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Creating an ESL Curriculum in a Type C International School in China

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Creating an ESL Curriculum in a Type C International School in China

by

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A capstone project submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in English as a Second Language

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

As an English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher, I have spent the majority of my short career in international schools. When I began teaching in Mandalay, Myanmar, I approached it with wide-eyed idealism and excitement, hoping for a job I could grow and excel in. However, frustration set in early on when I realized how unorganized and unprepared my school was for an ESL program to exist. After two years, I moved to Beijing, China, to work in another international school as a third grade teacher. Again, frustration set in with the lack of resources and support for teacher input and while continuing my master's degree in ESL, I decided to learn more about what I could do to improve the ESL program at the school.

My school in Beijing is a Type C international school, or an internationalized school, which means it is more of an experimental school that teaches the Chinese curriculum but also incorporates a Western curriculum (Poole, 2018). In other words, it is labeled as an international school, but it maintains many aspects of its national curriculum and mainly serves local students. As China continues to grow as a major world power, the education of its young people, especially in English, remains an utmost priority. Because of that, my original goal with this paper was to answer the following question: *What would an ESL program look like in a Type C Chinese international school and how would a school go about developing it?*

However, as I prepared to continue along this direction, the pandemic happened, and I had to pause on this project as I adjusted to the changes the pandemic brought. I

switched to virtual learning in the last part of my second year in Beijing, so I lost any face-to-face time with students and colleagues. My priorities changed, and by the time I returned to this project, I was back in the United States, surrounded by a different context. I knew that my initial project idea was not something I could put into use. So in looking forward to where I want to be in the next few years of my career, I decided to modify my original question to this: *What does an ESL curriculum look like in a Type C Chinese international school and how will it reflect the cultural and linguistic needs of its students?*

In the rest of this chapter, I will share more details about my teaching experiences in Myanmar and China. I will also explain the rationale behind this project and give a preview of the literature that will be synthesized and analyzed in Chapter Two. To conclude, I will summarize the main points of this chapter and give an overview for upcoming chapters.

Personal and Professional Experience

After receiving my ESL licensure, I began teaching professionally in Mandalay, Myanmar, in the fall of 2016. I had been familiar with ESL teaching and methodology because I had spent four years working as a teacher assistant within an ESL department in Minnesota. I expected similar experiences going into my first job. In Mandalay, I taught ESL to students in grades one to eight at an international school. The students were mostly of Myanmar background, but there is a large Chinese population in the city. The majority of my ESL students were Chinese. The way the ESL program was structured made it difficult to use best practices. Around 15-20 students in grades one to

five were in 30-minute pull-out sessions every day, with two hour-long classes for students in grades 6-8. The school lacked a curriculum and based ESL needs on the International Schools Assessment (ISA), which all students in grades three to 10 take. The ISA is akin to a standard state test where students' skills in literacy, math, and science are measured. There was no cutoff or proper channel of entry or exit for ESL students. I would describe this process as random or haphazard, and whenever I gave suggestions as to how to organize the program, they were ignored. I worked at this school for only two years, and afterwards accepted a job as a third grade teacher in Beijing, China.

My experience in Mandalay taught me a lot about how the international school system works. While there, I understood the difference between how ESL was viewed back in the U.S. and abroad. I understood how much (or little) influence I had at an international school. At the same time, I learned how to become a resourceful teacher, to make lessons and create activities from nothing. It was a skill that I got better at every day, and I wanted to carry that over to my new school in Beijing. But like in Mandalay, I quickly learned how little my opinion mattered in the grand scheme of things.

In the fall of 2018, I began working in Beijing. Even though I was a third grade teacher, I considered myself an ESL teacher first and foremost. All my kids were English learners, learning at various levels of proficiency. I taught with an ESL mindset. With the resources and textbooks given to us, I usually modified them or did not use them at all. Things that come to me naturally in teaching, like using visuals and scaffolds, seemed to be new and innovative to my boss and colleagues. To be fair, my school was

still new (now in its fifth year), and most of the staff in the primary department are Chinese, so this “American” way of teaching is a bit new. However, that is where the problem lies. Most of the staff are not certified or qualified in their position. I would include myself in that group, as I had to learn how to be a homeroom teacher and teach science, math, and social studies. In this environment, we were expected to help each other be better teachers while we are all grappling with honing our own skill and craft and managing the constant changes to the school and curriculum.

Context and Rationale

The question at hand is how can one design an ESL curriculum within a specific international school in China to provide best practices for its English learners? Research on Type C international schools is not common as they are a relatively new category of schools in the international landscape. Because of that, there are no resources for how an ESL program would work within the confines of a Type C school. It is a challenge for an ESL program to find space to exist. As I will mention in Chapter Two, the perception of ESL as a separate, necessary subject is not favorable, so it would never be prioritized. I will now provide a more detailed glimpse into my experience in a Type C international school to explain why it would benefit from a proper ESL curriculum.

As a third grade teacher with a group of 20 English learners who all have varying levels of English proficiency, I often found myself struggling to effectively reach out to each student. I come from an ESL background and education, so the switch to elementary school teaching made me see the frustrations of the job from the perspective of classroom teachers. The time to work with students who have a lower proficiency in

English seemed to disappear, and I felt like I had failed some of these students based on a lack of resources and support. My colleagues and I felt spent being asked to do so much on top of teaching and all its bearings. There were parts missing, but we weren't sure where to find them.

The easy answer (as it would be back in the U.S.) is an effective ESL program. At my school, there was technically an English language learner (ELL) program. There were two ELL facilitators, but in practice and reality, they were literacy facilitators, neither qualified to explicitly teach ESL. The secondary school that makes up the grade one-12 school does have an ELL program. Teachers pulled out students for sessions, and test scores from the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) test were closely monitored. In primary, we used MAP data exclusively to teach. In our classes, the MAP data drove our instruction and planning, and while that made sense to do, the truth is that without another set of data, it was difficult to rely solely on MAP. We also used Reading AZ running records as a secondary data set, but even that needed support. As a teacher in an international school, I was increasingly aware that all the materials and resources we used were made for native American English speakers. That was the standard we had to measure our students by, and without that understanding, it was hard to help our students the best we can.

I should add that we did use elements of WIDA. WIDA (World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment) is a national education consortium created to provide a framework and tools to help English learners in schools. Although it was created in the U.S., it has developed an international framework as well. However, my

school did not employ WIDA the way other international schools may have. It only used the W-APT (the entrance test), and it was only administered to students who had scored at a three or lower the previous year. I had proctored it with my students in the spring of 2019, but nothing had been done with the test results or referenced in any meaningful way. In the U.S., the use of any WIDA test makes sense when the school employs the WIDA curriculum and embeds its ESL/ELL program in the language and environment of WIDA. My school did not do that at all, so administering the WIDA test seemed like a pointless exercise.

In truth, our teachers worked hard to teach our students, and everyone in our department, including administration, always wanted to improve. But we were trying to be homeroom teachers full time while trying to be ESL teachers without training at the same time. Best practices that I learned when I became an ESL teacher were absent: there are no consistent pull-out or push-in sessions; the focus is on reading only; there were no ESL entrance or exit protocols, and no teachers with proper qualifications. I gave a professional development on WIDA with a colleague, but there was no follow-through or guidance from administrators. It felt like trying to create some semblance of an ESL program was an entirely different and unfamiliar beast that no one wanted to slay.

For my own personal and professional reasons, I am interested in continuing a career teaching abroad, but that takes a great deal of knowledge about international schools. It is important to know what kind of school you are working in. When I began teaching abroad, I was naive and idealistic and had no real understanding of international

schools. If I move forward down this career path, I want to be able to understand the nuances of working in these kinds of schools. I need to be able to assess any place I teach in order to be the most capable teacher I can be.

