taught culture in an overgeneralized way, namely by focusing on the "five Fs," namely, the surface culture elements of food, fashion, famous people, festivals and flags (Richards, 2015). PBL helped us to guide teachers to approach this lack of experience not as a deficit but as an incentive to engage their students in problem-solving and critical analyses of cultural features. To do so,



**FIGURE 12.** The Cultural Iceberg. Adapted from Hall, E. T. (1976). *Beyond culture*. Anchor Books Editions.

we framed our design of cultural activities in the metaphor "Culture as an Iceberg" (Hall, 1976). In this metaphor, much of culture is hidden under the surface (see Figure 12). Using this metaphor, we designed activities so that the teacher participants could explore with their students the cultural features that were not readily obvious.

Our second design step was culturally informed in a more specific way. We looked for areas of alignment between CRT and Chinese values. This was again part of our designer efforts to situate our work within the context of our participants. We saw a direct connection between CRT's inclusivity focus and Daoism values of teaching as "The Way" toward enlightenment. In the latter, teaching is viewed as a profession to serve and to do good for others (Pei et al, 2017), a value shared in CRT as well. We used the values to promote the concept of language teachers as "socio-professionals" (Freeman, 2009, p. 16) as a bridge to teachers' transforming and evolving their instructional roles toward those of inclusivity and advocacy. This alignment between CRT and Daoism gave justification for the inclusion of differentiated instruction and scaffolding from Indiana's CLI course. They remained relevant in the Beijing course because they could serve to support the learning of all students.

However, as we began to implement these design steps, we also gained insight into how Chinese cultural values played

important roles in guiding us as to the types of online interactions to put into place and how the interactions were perceived and utilized. In this respect, we were also guided by daily anonymous classroom evaluations.

Thus, we begin the Praxis section below by describing how the values influenced us in designing and implementing online interactions. We then follow the discussion with sample components that illustrate the ways we strove to achieve a balance between the contextual and pedagogical framing of the PD course with the activities we designed.

#### **Design Praxis**

# Values and the Structuring of Online Interactions

We noticed that similar to values in other cultures, there were paradoxes in Chinese values as well. Amongst them were three sets of contrasting values identified by Faure and Fang (2008, p. 196). They included (1) the view of teachers as expert "virtuosos" (Paine, 1990) versus the need to modernize that role; (2) the

importance of face-saving versus the need for directness; (3) "guanxi" (good relationship and harmony) versus the value placed on individual achievement through competitiveness.

The three paradoxical values that Faure and Fang (2008, p. 196) identified became relevant as we structured and implemented online interactions in the PD course. They first made it clear that the asynchronous unmoderated and self-paced online format we had in the Indiana CLI course had to be modified. The course we designed emerged as an intensively moderated five-day course comprising of two synchronous sessions (at 8:00-10:00 am and 20:00-22:00 pm Beijing time). In between, a 10-hour asynchronous component was put into place (see Figure 13). These design modifications were our efforts to balance the value paradoxes as can be seen from the following descriptions.

First, we worked to balance the values of teachers as "virtuosos" (Paine, 1990) and the interest to change that role toward more student-centered teaching approaches. Thus, in the first hour of the synchronous session, the first author undertook one-way lectures, but in the second hour, the TAs led discussions and actively engaged participants in sharing and constructing ideas based on their own experiences.

We realized quickly during the synchronous lectures, that there were few individual questions. However, from the



FIGURE 13. Screenshot of the Instructional Graphics on Canvas.

surveys, we realized that the situation was both the result of respect for the instructor and the TAs. The TAs then encouraged the participants to use backchanneling via private chat to let them know directly if there were issues that needed clarification or to have the TAs ask the instructor questions for them. Also, the Beijing participants' overreliance on the opinions of the more proficient and experienced classmates, proved to be another factor. This was because they were used to the "jiaoyanzu" system of school-based PD where teachers learned together in groups led by the most experienced and "backbone" (expert) colleagues, whose opinions were reverently deferred to.

