

1.5

A PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM FOR CHINESE EFL TEACHERS

A Global Englishes Language Teaching framework

Reza Farzi, Gloria Romero and Douglas Fleming

Background and description

Globalization has resulted in an increased popularity of learning English in many parts of the world. Consequently, educational policies advocating reforms in English language teaching (ELT) and learning have been adopted in many countries, including China (Rose & Galloway, 2019). Another driving factor behind the reform in ELT in China has been the emergence of the country as an economic superpower (Liu, 2011). China's foreign language education policy underwent a major change in 2001 when English was introduced as a compulsory subject in Grade 3.

This change requires training qualified English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers not only for schools in major cities but also in rural areas. One method to achieve this goal is to send EFL teachers in rural areas to attend professional development (PD) study abroad programs with the aim of improving English language performance, developing a deep understanding of English language teaching pedagogies, and enhancing cultural awareness through immersion in an English-speaking culture (Wang, 2014). Even though this immersion may be viewed as a perpetuation of an Inner Circle¹ orientation to professional development, the diverse ethno-linguistic and lingua-cultural backgrounds of the team members involved in developing and delivering PD programs based on a Global Englishes (GE) framework, such as the one presented in this chapter, defies the criticism.

In fact, from a GE perspective (Matsuda, 2017; Galloway, 2017), this is a win-win situation for both in-service EFL teacher learners and PD teacher educators since both parties develop a better understanding of each other's sociolinguistic realities and pedagogical practices. Furthermore, the political ideology embedded in GE challenges the power imbalance between center-based institutions and the members

of periphery communities (EFL teacher learners) seeking professional development (see Vasilopoulos et al., 2018). Conventionally, center-based institutions would adopt a top-down approach to developing and delivering PD programs in which teacher learners would forgo their expertise and linguistic knowledge and become passive receivers of knowledge (Canagarajah, 2005). However, we believe that the existence of such PD programs actually provides program developers and teacher educators with an opportunity to infuse teaching principles underlying GE.

To put these in a practical context, we present the Global Englishes Language Teaching (GELT) underpinnings of a professional development course (PDC) and a collaborative final assignment given to the participants of the PDC held at a major research-based Canadian university. The project's overarching goal was to develop a program that was mutually realistic and useful for the participants and the teacher educators. The demographic composition of both the PDC participants and teacher educators also reflects the GE-based design of the PDC. The participants were 69 EFL teachers with diversified multicultural and multilingual ethnic backgrounds coming from the provinces of Yunnan and Gansu in China, and a group² of multicultural multilingual professors and graduate students designed the course and trained the participants.

The assignment (see Appendix) required the participants to collaboratively develop and implement lesson plans that would suit their local EFL teaching needs and conditions. In particular, the participants were asked to detail a full pedagogic sequence for a lesson designed to achieve general and specific objectives linked to a chapter of the textbooks participants used in their local schools. These plans constituted the final product of a series of assignments that helped the participants reflect on how to strategize English language teaching in rural China. The assignment included a planning stage, an implementation stage, and an evaluation stage to map out in detail how the participants adapted what they had learned from the PDC and the assignment to their local contexts.

The assignment was developed to address several principles of GELT such as being critical of the Western models of teaching English, empowering the EFL teacher learners, associating the content of the lesson plans with the everyday realities of the EFL teacher learners, and taking their local dynamics into consideration.

Reflections from the field

Drawing on Bayyurt and Sifakis' (2017) model of exposure, critical awareness, and action plan, we will present reflections from the GELT field to describe the design underpinnings of the assignment and its actual implementation by some of the teachers we interviewed after they went back to China. The model was originally developed within a GELT framework to deepen pre-service practitioners' understanding of teaching English sensitive to the present-day global sociolinguistic realities.

Our main objective was to develop a PDC that was context-sensitive and critical of the Western models of pedagogy that have prescribed English language teaching in

*countries belonging to the Expanding Circle*³ (Kachru, 1985, 1990; Canagarajah, 2012). Therefore, we designed a course that was flexible and could be modified along the way following the suggestions the teachers gave us during the development of the course. This approach to the course design and delivery is contrary to that of the traditional ELT where pedagogical models developed by idealized native English (NE) speakers are considered “perfect.” We followed the GELT model where native speakers are not necessarily role models and experts of developing *perfect* courses.