Literature Preview

The research I gathered for this project focuses on three things: 1) English learning programs, 2) international schools, and 3) Chinese culture. The authors of the research come from a variety of backgrounds. They are teachers, professors, and researchers from the United States and from around the world. The international perspective is needed in order to try and answer my research question, particularly the way in how English language is taught.

My research question brings up Type C nontraditional international schools. As I mentioned already, this is a topic that does not have a wealth of research. The idea of an international school is not easily defined in this era. Traditionally, international schools have been schools intended for children of expatriates, typically known as Type A schools (Poole, 2018). The makeup of the student population in these schools are mostly international. On the other hand, there are also international schools that were created for the sole purpose of peace and global cooperation, which are Type B schools (Poole, 2018). Lastly, there are Type C schools, which have become more common due to the growth of globalization in the 21st century. For affluent families who want their children to learn their country's national curriculum but also want status by having them attend an "international" school, Type C schools are the perfect compromise (Poole, 2018). Because of their recent arrival on the international scene, there is still much to learn about

them and their goals and role in global education. All in all, the current research on Type C international schools is focused on informing teachers about their existence and history and whether or not we can call them international schools at all.

Furthermore, I will examine the different aspects of Chinese culture, which is necessary to understand in order to design an ESL curriculum in a Chinese school. Zhong (2012) details important Confucian values that underlie Chinese culture and how they permeate throughout education. I will also look at how Chinese education reform has impacted the way schools are run, since Type C international schools still use parts of the national curriculum. Additionally, I will examine how attitudes and beliefs towards education in China have influenced the grind culture that commonly exists in its schools today. Lastly, I will analyze Cullinan's (2016) framework for curriculum design along with other English teaching programs from around the world in order to create a model curriculum for a Type C international school in China to follow.

Summary

In Chapter One, I shared my experience about teaching abroad in Myanmar and China. In particular, my time spent teaching in China made me wonder how best to create an effective ESL curriculum in an international school. I explained how the lack of ESL services at my school contributed to the research question I proposed: *What does an ESL curriculum look like in a Type C Chinese international school and how will it reflect the cultural and linguistic needs of its students?* To expand my readers' knowledge on this topic, I defined that a Type C international school in China is a hybrid model that combines the national curriculum with a western curriculum and model. I also

pointed out that the research done on Type C schools is not abundant as these kinds of schools are still new in the international landscape. Additionally, I previewed some of the literature important to the purpose of this project, which I also explained in my overview of all the chapters in this paper. Based on this research, my end product for this project will be a four-week themed unit plan complete with lesson plans, language and content objectives, presentations, leveled exemplars, rubrics, and instructions on how to implement the unit.

Chapters Overview

In Chapter Two, I will review literature that discusses international schools, Chinese culture, and English learning programs around the world. Chapter Three will detail the entirety of this project and break down the different components. In this chapter, I will also explain the setting of the school and apply the relevant framework to this project. Finally, in Chapter Four, I will reflect on the process of this project and talk about how the curriculum I create will be useful for me in the future.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Introduction

In order to understand the full scope of my project, I will now present a literature review on different topics that have to do with designing an ESL curriculum in a Chinese international school. The question I am trying to answer is: *What does an ESL curriculum look like in a Type C Chinese international school and how will it reflect the cultural and linguistic needs of its students?* China is an interesting country for international education. Its education is dictated heavily by the national government, and with its growth as a global superpower in the last two decades, emphasis on English education has only grown.

The topics reviewed in this chapter include the role of ESL in international school settings, Type C Chinese schools and culture, different ESL curriculum frameworks used in international schools, and ESL best practices. These topics are necessary to understand the reasoning behind some of the choices that I have made in choosing the components of my project. These topics, which are covered in four major sections below, also provide a clear foundation for the need behind this project.

The first section gives a brief overview of the perception of ESL in international schools. In particular, this section delves into the role of ESL as a program and its teachers and how their role is linked to the purpose of international schools.

The second section expands on this conversation about international schools by talking about the culture and policies in China. An explanation of how China's

government affects education provides a glimpse into why English programs may not always be successful there. The obstacles that come with trying to implement changes to a system that is well-established in its governmental and cultural contexts will be made clear.

The third section will give an idea of what ESL frameworks and perceptions regarding ESL exist in current international schools. Various research studies and opinions expressed regarding these studies give ESL practitioners a plethora of choices in ESL instruction, depending on the different contexts in which schools exist. Many times, though, the politics of a country may affect how English is taught.

The last section covers best practices in teaching ESL. There are many principles and features of an ESL curriculum or program that most ESL teachers agree on. This section will present a list of those best practices and summarize why they are important to the education of English learners.

The Role of ESL in International School Settings

To start, it is important to understand the role of the ESL teacher, and how this role may be perceived in a country. For instance, Carder (2008), in his review on ESL history in England, found that ESL teachers did not need certification at the time because their role was not thought to be important. Essentially, as he put it bluntly, being an ESL teacher was a negative career choice. Shapiro (2011) wrote about ESL instructors at the college level on the West coast in the United States who felt like their work did not feel as important or appreciated as much as their non-ESL colleagues. She stated that those instructors had no status within their institutional setting. These sentiments about ESL

teachers and the teaching of ESL contribute to the hesitation of implementing strong ESL programs and curricula in the international school system. In the United States, it is understandable to create these programs with the influx of immigrants and refugees to the public schools. International schools, however, are mostly private and cater to wealthy families where the majority of students are English learners. The circumstances in both cases dictate the perspective and need for ESL programs, but when students of international schools move on unpreparedly to higher education in other countries, it begs the question of what could have been done to prepare them even more.

Some educators believe that the core of any international school is its mission statement. From the mission statement, one can get an idea of what the school believes to be essential lessons for the students. Bittencourt and Willetts (2018) cited arguments for whether or not a mission statement is useful. On the one hand, they wrote that mission statements are nothing but mere platitudes, a necessary element in the process of getting accredited. On the other hand, they wrote that mission statements matter in how an international school presents itself. In their analysis of mission statements from 46 international schools, Bittencourt and Willetts found that the purpose of many of these schools lie in either market-driven multinationalism or internationalism. In other words, schools are either preparing students to be global citizens or to be a part of the labor market that perpetually runs the world, or perhaps both even. No matter what the true goal of international schools may be, they are an enticing alternative to public schools that give hope of higher education to parents. This is the setting from which we have to

imagine creating an ESL curriculum that should aid in supporting the perceived and actual goals of the institution.

ESL Curriculum Frameworks in International Schools

Understanding what ESL curriculum frameworks exist in international schools is pertinent to how to design an ESL curriculum. Coming from the United States, we tend to think that there is no clear-cut ESL curriculum that exists for all ESL teachers to follow except WIDA, and even then, WIDA acts more as a framework for ESL rather than an actual curriculum to teach and plan units from. Cullinan (2016) stated that ESL programs often make the mistake of applying curriculum development principles to language programs instead of evaluating the curriculum at hand. This means in the question of “which comes first, curriculum or program?,” the curriculum should come first. Ideally, the language program should be a product of the curriculum, which should often be evaluated for satisfaction from all participants (Cullinan, 2016).

Cullinan (2016) described curriculum as “...the umbrella that encompasses the goals of an educational institution; it is developed often with the national political agenda, and popular trends in consideration, such as communicative language teaching as an overall philosophy, or ‘learning by doing’” (p. 55). Essentially, the curriculum acts as the skeleton, a foundation, for a language program by explaining its educational philosophy and course content, materials, and assessments. Similarly, Ellili-Cherif and Hadba (2017) stated that a curriculum has three processes: development, implementation, and evaluation. In the development stage, the curriculum designer uses their school’s educational philosophy as the underlying foundation for language policies,

they identify students' needs, goals and objectives, and select content and materials to teach (Ellili-Cherif & Hadba, 2017). Once a curriculum is decided and designed, a program can be created from it to implement and evaluate it.