We also then strove to find the balance between "guanxi" (good relationship and harmony) and individual competitiveness. We designed the asynchronous and the second synchronous sessions for this purpose. During the asynchronous 10 hours, participants were assigned collaborative projects to work in small groups, to learn and support each other. The tasks, as in the CLI course, enabled them to engage in the "4-C" cycle of consumption, connection, creation, and contribution. (However, we had also to be on hand "live" as participants would continue to post questions to us for help).

During the second synchronous session (20:00-22:00), the participants were asked to individually showcase the parts they played in their projects, and in doing so, we created room for them to demonstrate not only their individual English language proficiency but also their teaching skills. The participants placed a high priority on these sessions as evidenced by the classroom surveys. This was because they were aware that their Chinese English language supervisors would often choose to attend these sessions in particular and were evaluating their individual proficiency and teaching skills. It remains unclear how that awareness impacted their collaboration with each other on the projects in the asynchronous sessions.

Nevertheless, we continued to create avenues so that there was room for the participants to expand the audience, the purpose, and the utility of their projects beyond the classroom. Laozi, the founder of Daoism's school of thought, likened teaching to the way the natural element of "water" serves to nurture and sustain our fellow human beings (Pei et al., 2017). We used this perspective to promote the final project. The participants were asked to design online toolkits of ideas and materials for their colleagues as well as for their community members, to extend "know how" to everyone interested in supporting students of diverse backgrounds (see Figure 14).

To help the participants to have access to curated resources to use for the project, we moved instruction from Beijing's platform of "Qi Shi Online" and Tencent Meeting (Tengxun Huiyi) to our institutional Canvas Learning Management System and Zoom respectively that we used in the Indiana CLI PD course. That way we could facilitate participants with accessing our library of instructional materials including those already curated for CLI, as well as facilitate small group discussions using Zoom's breakout rooms.

The above description provides a window into our experiences and learnings as we structured and implemented our design asynchronously and synchronously. Cultural considerations and participants' opinions guided our decisions in terms of synchronous and asynchronous approaches to use.

In the following sections, we highlight several bridges we designed and used to connect our Beijing participants to CRT as a concept and as practice.

Task 2: Toolkit: All the activities we have done so far can be accumulated into this toolkit.

Review	the	examples	of	Toolkits	here.

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Grace's Toolkit for	Megan's Toolkit for	Karen's EFL
ENL	Teachers of Primary &	Resource
teachers: <u>https://e</u>	Middle	Toolkit: https:/
	ELLs:	

- Choose ONE of them to modify or to inspire you to develop your own Toolkit. You can use any tools including websites, powerpoints etc. Strive for multimodality.
- Components-your toolkit must include the following components
  - 1. Your teaching Metaphor i.e. Who you are as the teacher
  - Differentiation include at 1-3, unique differentiation strategies to teach English to students with different learning styles and abilities
  - 3. Culturally Relevant Pedagogy identify and describe at 1-3 unique ways to use culture to scaffold instruction.
  - 4. Glocalization Provide 1-3 strategies for glocalizing teaching approaches
  - Collaboration-describe and incorporate a chart of Personal Learning Networks that teachers can connect with in order to pursue learning.

# Task 3: Upload and Comment (before we meet synchronously at 8pm)

• Upload your completed toolkit activity here

#### FIGURE 14. Screenshot of Toolkits.

#### CRT Through PBL Elements of Reflection and Authentic Gaps

As mentioned in the above section, we used PBL elements as bridges to CRT. For example, during the asynchronous sessions, we used the element of reflection to surface teacher beliefs. For example, we engaged our teacher participants in the following ways:

- reflecting using teachers' Beliefs about Language Learning Inventory (BALLI) (Horwitz,1985). (https:// tesolresourcesab.weebly.com/uploads/7/8/0/9/7809577/ theory\_viewbook\_item\_15.pdf)
- analyzing their own teaching beliefs as they viewed the 15-minute clip of their own teaching, including where they saw limitations and where they saw needed changes
- developing their own theory or metaphor as to teaching that was effectively based on their reflections
- viewing and commenting on the video clips of peers to demonstrate connections and to make suggestions

