

Chapter 9

Chinese Foreign Language Online Course Design to Improve English Monolingual Teachers' Awareness of ELLs: A Linguistic, Cultural, and Technological Awareness Development and Transfer Model

Congcong Wang
University of Northern Iowa, USA

ABSTRACT

To improve English monolingual teachers' awareness of obstacles that English language learners (ELL) may encounter at school, in 2012 the author conducted a study to explore preservice teachers' perceptions of learning a foreign language online. No participant had Chinese learning experience and their interest varied. This study suggested that preservice teachers perceived their initial experiences as online language learners increased their linguistic, cultural and technological awareness, which would further benefit them when working with ELLs. However, it was unclear if teachers perceived they could transfer their awareness into teaching practice. Thus, this follow-up study explores in-service teachers' perceptions of linguistic, cultural, and technological awareness transfer in teaching ELLs by asking them to engage and reflect on their experiences with a Chinese language online course. This chapter proposes a model for language teacher linguistic, cultural, and technological awareness development and transfer, as well as discussing issues related to language teacher awareness transfer.

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INTRODUCTION

The continuing linguistic, cultural and technological diversity among students and the increasing influence of Internet technologies on learning bring challenges to today's teachers (Becker, Rodriguez, Estrada & Davis, 2016; Beatty, 2013; Burns & Richards, 2012; Coiro, Leu, Lankshear & Knobel, 2008; Mills, 2010; Wang & Winstead, 2016). The teacher education and professional development literature suggests that educators should prepare preservice teachers to work with linguistic, cultural and technological diversity by raising their awareness in these areas (Mills, 2010; Russell, Bebell O'Dwyer & O'Connor, 2003; Wang, 2012; Wang, 2015). A review of teacher cognition theories suggests the importance of teacher awareness development (Andrew, 2007; Borg, 2001; England, 2017). To expand the understanding of teacher awareness development through teachers' learning experiences, Wang (2012) conducted a pilot study to explore preservice English monolingual teachers' perceptions while learning a foreign language online. In this pilot study, preservice teachers refers to student teachers who are undergoing training through teacher education programs before taking positions as full time teachers. The results suggested that preservice teachers perceived their experiences of online foreign language learning prepared them to work with English Language Learners (ELLs). Results also suggest it increased their linguistic, cultural and technological awareness which, in this study, refers to teachers' general knowledge about any aspect of a language, culture, or technology. Linguistic and cultural awareness means teachers need to be aware of broad issues such as students' home-school language gap, teachers' self-awareness of their own language use, and diverse cultural backgrounds (Andrews & Svalberg, 2016). Teachers' technological awareness refers awareness of issues such as appropriate use of new technology to facilitate diverse students' learning (Ferreira, Salinas, & Morales, 2014; Thomas, 2013). However, the literature is unclear about whether and how teachers transfer linguistic, cultural and technological awareness developed through teacher education contexts into practice. A follow-up study is essential to explore how teachers, from their perspectives, transfer their linguistic, cultural and technological awareness into teaching ELLs. If teachers know more about how they transfer awareness, educational programs for teachers can use this information to improve offerings. In this study, a literature review presents a model of teacher awareness development. A follow-up study is presented that explores teacher awareness transfer. This follow-up study develops a model for teacher linguistic, cultural and technological awareness development and transfer, and discusses related issues. Finally, conclusions and implications are presented.

Literature

A model of language teacher awareness development was based on a review of the literature on language teacher cognition, language teacher education and teacher awareness development. (See Figure 1 for the model).

This model depicts a linear process of language teacher awareness development and transfer, from developing awareness in teacher education contexts to transferring awareness to ELL classroom contexts. This is the "ideal" process for which much language teacher education is developed. A more specific explanation is below (Adams & Krockover, 1997; Bamard & Burns, 2012; Borko, 2004; Borg, 2003; England, 2017; Gándara, Maxwell-Jolly & Driscoll, 2005; Gatbonton, 2008).

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