There are several kinds of curriculum frameworks, as the following discussion indicates. Using a school in rural Canada as a case, Apedaile and Whitelaw (2012) said that schools should develop language programs with a culturally integrated approach, explaining that every participant involved in the language program (students, instructors, administrators, and the like) should develop intercultural sensitivity. Apedaile and Whitelaw used a resource titled *Roots and Connections* that was created in their community to report their findings on whether or not this curriculum is effective in engaging learners and other members of the community. The way *Roots and Connections* attempts to do that is to integrate content, process, and instructor supports. In this resource, students completed tasks that have to do with their identity and connection to their community. Teachers' roles were reimagined as cultural bridges between learners and the community. These two challenges were supported with intercultural materials that were weaved into the curriculum and daily routines (Apedaile & Whitelaw, 2012). Cullinan (2016) surmised that curricula are often made up of a country's political agenda and trends in education. This falls in with Apedaile and Whitelaw's idea of developing intercultural sensitivity, especially between instructor and student, in order to meet that balance between politics and education.

Other ESL curricula that exist in several international settings are based on traditional foreign language teaching (FL) and content-based teaching (CB).

Castro-Garcia (2017) differentiated between the two by studying a school in Costa Rica, saying that an FL school would have students take all classes in the home language, with the second language (which would be English in a foreign school) only taught as a subject. In contrast, a CB school would have all content classes taught in the second language as a way to gain language and content knowledge (Castro-Garcia 2017).

Content-based teaching, in a way, is part of content and language integrated learning (CLIL). Dalton-Puffer and Nikula (2014) defined CLIL as an approach to education where content classes are taught in a second language, similar to the way Castro-Garcia describes content-based teaching. The difference between the two is CLIL has more benefits when it comes to more focus on individual linguistic features and cultural awareness in general (Castro-Garcia, 2017). In any case, in his study on how these different ESL methods affect students' retention and use of vocabulary, Castro-Garcia found that students who were at the CB school had a larger vocabulary size than that of students at the FL school. Because of this, he argues for the incorporation of CLIL, which is largely used in Europe, in the national curriculum.

While content and language integrated learning is something that is seen as a positive step in the world of ESL teaching, Carder (2008) argued that it is not enough. He stated that there are other factors to consider when it comes to developing an ESL curriculum and program. An example he used was how social language can be left out when content language was only emphasized. He believed in a balance of all factors and using different models. His suggestion was that a three-program model is necessary. This includes a mother-tongue program, an ESL program, and a program for teachers to

learn about language and content. Thus, to him, an excellent ESL curriculum considers all sources and all possibilities.

Ellili-Cherif and Hadba (2017) were aware of the complexities behind curriculum design. They said that curriculum designers in the Gulf region often come from different backgrounds and thus carry different notions, beliefs, and values when it comes to how schools operate. Because of this, Ellili-Cherif and Hadba insisted that an ESL curriculum should cater to multicultural teachers who have different beliefs, methodologies, and teaching styles so that it can mesh with students' own needs and preferences, which can be done by involving teachers in the curriculum design process. This is a tall order for any teacher to accomplish, but as long as teachers have a voice in what they teach, they can meet student needs with greater success (Ellili-Cherif and Habda, 2017).

Ellili-Cherif and Hadba's (2017) notions about teacher-led curriculum design paved a way for Kumaravadivelu's (1994) postmethod theory to be a significant part of this research. Kumaravadivelu posited three principles when it comes to postmethod theory: 1) educators should seek alternatives to methods, not alternative methods; 2) teacher autonomy, which leads to empowering teachers to learn from their own experiences; and 3) principled pragmatism, which "focuses on how classroom learning can be shaped and managed by teachers as a result of informed teaching and critical appraisal" (p. 31). In essence, postmethod theory rejects methods as the only way to teach language. It also advocates for teachers to be in charge of what and how they teach. Cullinan (2016) agreed with this and stated that since teachers are the ones who administer the curriculum, they must be the ones who center the curriculum around their

knowledge and experience. This theory will be further explored in the next section and in Chapter Three.

As you can see, different countries from all around the world at different levels of education have varying ideas about how and what to teach to English learners. It is a complex issue that requires thought, thoroughness and a deliberate approach to curriculum design.

ESL Program Implementation and Best Practices

After understanding the basics of ESL curriculum, the next step is to look at best practices and how they can be implemented within the ESL curriculum.

Program Implementation

Implementation of a new program forces a school to reevaluate its goals. That practice involves more than just seeing what worked and what didn't. Bokhari et al. (2015) stated that if administrators and teachers do not agree on the goals or objectives of a program, success is hard to achieve. Program development then begins with a school's staff willingness to discuss and be open to each other's thoughts and values. No matter the mission statement of a school, staff and faculty remain autonomous beings with their own perceptions of said mission statement. Different interpretations lead to disagreements, and these disagreements ultimately affect how programs develop and work. Without a basic sense of agreement and shared vision, a program is doomed to fail.

With that being said, Cullinan (2016) stated that when a school creates goals, an analysis of a school's environment and needs is necessary. Kayi (2008) also called for

the necessity of a needs analysis and a situational analysis. According to Kayi, developing an ESL program is difficult due to the diversity of students and their needs. In order to wade through that, a school should collect data regarding students' needs that relate to their learning style, their attitude towards learning, learning habits, among other points of data (Kayi 2008). The purpose for learning English differs from school to school, so no one curriculum will fit all schools (Graves & Garton, 2017). This is important information to keep in mind as ESL program development begins.

Graves and Garton (2017) included teachers and milieus (context of the school) as integral parts of a program development process. These factors would be part of a situational analysis. A situational analysis is just as its name suggests: an analysis of factors of the situation and context of the school where it takes place (Kayi, 2008). Considering that there are different types of international schools, a situational analysis is necessary to review a school's current practices to see where change can be embedded. A one-size-fits-all approach to ESL programming cannot work. If it did, this paper would not exist.

Discussion so far has suggested that a good jumping-off point would be a situational analysis. Situational analyses invite a closer look at a school's mission, staff, curriculum, context, and more. Through the lens of curriculum development, a situational analysis serves as a purpose for reform, and without purpose, nothing can be achieved authentically.

In typical American schools, English programs are created to serve, more often than not, underprivileged children. Colegrove and Zuniga (2018) studied a case where a

first-grade teacher implemented project-based instruction (PBI) as a response to the high-stakes environment of standardized testing in the United States. The teacher taught many Latinx students, a group of students who are marginalized. PBI would allow students some agency in their own learning by letting them explore what they want and sidestep the stress and discrimination of the school system. This was an example of one teacher that analyzed local students' needs, needs and made decisions that would help their students. Colegrove and Zuniga highlighted the importance of teacher agency. They stressed how little agency teachers have in their teaching practices when in a high-stakes environment like an American public school. This lack of agency can carry through to their students. The teacher in this study had a thought-out plan, only implementing it when the moment was right. A similar approach can be adopted in China.

During China's English education reform in 2001, teachers were pressured to teach differently than what they were used to (Zhao et al., 2015). They were supposed to teach with creativity they had not cultivated while nurturing students' independent thinking and preparing them for tests (Zhao et al., 2015). Teachers in China were expected to do a complete 180 in how they had been teaching, and this led to ineffective curriculum and protocol. This is an example of how some schools in China operate in response to educational needs. They understand the need for English reform, but they took underprepared teachers and put them in unfamiliar teaching environments, expecting them to succeed without changing much else.