We also positioned CRT's principles as PBL strategies to overcome existing challenges. For example, we shared a project that demonstrated how a teacher strove to find ways to gain insight into her students' backgrounds through her own examples. We showed a project called, "All about me" created by a U.S. ESL teacher that showed the recording of one day of her life and all the roles she played and places she went to on that day. She invited her own students to share either audio, video, or a written journal account of one day of their lives, as a way for her to get to know them and more importantly, as a way for her own students to incorporate their backgrounds into an English language lesson. During the synchronous discussions that followed class, we engaged the Beijing participants in analyzing how the example demonstrated the enactment of CRT principles of incorporating students' backgrounds into a lesson. We also engaged them in discussing other CRT ideas that the example might have triggered for them.

Another way we took the problem-solving approach was to turn the teacher participants' challenges with limited cultural exposure into a teaching opportunity. For this purpose, we used several activities as leveraging points for teacher participants to draw from their own teaching experiences, and materials to be used in their own instruction. For example, during the asynchronous sessions, to demonstrate the insufficiency of understanding a culture at the surface level, we asked participants to deliberate with each other, one of the most compelling examples from a TED Talk by Chimamanda Aidichie (2009), entitled, "Danger of a Single Story."

For the same purpose, we referred to Hall's metaphor mentioned above, in our use of the classic cultural "spoof" by Howard Miner's "Nacirema" ("America" spelled backward). It is a "problem" which have been used to demonstrate that unless there is a deeper analysis of the layers underlying surface-level practices, serious misunderstandings of even the most basic practices can result. The quote below is illustrative:

The magical beliefs and practices of a group of people known as the Nacirema are interesting because they are so unusual. The Nacirema have many magical beliefs, but the most interesting are those about their own bodies and how they should be cared for... The Nacirema have another kind of specialist whose name is best translated as "holvmouth-man." The Nacirema have an almost extreme horror and fascination with the mouth, the condition of which is believed to have a supernatural influence on all social relationships. Several times each day, the natives rub the insides of their mouths with a small bundle of hog bristles. Those who neglect the ritual are forced to visit the holy mouth man who, as punishment, digs holes in their teeth with sharp instruments. Though small children must be forced to undergo this punishment when they neglect the mouth ritual, adults willingly accept it. Were it not for the rituals of the mouth, they believe that their teeth would fall out, their gums bleed, their jaws shrink, their friends desert them, and their lovers reject them. (Miner, 1956, p. 504).

We followed these examples with synchronous discussions during which we guided participants toward sharing misconceptions they uncovered that resulted when they based understanding and teaching on limited information about a culture. We also engaged the participants during the synchronous sessions, in identifying "critical incidents." These were instances that they vividly remembered when they critically needed additional information about their students' backgrounds (Joshi, 2018) that could have helped them in their teaching.

The above examples in our praxis demonstrated the various ways we endeavored to design and implement an online PD course in ways that balanced disciplinary, cultural, contextual, and online factors. They also demonstrated that the Indiana CLI PD course was invaluable as a design precedent and foundation to improve through adaptations and changes in the design of the Beijing course.

# DISCUSSION, CHALLENGES, AND NEXT STEPS

Although the factors mentioned above led to two online PD designs, we kept a steady focus on our sociocultural perspectives of inclusiveness through Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT), and on the enactment of effective foreign language and online teaching. We also kept in mind, the 4Cs of PD in that they are most effective and fulfilling when teachers are not only able to consume and connect but are also able to create artifacts that contribute to the learning of others. However, we approached the enactment of these perspectives in different ways in each design. In response to Indiana's governor's call for teacher support through the GEER grant, we saw the proposal and design of the online CLI course as a means to forward the agenda of CRT, to help teachers reach their ELs through the online medium. Contextualized by CRT and foreign language teaching principles that are aligned with them, we suggested activities for teachers to consider. In contrast, the Beijing course was in response to the funder's request to help teachers to transform traditional practices and to become responsive to the rapidly changing student demographics. To address the request, we built and utilized instructional bridges to the CRT approach as well as provided examples and used authentic problems for teachers to consider as a starting point for their practice. In both the CLI and Beijing PD courses, we used reflections. In the former, they were a means for teachers to surface underlying implicit biases that could find their way into their teaching. In the case of the latter, it was to surface beliefs about language teaching and learning that could be changed and transformed.