In the same vein, we wanted the participants to feel that the collaborative assignment was relevant and useful to their everyday realities. Therefore, instead of having them use traditional ELT sources developed by native English speakers, we asked them to use their own textbooks and resources even though they were exposed to resources developed by both NE speakers and non-native English (NNE) speaker experts (Rose & Galloway, 2019). We firmly believed that exposure to a variety of Englishes and English resources was critical for the participants’ understanding of the concept of GE, its role in a shift from ELT to GELT-based models of teaching English(es).

The exposure to a variety of ELT methods and Englishes throughout the program helped us raise critical awareness among participants about how the GELT framework invites all qualified teachers to voice their opinions about teaching and learning GE. It was paramount for us to give the participants a voice and value their knowledge of the teaching realities in rural China. External critical awareness was developed through methodology lectures on teaching GE and English(es) language development. Internal critical awareness was present through reflective activities (e.g. write short reflective pieces, mind maps developed in groups, group discussion and presentations) that made them think of their teaching realities in their rural communities and the challenges that they faced when teaching English to students from different ethnic minority backgrounds who are learning English as a third language. Raising critical awareness was an ongoing process throughout the program that overlapped and was intertwined.

The assignment involved the participants in an action plan that incorporated some key elements of the GELT framework relevant to their own teaching contexts. They were asked to develop a lesson plan that would provide them with a road map to implement what they learned during the program in their classrooms in China. This final activity was developed in three stages: planning, implementation, and evaluation.

For the planning stage we ensured to follow the GELT framework presented by Rose and Galloway (2019). We first obtained access to the textbooks that the participants used in their local schools. It was crucial for us to ask them to develop their lesson plans using the material they taught back home. As emphasized in GELT, it was important that we took into consideration their local dynamics and realities. The teachers were then asked to form groups of three or four “expert communities” based on the levels they taught in their local schools to reflect on and select the content for their lesson plans. Each group had to provide information about the context where the lesson plan was going to be implemented and the rationale for

their selection of topic, teaching methods, and language content and activities. This helped them justify how their lesson plan choices reflect the needs of their EFL students, and that how these needs are not necessarily Inner Circle defined but defined within the realm of the Expanding Circle. Finally, the participants received two rounds of feedback and had the chance to discuss their choices in detail with the teacher educators before they presented their lesson plans.

Group work and interaction was present throughout the development and implementation of the lesson plans. With the group the participants formed in the planning stage and the teacher educator that was assigned to them, the participants collaboratively presented their lesson plans and implemented an activity. Presentations and activities were videotaped for the teachers to take back to their school communities in China. We hoped that they continued to collaborate with their fellow colleagues to tackle pedagogical challenges they would face, when they returned to their low-resource, rural communities.

The evaluation stage was designed based on the participants' understanding of teaching English in the rural communities of an Expanding Circle country as opposed to teaching English in Canada. The participants and the teacher educators watched the videos to discuss the lesson plan demonstrations so that each group could reflect on the challenges they faced to complete the assignment. A recurring theme that was frequently raised by the participants was how their EFL teaching realities differed from “our” teaching realities. They also stated that their large class sizes and their assessment-oriented curricula do not allow them to use the “fun” teaching strategies they learned during the PDC but that they will try to implement some of the strategies they learned in their future teaching. Finally, they expressed immense satisfaction as the assignment boosted their confidence in teaching their students and addressing student needs more properly.

Finally, the development and delivery of the PDC offered us a great opportunity to reflect on our own practices as ESL teachers and ESL teacher educators, learn how a PD program based on an equitable negotiation of knowledge rather than a top-down approach to spreading colonial knowledge yields more positive results for the two parties involved, learn about the realities and dynamics of teaching English in the rural areas of an Expanding Circle country, and essentially learn from the EFL teacher learners as they were constantly reminded they were experts in their fields.