The examples in the previous two paragraphs show that each school had a seemingly similar goal: to produce creative teachers and to encourage student independence and critical thinking. In the first example, the goals met the context of the school the teacher was in. A marginalized group of students who would only be disadvantaged with current, heavy test-dependent curriculum are given the opportunity to enhance their thinking and learn for themselves. In the second example, the context of the school is similar to the former in its test-driven environment (the *gaokao*, the university-entrance test, is a controversial system as it fuels the stress of students but also seems like a fair way for everyone to get a chance (Zhao et al., 2015)). However, the difference between the two lies in the approach to change.

Understandably, we cannot judge or generalize the effects of one approach based on one incident. Still, the fact that the 2001 education reform policy in China faltered within three years is an important indicator of how much further China has to go to instill best practices.

There is a lack of research on the implementation of English programs in China. Knell et al. (2007) reviewed English immersion programs in Xi'an that were modeled on immersion programs that were created in Canada. Knell et al. found that students who started earlier in the immersion programs had better oral English than students who started later. This was in contrast to the practice of drills and rote memorization that exists in Chinese schools, where the focus was more on understanding written English rather than speaking English. Early exposure, as we know, is a factor in a student's ability to learn another language.

Best Practices

Once a program is developed, one of the last things to consider is the quality and variety of instruction. Best practices are integral to an ESL program; what is the point of it all if instruction is not effective? The term “best practice” (or “effective teaching”) can be interpreted in many ways. After all, depending on one’s content and teaching philosophy, best practice can simply mean just showing up and teaching. The best place to start this discussion is to look at what Gupta (2019) listed as the seven principles of best practices for teaching ESL students, which are learned in an ESL teaching program: 1) knowing student motivation for learning L2; 2) creating a welcoming classroom environment; 3) building background knowledge; 4) providing comprehensible input by building vocabulary; 5) including opportunities for interaction and discussion; 6) using multiple modalities; and 7) conducting ongoing review and assessment. These best practices are common among many teachers and are corroborated by Gan and Lee’s (2016) study on student teachers in Hong Kong who observed and analyzed practices in their practicums. Gan and Lee provided examples of how these student teachers motivated their students by using interesting materials or students’ interests in certain topics to create meaningful dialogue. Student teachers also shared how they used visuals to create a supportive learning environment and how they used assessments to promote student learning and not just to distinguish learners from each other (Gan & Lee, 2016).

Many other studies have used different frameworks or values to measure the effectiveness of teaching. Kumaravadivelu’s (1994) postmethod theory was supplemented by a strategic framework that involves 10 macrostrategies that teachers

should use: “(a) maximize learning opportunities, (b) facilitate negotiated interaction, (c) minimize perceptual mismatches, (d) activate intuitive heuristics, (e) foster language awareness, (f) contextualize linguistic input, (g) integrate language skills, (h) promote learner autonomy, (i) raise cultural consciousness, and (j) ensure social relevance” (p. 32). While these best practices are not specific strategies to enhance individual learning, when looking at creating a curriculum, they are useful in making decisions of how to implement lessons. For example, if one wants to facilitate negotiated interaction, then they can create group or paired activities for students to give them the opportunity to learn from and interact with each other. As Kumaravadivelu explains, this framework is not meant to be a rigid set of guidelines. It is meant to be used as guidance, molded and shaped to the curriculum designer’s needs and experience.

To add to the interactive quality of best practices, Zuniga and Simard (2016) suggested five dimensions of effective interactive learning within an ESL classroom: 1) *general collective focus of attention*, which describes whether a classroom is teacher- or student-centered; 2) *interactivity*, which describes how much interaction any given activity or lesson allows; 3) *information flow of tasks*, which describes how much information is given to students on how to complete tasks; 4) *goal-orientation of a task*, which describes whether or no the goal is the same for all involved in learning; and 5) *number of active participants*, which describes how tasks are carried out, whether in groups, pairs, individually, or whole class. While it is obvious that any teacher would encourage interaction between students on a daily basis, it is important to take what Zuniga and Simard have laid out to be even more specific in how to improve best

practices in terms of student interaction. As Gupta (2019) mentioned, having small group interactions can be less threatening for some students and provide more opportunities to practice the target language. Zuniga and Simard's suggestions can only help students.

Stronge's framework has been used in the United States and in China as well (Meng & Munoz, 2016). As described by Meng and Munoz (2016), this framework focuses on six areas: teacher knowledge and experience, teacher personality, classroom management, instruction planning, instruction implementation, and student progress. Meng and Munoz also gave different theoretical views of what exactly best practice, or "effective teaching" is. They describe these as being habituation, construction, and enculturation. Habituation is repetition of learned material to acquire skill, construction builds on concepts, and enculturation involves cultural pedagogy (Meng & Munoz, 2016). All of these are different factors to consider as requirements for best practices.

According to Araujo (2009), teachers who teach culturally relevant material are using best practice in their instruction. She also stated that teachers who consider English learners as students with deficits rather than students with strengths will fail to teach these students equitably. In addition, Araujo advocated for using students' funds of knowledge. Gupta (2019) echoed this advocacy, stating that using students' funds of knowledge helps students connect concepts they may not know the words for to concrete, real-world experiences and/or objects. This leads to a student-centered classroom rather than a subject-centered classroom, which then can lead to differentiating instruction and giving students choices in how they present their learning (Gupta, 2019). This falls in line with Meng and Munoz's (2016) definition of enculturation. When ELs are not being

taught from a cultural perspective, their wealth of knowledge and academic skills can appear to be lacking because of the language barrier (Fernandez & Inserra, 2013). This can lead to ineffective teaching methods, especially for teachers who are not trained in teaching English learners. As with many schools in China, that is often the case for teachers. To curb this problem, it is necessary for schools to know how to differentiate between students who need English help versus students who have learning disabilities, among other considerations (Fernandez & Inserra, 2013).

Similarly, Mede's (2016) case study of six public schools in Istanbul, Turkey, described the best practices those schools' teachers proposed in response to the education reform that happened in response to Turkey's increased global presence. Some of these findings include the need for total physical response (TPR), cross-curricular integration, storytelling, parent-teacher relationships, and interactive teaching (Mede, 2016). These items are typical of what ESL teachers in the U.S. learn to incorporate and encourage, so the one has to wonder why these practices are not adopted more widely in international schools.

International Schools in China

The term "international school" is used to describe schools that may not even be international in the true sense of the word. Bittencourt and Willetts (2018) claimed that because the parameters of what passes as an international school are not clearly defined, schools can decide themselves what makes them international. Young (2018) agreed with that notion, but adds that:

‘[I]nternational education’ can be conceptualised as education that extends beyond national borders in either of two ways: (1) students moving across borders to pursue education (e.g. students seeking undergraduate or graduate studies overseas or embarking on a semester abroad); (2) incorporating foreign ideas or ways of thinking into curriculum, diverging from a focus on the nation-state in which the school is located. (p. 159).

In essence, the perceived fluidity of international education has allowed China to become the biggest exporter, to put it plainly, of international students to the United States and Canada (Young, 2018). There is a certain eliteness to the international education system that children of extreme wealth and privilege can take advantage of. Zhong (2012) explained that China’s economic standing in the world has prompted parents to send their children to these schools to learn English. English is compulsory in universities. It is the one skill a person in China needs to know if they wish to succeed in their career.

Young (2018) outlined three models of international schools that exist, with a fourth model growing in China: 1) the traditional international school that serves privileged expatriates; 2) the ideological international school that brings forth elites from other countries; and 3) the non-traditional international school that serves the local elite. She argued for a fourth kind, the international school that caters to well-off families whose questionable social status acts as an obstacle within the local educational system. She notes that this fourth type is growing in China, and her study finds implications of what it means for class and society in China. Poole (2018) called this fourth kind of school Type C non-traditional or internationalized, aimed at affluent Chinese families,

engaging in a bilingual and experimental educational experience. These types of schools have grown a lot in recent years, so little research has been done on them. Because of that, it can be hard to thoroughly understand the nature of these kinds of schools.