We also had different approaches to designing and implementing engagement in the CLI and Beijing PD courses. In the former, the GEER grant dictated that we designed a self-paced and unmoderated online course. Nevertheless, given what we know of teachers and ELs in the state, we seized the opportunity to build community, to crowdsource information, and in essence, to enact the 4Cs. We installed Inscribe as a space for participants to build community through sharing ideas while at the same time feeding into the continued growth of the CLI repository of practices. In the Beijing PD course, we relied upon the information from our students as well as our combined lived and professional knowledge of Chinese values to design engagement in the online PD. The Chinese value paradoxes gave us an opportunity as well to weave in, along with standard practices, our dialectical preferences for learning through engagement as described in the Praxis section. At the same time, the values also helped us to enact pedagogical online presences. In the synchronous blocks of the PD, the lectures provided teacher presence; the small group work with the TAs provide a means for the participants to connect with each other as well as to obtain just-in-time support in an informal and social manner (social presence); and the presentation sessions were a means for students to take agency in showcasing their strengths (learning presence). In the asynchronous sessions, cognitive and social presences were enacted in that they were used by students to reflect, collaborate, and cheer each other on

There were two challenges that remained unresolved but they provided us with insights to improve subsequent PDs we might develop in the future. In the CLI course, we noticed that although the number of participants increased steadily, the number of idea contributions did not. Also, although the course was directly targeted to CATs, we noticed that ESLTs also were in the course, but the two sets of teachers rarely responded to each other. We attributed both challenges to the course not being moderated. In the case of the first challenge, research has shown that to achieve collaborative engagement, explicit moderation is needed if online participants are to move beyond merely consuming and exploring information. In terms of the second problem, we do worry that our inability to moderate, has left us unable to address a persistent issue that challenges CAT and ESLT collaboration. Because the two sets of teachers do not share the same community of practice, there is often mistrust and misunderstandings on both sides as to the type of EL instruction needed. For the purposes of refining the CLI to be used beyond the GEER project, we have created a CLI research group consisting of graduate student volunteers to engage participants in the PD course and to update it as well from time to time.

In the Beijing course, the challenges were logistical as well as pedagogical in nature. The 12-hour difference between Indiana and Beijing was a challenge. We were energized and tired at different times. For the instructors, the synchronous sessions started very late in the evening when the Beijing participants were just revving up to start their morning. The reverse was true when the participants presented their work late in the evening Beijing time after spending long hours working on their projects and attending other classes during the day. Nevertheless, evaluations reflected that the participants preferred the synchronous sessions despite the time differences.

The first of the pedagogical challenges pertained to the evaluation expectations. Initially, the first author was expected to evaluate participants along with the supervisors who were in attendance. Because the first author did not want the participants to have to address dual expectations, she decided that the supervisors should do so instead. She provided them with evaluation rubrics as guidance. Nevertheless, it is unclear, even with the rubrics, whether the supervisors shared the first author's views of performance evaluation. Evaluation training would be needed in the future if this PD is to be offered again.

We continue to deliberate on the Beijing participants' deference to "backbone" (expert) colleagues in discussions. Our future step would be using different grouping configurations in breakout rooms such as one-to-one, homogenous and heterogenous groupings, so that we would be able to more effectively bring forth a multitude of voices.

We continue to design online PDs that are inclusive and responsive to the situation at hand as well as to the values of our participants. We consider this work important and timely as teachers' lack of knowledge and the cultural mismatch between them and their students often lead to the latter's underperformance, a phenomenon well documented, particularly in research on learners of diverse backgrounds. According to Windschitl (2002), "in classrooms where teachers are unaware of students' interests and life experiences, they not only fail to build on local knowledge but essentially offer 'disinvitations' to participate in classroom discourse" (p. 18).

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