Notes

- 1 In Kachru's (1985) Three-circle Model, the Inner Circle refers to the countries where English acts as a first language.
- 2 The PD teacher educators were originally from Anglophone and Francophone Canada, Iran, Chile, France, and China.
- 3 The Expanding Circle includes countries where they no historical ties with English but it has been added to their education system. China is one of the many countries belonging to the Expanding Circle.

References

- Bayyurt, Y. & Sifakis, N. (2017). Foundations of an EIL-aware teacher education. In A. Matsuda (ed.), *Preparing teachers to teach English as an International Language* (pp. 3–18). Multilingual Matters.
- Canagarajah, S. (2012). *Translingual practice: Global Englishes and cosmopolitan relations*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203073889>
- Canagarajah, S. (2005). Reconstructing local knowledge, reconfiguring language studies. In A. S. Canagarajah (ed.), *ESL and applied linguistics professional series: Reclaiming the local in language policy and practice* (pp. 3–24). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers.
- Galloway, N. (2017). *Global Englishes and change in English language teaching: Attitudes and impact*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315158983>
- Kachru, B. B. (1990). World Englishes and applied linguistics. *World Englishes*, 9(1), 3–20.
- Kachru, B. B. (1985). Standards, codification and sociolinguistic realism: The English language in the outer circle. In R. Quirk and H. G. Widdowson (eds.), *English in the world: Teaching and learning the language and literatures* (pp. 11–30). Cambridge University Press.
- Liu, Y. (2011). Pedagogic discourse and transformation: A selective tradition. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 43, 599–606. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220272.2011.584564>
- Matsuda, A. (ed.). (2017). *Preparing teachers to teach English as an International Language*. Multilingual Matters. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13488678.2017.1345556>
- Rose, H. & Galloway, N. (2019). *Global Englishes for language teaching*. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781316678343>
- Vasilopoulos, G., Romero, G., Farzi, R., Shekarian, M., & Fleming, D. (2019). The practicality and relevance of peace in an EFL teacher training program: Applications and implications. *Critical Inquiry in Language Studies*, 16(1), 10–29. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15427587.2018.1520599>
- Wang, D. (2014). Effects of study abroad on teachers' self-perceptions: A study of Chinese EFL teachers. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 5(1), 70–79. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4304/jltr.5.1.70-79>

Appendix

Collaborative assignment: development of a lesson plan based on the needs

In order to demonstrate the pedagogical practices in your local schools and try out some of the ideas discussed the methodology courses and observed in the language courses of the professional development program, you and your team members will need to prepare and provide us and your peers from China with a lesson plan detailing the full pedagogic sequence for a lesson designed to achieve general and specific objectives linked to a unit/chapter of the textbook(s) you use in your local schools. The lesson plan should include the following elements:

- the title and chapter of the textbook;
- the theme/topic of the lesson;
- the level of the students (i.e. middle school or high school and grade);
- the duration of the lesson;
- the context of the lesson;

- the rationale of the lesson/topic;
- the general and specific objectives of the lesson;
- the segments/stages of the lesson plan;
- the timing of each segment/stage;
- the reflections of teachers on the plan; and
- all relevant appendices.

For this assignment, you must work in groups of three or four. You will select your team members based on the grades at which you and your potential team members teach. Our approach to this assignment is process-oriented and interaction-based. Therefore, we would like to encourage you all to attend brainstorming meetings, group discussions, and feedback sessions at different stages of the assignment. Also, feel free to speak with your methodology teachers, language facilitators, and lecture professors about your teaching practices, concerns, or limitations. We are highly interested in seeing your ways of teaching and how and why they are different from those of ours here in Canada.

Once your team has completed the assignment, you will need to do the following:

- submit your collaborative lesson plan electronically;
- make a 15- to 20-minute presentation based on the content of your lesson plan; and
- answer questions from the audience attending the lesson plan presentations.

You will receive oral and written feedback from your methodology and language teachers on the following criteria:

- Presence of all the required elements;
- Quality of language;
- Educational value of the ideas presented (what one reads is sensible, well explained and linked to EFL teaching principles);
- Value of research/sources of the ideas (one feels that one has spent time trying to find the best ideas);
- Originality and demonstrated effort; and
- Quality of the presentation.