Although certain international schools in China are not run by the government like private and public schools, they still have to adhere to some governmental mandates (Young 2018). After all, the goal of the Chinese national curriculum is to encourage morality and patriotism. Traditional international schools, where students are almost all expatriates, receive less attention from the government. The government's focus is on those non-traditional international schools that serve Chinese students. In international Chinese schools, there exists two kinds of institutional logics (Poole 2018). One is Chinese institutional logic, which combines Confucian and socialist beliefs. Zhong (2012) wrote that Confucian tradition dictates the importance and respectability of the teacher and any authority figure. Poole (2018) added that socialist beliefs are geared towards patriotism. This logic is teacher-centered. The other logic Poole talked about is international institutional logic, which supports global mindedness and increased world views. In contrast, it is student-centered. He stated in his observations that Chinese teachers often follow the Chinese institutional logic, preferring to teach in traditional ways (where using rote memorization is favored). He also observed that while expatriate teachers follow the international institutional logic closely, they also pay attention to the Chinese institutional logic.

In 2001, the Chinese government created English as a Foreign Language (EFL) curriculum standards (Li 2017). This was in response to the country's increasing global

power at the turn of the century. However, this curriculum did not work effectively due to the hierarchical process of development. Li (2007) described how the development of curriculum starts at the top with the state council. From there, responsibility trickles down through three more administrative government offices (Ministry of Education, Provincial Education Department, Department of Education at Local Level) before finding its way to teachers to implement the curriculum. As mentioned before, Ellili-Cherif and Hadba (2017) advocated for the involvement of teachers in creating assessments, evaluating curriculum, and modifying materials, and this certainly was not the case in China. Ellili-Cherif and Hadba's study took place in the Gulf region, which, much like China, has a firm grip on what schools can or cannot do. Additionally, a quick policy change in 2003 further harmed the EFL curriculum (Chen, 2013). Zhu et al. (2014) similarly stated that while education reform has been going on during the last 15 years in China because of dissatisfaction with exam-oriented systems (Poole, 2018), there are still limitations as to what schools are free to do, courtesy of the supervision of the Chinese Communist Party Committee. The government's unwillingness to allow teachers who are experts in their field to take part in the creation of curriculum is hurting its own chances at being successful in its implementation.

The rise of Type C schools in China is not by accident. These kinds of schools allow middle-class families some social capital by not enrolling their children in public schools and yet still obtaining the prestige of an international education. In describing these kinds of schools, Poole (2020) used words like "non-premium" or "underbelly," not to denote the sketchiness of them but to understand their nuances and shortcomings. In

Type C schools, the curriculum is part Western and part Chinese. The school itself may promote a hybrid kind of curriculum, but Poole (2018) in his study noted that the two are more separate than combined. In the middle school years, the national curriculum is more adhered to, while the Western curriculum (something like the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme) is taught in the high school (Poole, 2020). This is structured in such a way so that students can take the national exam at the end of middle school to fulfill that need. Another way to distinguish Type C schools from traditional international schools is how they include a bilingual program and do not strictly teach in English only. Poole (2020) also discussed how teachers in Type C schools may not be fully qualified to teach their subjects. Despite these hesitations, Poole (2020) argued that we should see these schools as the model for the future. Therefore, instead of trying to work against Type C schools when designing an ESL curriculum, we should work within it.

Features of a Chinese school culture still permeate through these schools in spite of their effort to be different. Zhao et al. (2015) recognized that even though Chinese students continually score high in math, science, and reading, all that success comes at a price. In their study on the behavior of Chinese children, Hesketh et al. (2010) claimed that the highly-competitive nature of school in today's world combined with the old Confucian traditions lead children to high levels of stress. Education is seen as a chance for upward mobility, so parents do what they can to provide the best education for their children. Hesketh et al.'s findings reported that only a fourth of children said they were happy, three-fourths say they were always worried about exams, and over two-thirds

received corporal punishment at home. All these factors are an extension of the stress they feel at school to compete with each other and excel enough to move on to universities. They in turn affect student behavior, and in a Type C school where Western values meet Eastern values, students need support in more than just academic ways. This is something to keep in mind as a school begins to mold its ESL program and curriculum.

Creating an ESL program and curriculum in a country like China is not as simple as it may seem. There are many factors to consider, from the culture of the school, the history of education reform, and the different belief systems and values that clash within an international school. It is an undertaking that seeks to overhaul a stubborn system that is tough to go against.

Summary

International schools are not easy to define. International schools within China are not easy to navigate. How each school interprets who they are and how they function is entirely up to them. This literature review's aim was to lay a foundation of understanding for this project. International schools implement ESL curricula differently based on their contexts and countries. The role of ESL curricula and teachers are viewed differently. There is no one-way approach to creating an ESL curriculum. This research shows how many factors it takes to consider implementing an ESL curriculum in a Type C international school in China. It is important to think about how the culture of China affects the way things are done in schools there, how English learning is viewed there, and how these best practices can suit Chinese students. It is also essential to think about how an ESL curriculum can coexist with the national curriculum. My hope in presenting

this research is to give a clear foundation for my project and why it is necessary to individualize ESL curricula in Type C schools. I hope to answer this question: *What does an ESL curriculum look like in a Type C Chinese international school and how will it reflect the cultural and linguistic needs of its students?*

In the next chapter, I will give an overview of my project. I will describe the context of the school I will teach at my new school in the 2021-2022 school year, where I can implement my project. I will discuss how Kumaravadivelu's (1994) postmethod theory and Cullinan's (2016) curriculum design framework inspired my project. I provide a timeline for my project as well. This will lead to the end result of a unit plan complete with lesson plans, materials, assessments, exemplars, and instructional documents for a four-week curriculum unit.

CHAPTER THREE

Project Description

Introduction

As I described in Chapter One, this project aims to create an effective ESL curriculum for a Type C international school in China with consideration for the cultural and linguistic needs of its students. To do that, I picked a topic and content area that will lend itself to the idea of preparing students to be responsible, global citizens. I created a four-week social studies unit that introduced knowledge of human impact on land and how that relates to the beliefs and values of indigenous peoples. I myself come from an indigenous people, so the relevance to me will be shared with students. I understand there should be an integration of both international and mandatory national curriculum. There is a fine line, and as this school fell under the Chinese government, it was in my best interests to not overstep with the design of this curriculum. Based on this notion, I hope to answer the question: *What does an ESL curriculum look like in a Type C Chinese international school and how will it reflect the cultural and linguistic needs of its students?*

The end product of this project is a unit plan with all the necessary materials included. It is something I can use in my next teaching job at a school similar to a Type C international school. Before we get to that, I will first give an overview of my project and why I chose the topic and content area that I did. Next, I will describe the school setting to place this project within a context. Additionally, I will provide a detailed look at why I am using the Ontario English as a Second Language and English Literacy

Development guide as the framework for my project. Lastly, I will also describe the timeline of my project and conclude this chapter with a summary of the main points of this chapter.

Overview of Project

The research from Chapter Two culminated in a unit plan that I can put to use in my next job. At this school, I will be teaching ESL to upper elementary students. With the school year divided in four quarters, each quarter focuses on a different content area of the teacher's choosing. The school I will be teaching in has an ESL program based on the Ontario ESL-ELD curriculum. It is separate from the national curriculum because the sole focus is on English language development. Despite that, it is necessary still to create a curriculum that aligns with government policies, the school's vision, and the linguistic needs of the students. The aim of the ESL program at the school is to provide a strong foundation for students' continual use of English throughout middle school, high school, and university. Parents enroll their children into this program for that purpose, so it is the responsibility of the program and teachers to teach language through content that will help the students grow up as citizens of the world.

I intend for this curriculum to be used within the ESL program at my future school, to be adapted and modified for the students. This unit is a four-week social studies unit, designed to answer this big question: *How have humans impacted the earth and how does that affect the lives of indigenous peoples?* Cullinan (2016) stated that content of an ESL course should maximize the students' learning opportunities by putting them in the position to engage in the subject by examining a question. With that in mind,

there were six major reasons why I chose this: 1) China is mostly racially homogenous, so this would be a way to introduce young students to the idea that many kinds of people exist in this world; 2) Part of most international schools' mission is to teach students to become advocates for the betterment of the world, and without knowledge of how humans have impacted the world, whether negatively or positively, they can't really do that; 3) This topic lends itself to the use of academic language functions that are key components of being competent in all content areas; in addition, the vocabulary and language features are essential to understand how society in general works; 4) As this program stems from the Ontario ESL curriculum framework, there is direct connection from this topic to the history of how the Canadian government has treated indigenous people; 5) In light of China's human rights violations in its current treatment of the Uighur people, this topic can serve as a parallel between what's happened in the past and what's happening now; part of becoming global citizens is to recognize right from wrong, so this would be an indirect way of showing students that; and 6) For personal reasons, I find this to be a great way to introduce my culture to my students, as I have experienced in the past people assuming I am Chinese (and again, this would be another opportunity for students to learn about something new). For these reasons, I feel strongly about this topic as potential for students to glean not just content from, but also language skills, compassion, and appreciation for the diversity of the world.

This project starts with a unit plan, which is inspired by Cullinan's (2016) curriculum design framework, which is based on Kumaravadivelu's (1994) postmethod theory. From there, content and language objectives are created for each week, followed

by 20 lesson plans to be enacted by the teacher. The unit is scaffolded, with each week being a foundation of knowledge and skills built for the following week. Week One focuses on human impact on land, specifically how the physical features have been used to build human features on. Week Two introduces indigenous peoples and provides background on their rights. Week Three focuses on introducing the Hmong people by reading and writing about illustrations from the book, *Dia's Story Cloth*. This week introduces vocabulary words like *tribe*, *culture*, *government*, *resourceful*, *identity*, and *community* that are relevant for the unit. Week Four segues into how the land changing has affected indigenous peoples around the world. This knowledge and understanding culminates in a podcast interview for the unit. Throughout this unit, elements of the Ontario ESL curriculum, which will be discussed further down, lay the foundation for the objectives, activities, and assessments.

School Setting and Context

This project enters the 2021-2022 school year at an interesting time. In July of 2019, the Chinese Ministry of Education laid out new mandates for education. New reforms include more focus on morality education, requiring graduation exams for students in middle school, and integration of the Chinese curriculum with the American curriculum. All of these factors have to be taken into consideration when designing an ESL curriculum within China. Now that China is increasingly sending students overseas, English education has become a pertinent part of school here. Back in 2001, the government enacted English education reforms, and even though they ultimately were not successful, their necessity was important enough to be developed. It would be remiss of

me not to mention also that this school year will be the second full school year during the pandemic. While that has not been an issue in the school and city where I will be teaching, the context of the world currently is an additional factor to think about when creating a curriculum. As a teacher in the international community, I want students to not just think about their futures but also their present.

The school for this project is a private elementary school with a similar setting to a Type C international school located in a major city. In this city, English is becoming one of the main languages, and English education has become a necessary part of student academics. For parents who can't afford Type A international schools, this school is a good bridge between maintaining the national curriculum and learning the Western curriculum (in this case, Canadian). The ESL program is available for students in grades 1-6. ESL teachers are overseas hires, and in the lower grades, teachers also have a local co-teacher to assist with the language barrier. One hundred percent of all students in the elementary school are Chinese, and most of them are bilingual in Chinese and English.

I will be teaching two classes of upper elementary students, 20-25 in each one. All students are non-native English speakers. Students come to the ESL teacher's room from their homeroom as a content area class. Resources in the classroom include RAZ Kids, SmartBoard, class set of iPads, leveled readers, books from the Ontario curriculum, and unit plans from previous teachers. Support for teachers is in place in the forms of a lead teacher, program coordinator, principal, and consistent meeting and planning periods with other teachers. Teacher creativity is encouraged as ESL lessons are taught through different content areas.

Research and Curriculum Framework

The theoretical inspiration for this project comes from Kumaravadivelu's (1994) postmethod theory and Cullinan's (2016) paper on critical reviews of curriculum revision. In her paper, Cullinan referenced Kumaravadivelu's postmethod theory. Postmethod theory basically describes the rejection of methods as studied by teachers. Kumaravadivelu stated that teachers follow so many prescribed methods of teaching that they all become useless. He claimed that methods are not created or theorized from actual teaching experience, so consequently they are not genuine or authentic. Postmethod theory also places teacher autonomy at the forefront of English teaching curriculum. In essence, knowledge of language teaching should come from the teacher. Similarly, Cullinan (2016) described postmethod theory as the notion that there is no best way to teach ESL because it is innately impossible. The teacher's experience informs knowledge and vice versa. Through using this theory, as an ESL teacher, I am allowed to fully teach what and how I want to teach based on my previous experience working with Chinese elementary students. I can use the successful strategies and activities I've tried in the past to navigate my upcoming teaching role.

Cullinan (2016) also outlined the necessities in curriculum design: *situational analysis, needs analysis, objectives and goals, syllabus, and evaluation*. From this theory and from Cullinan's (2016) curriculum outline, I am approaching this project not from building on a blank slate, but from seeing what is there already and filling in gaps where needed.

A proper situational analysis “looks at the context where the course will take place and considers things such as the physical resources, the cultural context, the teaching staff, political and institutional factors and the learners” (Cullinan, 2016, p.57). In English language programs and courses, the best practice is to align the curriculum with the context of where the students are learning. The main goal is to identify any features that can impact the curriculum negatively or positively. The idea is to get rid of any hindrance and to maximize any potential strength.

Along with a situational analysis, curriculum designers should also conduct a needs analysis. According to Cullinan (2016), a needs analysis is aimed at assessing the learners’ needs. Students get a say in what and how they learn. This is useful information in trying to find students’ motivations in order to target their interests and learning styles. However, there are caveats to using a needs analysis. On one hand, Cullinan described needs analyses as being too subjective since the questions that will be asked or not asked of the learners already have an inherent bias. I have to agree with this. As the curriculum designer who would have to create this needs analysis for the students, I can foresee questions that are skewed towards information I want. On the other hand, I should also not make assumptions about how students learn and what motivates them.

The next item Cullinan (2016) listed is objectives and goals. She gives each one of these their own explicit definitions to avoid the too-often act of using these terms simultaneously. Cullinan (2016) stated that goals are the expected outcomes of the whole program, and objectives are the necessary steps to reach those outcomes. Goals have to

be derived from the situational and needs analyses, so once these are conducted, realistic goals and objectives can be created.

A syllabus is part of the Cullinan's (2016) framework. She described a syllabus as "a plan of what is to be achieved through teaching and learning" (p. 59). It organizes the curriculum and is product- or process-oriented. For the purposes and context of this project, I see a syllabus as a unit plan, which will take the place of the syllabus for this project.

The last item on Cullinan's (2016) list is evaluation. Every two or three years, it is important that a school reviews and evaluates its program and curriculum. This is an important step because it allows the school to consistently reflect on its practices and see where it's growing and not growing.

Along with Cullinan's (2016) design framework as the basis of my unit plan, the curricular framework I will be using to create lessons and assessments comes from the Ministry of Education in Ontario, Canada. The ESL program is run and designed by educators and experts in the Ontario school system. I will be taking this time to give an overview of the components of the ESL curriculum. In order to achieve success, it is recommended that an ESL program utilizing the Ontario curriculum do the following:

- Use language in a real and natural way
- Provide opportunities for listening and speaking, as well as integrating all four domains of English
- Teach vocabulary related to the content
- Create spaces for conversations between peers

- Accept mistakes as part of learning
- Be clear in assigning language tasks
- Give students time to process and feel comfortable with using English

(Ministry of Education, 2001)

Looking at this list, any ESL program would endorse these ideas. Some of these points do go against traditional Chinese learning, so in applying these to the ESL program, it is important to understand what might be expected of you as a teacher in your school.

The Ontario curriculum breaks English learning into two separate strands: English as a second language (ESL) and English literacy development (ELD). The Ministry of Education (2001) makes a clear distinction between the two: ESL is for students who come from a community or home where English is not the first language, and ELD is for students who, whether or not English is their first language, have not developed the necessary literacy skills. These are both intertwined as they are both necessary for success. ESL encompasses reading, writing, speaking, and listening, whereas ELD encompasses reading, writing, and oral communication. Both ESL and ELD skills are then divided into three sets of descriptors (identified by grade levels): one to three, four to six, and seven to eight. Each grade level is then further divided into four levels of proficiency, called stages. (For the purposes of this project, since I will be teaching upper elementary, I will provide examples of descriptions from the grades four to six strand.)

Like mentioned before, the Ministry of Education (2001) has divided the ESL and ELD strands into four levels of proficiency:

Figure 1

Four Levels of Proficiency

	ESL	ELD
Stage 1	Using English for Survival Purposes	Beginning to Use Standard Canadian English Appropriately
Stage 2	Using English in Supported and Familiar Activities and Contexts	Using Standard Canadian English in Supported and Familiar Activities and Contexts
Stage 3	Using English Independently in Most Contexts	Using Standard Canadian English Accurately and Correctly in Most Contexts
Stage 4	Using English With a Proficiency Approaching That of First-Language Speakers	Reading and Writing

From these descriptors, a set of skills are listed under each stage as indicators of what students in a particular grade at a certain stage should be able to do at each domain. For example, a Stage 1 student in grade four should be able to “recognize the English alphabet in both script and print” in the reading domain, while a Stage 3 student in the same grade in the reading domain should be able to “skim and scan for key information in reading materials with familiar vocabulary and context” (Ministry of Education, 2001).

Based on this understanding of the Ontario ESL curriculum, I created language objectives for each level of proficiency. For the final assessment, I also created exemplars at each level so that future teachers can gauge what kind of work to expect from students.

Timeline

The completion of this project took place during the capstone course in the spring of 2021, which would enable it to be ready to use in the 2021-2022 school year. I created a unit plan, starting with language and content objectives in February 2021. The unit plan and 15 lesson plans were written by the second week of March 2021. Thereafter, I created all the materials, including assessments, exemplars, rubrics, worksheets, and more, during March 2021 and completed and revised them by the end of April 2021.

Throughout the course, I reviewed and revised all plans and materials for the project. All chapters of my capstone were written, edited, and revised in its finality by the end of April 2021. With this schedule, the curriculum unit plan and materials were ready to submit for assessment by the end of spring 2021 and in time for the 2021-2022 school year.

Summary

In Chapter Three, the ESL curriculum design was discussed in full detail. The explanation of the project was described, as was its rationale and necessity. The setting and the school were also described. I discussed the postmethod theory as the basis for my project and provided a description of the Ontario ESL-ELD curriculum as the framework for this project. Lastly, I gave a timeline of when certain parts of the project will be completed. In Chapter Four, I will reflect on the process of creating a curriculum for a specific type of school and students.

CHAPTER FOUR

Conclusion

Introduction

The question for my capstone project was *What does an ESL curriculum look like in a Type C Chinese international school and how will it reflect the cultural and linguistic needs of its students?* In answering this question, I researched about the existence of different types of international schools, Chinese culture, and best practices in English teaching in order to provide a foundation for my project. In Chapter One, I wrote about how my experiences teaching abroad in Myanmar and China formed my question and interest in this topic. I also shared about my future career plans and how this project will help me in my next school. In Chapter Two, I discussed the literature related to my question in the hopes of finding some gaps and knowledge in my understanding of the research topics mentioned above. In Chapter Three, I described what my project entailed, which is a unit plan for a 4-week curriculum that would tailor to Chinese students in a Type C international school.

In this chapter, I reflect on my own personal and professional learning throughout this project. I discuss any expected and unexpected knowledge gained. Additionally, I revisit the literature review and indicate which researchers greatly influenced my project and understanding of it. Ultimately, this chapter provides a sense of closure by exploring the implications and limitations of my project and what trajectory it could take me in next.

Reflection on My Learning

Upon starting research into my topic, I was unfamiliar with the literature surrounding teaching ESL in international schools. My knowledge of it only came from my two experiences in Myanmar and China, so I wanted to understand more about the nuances of my topic. Before teaching in Myanmar and China, I worked closely with ESL teachers here in Minnesota. I had a lot of experience with things like WIDA, sheltered instruction, SLIFE, and other typical ESL contexts here in the U.S. I was convinced that my training in ESL here would help me internationally. Although aspects of it did help, I was overwhelmed with the lack of resources in my international schools, and eventually I came to the conclusion that ESL programs do not fully exist or operate in the international setting. This was strange to me because when looking at different international schools' websites, I saw that most of them prided themselves on bringing a global education to their students. Part of this goal was for their students to learn English, as the hope was for them to enter Western universities. What I didn't know then was that the term "international school" is more or less an umbrella term. What qualifies as "international" is not clear-cut.

At this point, I hope to continue teaching abroad. As a researcher for this topic, I learned a lot of valuable knowledge that I will carry into my career. My newly acquired knowledge of the different types of international schools has allowed me to understand how various contexts require unique ESL programs and curricula. Just like here in the U.S., a one-size-fits-all approach to teaching ESL does not work, and in the international setting I am almost required to create something even more exceptional and rigorous. I

will be better prepared to teach in any international school, evaluate its needs, and design a curriculum that meets those needs.

Personally, I have learned to seek out help more when I need it. For most of my international teaching experience, I have worked alone as the main teacher. It is very easy for me to have tunnel vision when I am planning lessons. If I know what I want at the end of a unit, I will go whichever direction to get there. I give myself a lot of responsibility and pressure to succeed, and this sometimes hinders my ability to ask for help. Creativity and imagination are my best qualities as a teacher, but the problem with that is that everything I plan comes out of my head. Rarely do I ever sit down and research and read about new ideas in teaching or talk to my colleagues for advice. As I researched, I realized how much information was out there. There are answers out there, and I just have to take that first step in order to find it. I value research a lot more now that I know what is out there. Researchers who I never knew about before will become names I remember when I want to find out more about my topic.

In this section, I summarized my learning from this process. I talked about what I learned professionally and personally. The bulk of my learning came from my research. There were a few researchers that positively impacted my capstone. My idea of who I am as a teacher has changed. I will summarize some of the important findings in my research in the next section

Revisiting the Literature

Cullinan's (2016) article on curriculum design and application influenced me the most while doing my research. She has an interesting take on what curriculum design

entails and lays out a solid foundation for how to start. Before I changed my project idea, I was going to use her research to help build a template for situational and needs analyses, so I tried to capture a bit of it in my final project. Through her work, I came upon Kumaravadivelu's (1994) postmethod theory, which stuck with me as I worked on my project. Kumaravadivelu describes postmethod theory as a way to "refigure the relationship between the theorizers and practitioners of method" (p. 28). Essentially, postmethod theory tells us that as teachers (the practitioners), we should have free range to find "an alternative to method, not an alternative method" (p. 29). We can look to our experiences to create the best ways to teach language, even if they may diverge from typical, conventional methodology. In my five years of teaching, I have had to create things from scratch and adapt to changing policies and caseload numbers at my schools. I have had to learn to teach virtually through the current pandemic. I feel strongly about my experiences in the classroom, and I see them as worthwhile lessons in improving my teaching. These are things I cannot learn from an article or a text.

I also found my research into Type C international schools beneficial to my project. I knew my school in Beijing, despite having the word "international" in its name, was not quite the usual international school. Reading through Poole (2018) and Poole (2020) made me realize that my school in Beijing, while interesting, was not an anomaly. Rather, it was part of a growing school community in China. With this new information, I was better able to understand the real goals and purpose of my school. It was like peeling its mask off to see what it really looked like; I would not be able to take my school at face value if I wanted to be effective at teaching English.

Poole's (2018) and Young's (2018) research explains what Type C international schools are. For me, they both introduced the idea of Type C international schools to me even though I had been working in one. Type C international schools have been created over the last few years in response to globalization (Poole, 2018). These kinds of schools catered to middle-class families who want to gain affluence and social capital for their children and families. These kinds of schools differ from traditional international schools in that they offer bilingual programs and may not always hire teachers with the correct qualifications. But Poole (2020) claims they are the future of international education in China, and as such, we should learn how to work within these circumstances rather than fight against them if we happen to be employed in them. Both Poole and Young showed me how to distinguish between the particular types of international schools. Once I was able to make that contrast between my Type C school in Beijing and what I expected an international school should be, it became easy to focus on my topic in order to create my project. Ultimately, though, there is not a lot of research on Type C international schools. Both Poole and Young have provided pertinent information and studies on this kind of school. My hope is that their work will lay the groundwork for further research into this topic.

In this section, I mentioned the few researchers that influenced my project and paper the most. Cullinan (2016) and Kumaravadivelu (1994) gave me the method and foundation for my understanding of my project. Poole (2018) and Young (2018) gave me the content that I needed to structure my project around. In the next section, I will talk about the implications and limitations of my research and project.

Implications and Limitations

At the end of this process, I anticipate my project and capstone to be a useful resource and guide for ESL teachers in a similar position. In this section, I will discuss the implications my work has contributed to the conversation surrounding ESL in Chinese international schools. On the flipside, as thorough as I have made my work, there are limitations to what I have created.

Implications

As I have stated a few times throughout, research on Type C international schools is still relatively new. From what I have been able to gather, I know that Type C international schools have more of a target population than a target goal. That is to say that these schools cater to certain affluent families who are open to a new, experimental way of schooling. Although these families' goal for the children is to learn English, how they do it is of little importance as long as they just do. Knowing this has led me to really experiment with cross-curricular activities. I incorporated language arts, social studies, and art in my unit in order to include a variety of resources and assessments. Learning English happens in many contexts, and this opens up a world of possibilities for what I can teach to students.

Another implication of my project is that just because my future students live in a country where their history is censored and their voices are subdued, it does not mean that they cannot access information that can lead them to think critically about the world around them. I am lucky enough to have grown up in a country where we have the right to learn about our history and criticize it. Because of this, I believe strongly in not

restricting education as a way to move a society forward. As a teacher, I would not be doing my job if I was not teaching truth and power. Even if I am teaching in China, I still want to instill in my students their individuality and talents to lead the generations to come.

With this project, I hope to show other teachers who choose the international teaching route that their imagination and creativity should not be restrained and defined. If teachers have to work within parameters depending on their school, they should look to the culture of the school's home country. They should draw inspiration from the politics of the country, traditions, values, and places to inspire their plans and activities. All of this should cause them to question what gaps are missing in the national curriculum so that they can really teach meaningful content, no matter what the subject area is.

Limitations

I am well aware of how specific my target audience for my project is. Since I had very particular reasons for the decisions I made, my project ended up having a few limitations. When I started working at my school in Beijing, I had expected to stay for another year or two so I could create my project while I was based there. However, as Poole (2020) mentions, Type C schools will continue to grow, so there would be a chance that I would work in them in the future. Fortunately, I will be working at a similar school for the 2021-2022 school year. Still, as I continued researching and drafting my capstone, I had to rethink my project. With that came a new context for my project, a new framework to build off of, a new curriculum to study. These new components narrowed down who I was designing a curriculum for.

The ESL program at my future school teaches English through the Ontario curriculum and the structure to teach it is through different subject areas. I designed my curriculum to focus on all four domains of English learning (reading, writing, listening, speaking) rather than the content. Many schools use Western and native English curricula and standards, whether it be American, Canadian, British, or Australian. Even within those countries, states and provinces carry their own curriculum and standards. The framework I used for my project is limited to only schools and programs that utilize the Ontario curriculum from Canada. I do not have much knowledge of how well-known or well-used the Ontario curriculum is outside of Ontario, but I cannot imagine it being as prevalent as Common Core, Cambridge, International Baccalaureate, or others. The only positive I see when it comes to the curriculum is that standards are easily transferable between different curricula.

My project is also limited in the nationality of its students. I could argue that there are many other countries like China where its education and people are heavily monitored by the government. But with this particular unit, I looked at what topic would be beneficial to my future students. I thought about what current events would be good for them to learn a bit more information about. The biggest news story coming out of China as an outsider is the ongoing mistreatment and abuse of the Uighurs in Xinjiang province. Because this is a sensitive topic, I wanted to be subtle in how I could convey a situation like this to students without ever mentioning what is actually happening and with a positive outlook. With this project, I have taken into consideration the cultural backgrounds of the students. I have worked with Chinese students for four years, so I

have a good grasp of the kind of pressure they face and the linguistic challenges when they learn English. These many factors will come together to become a cohesive unit that is tailored to them.

One last limitation to my project is that it encompasses only one main subject area, which is social studies. The reason for that is to narrow the language and learning objectives to be manageable and available for the students. For some assessments, I planned artistic and language arts-related activities. Social studies can be a very heavy, technical subject for students, so I made sure to include two other subjects that not only complement social studies but also offer a reprieve from the weighty material. Reading stories and creating art projects seemed like the way to do that. For teachers who use my project as a resource, I intend for this to be a jumping-off point.

Future Implementation

This coming summer, I will be moving abroad to my new school. I will be teaching in a similar context as a Type C international school. I plan to bring my project with me and teach part, if not all, of it in my new school. I will be teaching two separate classes of upper elementary Chinese English learners. I will be working with a grade-level team and be supported by a lead teacher and advisor. I hope to be able to share my project with them. It is my understanding that my new school encourages creativity and is flexible when it comes to teaching content, so I am optimistic that my project will be met with enthusiasm. The program has existing curricula already in place, but like any competent teacher, I plan on reviewing it and making changes if necessary. If the teaching of my project proves to be successful, I will plan on creating more units

for other subjects. If I do not feel like it is successful, then I will reflect and revise the project to make it more culturally appropriate and equitable.

Summary

In this chapter, I reflected on what I learned from the research process. Going through this meticulous process has shed some light on topics I had always wanted to learn more about. I have also gained a greater appreciation for working internationally. What started out as a frustrating situation has turned into an optimistic feeling that I will have something to be passionate about in the next few years.

Throughout this paper, I have tried to answer the question *What does an ESL curriculum look like in a Type C Chinese international school and how will it reflect the cultural and linguistic needs of its students?* In my experience teaching abroad, I always felt like I was not doing enough. I used to think that was because of me, but eventually I recognized that if I was not able to feel qualified for my job, it was because I did not feel supported by my schools. My schools lacked proper ESL programs. Like Cullinan (2016) mentions, if a school lacks a program it is because it lacks a curriculum that supports that in the first place. I could not be a good teacher if I did not have the proper resources to guide me. With this project, I hope to have answered my question fully.

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