

**ESL International Pre-Service Teacher Development: Intercultural Education as the
Enacting of Anti-Oppressive Pedagogies**

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Abstract

Teaching English as a second language in China has and continues to be both a lucrative business within the country, and an exciting opportunity for native English speakers to gain exposure to a different culture while gaining teaching experience at the same time. This endeavor presents wonderful opportunities for cross national and multicultural cooperation and collaboration, broadening the minds of all participants and enriching the lives of learners in China. Unfortunately, these opportunities have also come to be undermined by narrow bottom-line thinking from a corporate perspective, which undercuts the potentialities mentioned above by positioning international teachers as commodities to be marketed and sold for financial gain at the cost of personal and professional dignity, and educational excellence. These are symptomatic of a deeper embedded set of psychological attributes which succeed in perpetuating an imbalanced landscape which manifests itself as oppressive in both form and function and thus requires progressive interventions to enhance the probability of such endeavors reaching their full potential for good. It is thus suggested that pre-service preparation and development courses ought to be made compulsory for new international participants travelling abroad to teach in China. This prescribed course sees cultural competence as a key learning aim to adapting, adjusting, and even transforming said problematic landscapes. The course is articulated as an intercultural education course and underpinned by anti-oppressive pedagogies which take seriously the need to explore the psychological and relational dimensions of all participants to better ensure an effective and lasting transformation within these spaces.

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Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used throughout this dissertation.

CQ: Cultural Intelligence

CSR: Corporate Social Responsibility

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

ESL: English as a Second Language

HK: Hong Kong

HSK: Hanyu Shuiping Kaoshi (Test of Standard Chinese Language Proficiency of the People's Republic of China, for Non-Native Chinese Speakers)

IELTS: International English Language Testing System

IST: International School Teachers

MOOC: Massive Open Online Course

cMOOC: connective Massive Open Online Course

IMOOC: language Massive Open Online Course

xMOOC: extended Massive Open Online Course

NNS: Non-native Speaker

TSP: Teacher Success Platform

UK: United Kingdom

US: United States

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Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1. Context

This dissertation serves as a starting point for a larger project that was initially conceived within the offices of a Chinese language training company in 2017, a project interested in the cultural intelligence and competence of teachers both local and international, and the depth and rigour of any existent pre-requisite courses for preparing teachers for multicultural landscapes. The existent requirements and screening procedures were and continue to be deemed inadequate, serving rather to augment a landscape that is argued to be oppressive in its capacity to perpetuate imbalanced perceptions and attitudes towards the “other”, thus stifling the potentialities of multicultural education endeavors, and maintaining an imbalanced status quo.

1.1.1. The Curious Case of the Chinese ESL Landscape

The need for professionals in English has not only become a means of participating in the activities and endeavors of the global community, but also for demonstrating and, dare I say, boasting and bolstering a certain social position within the middle to upper classes of modern-day Chinese society. Several reasons can be put forward as to why English was inserted into the curriculums of most Chinese institutions of formal learning, but given this paper’s aims, it is argued that inclusion was influenced in part by strong desires for the children of Chinese parents to work toward the prestigious social goals that were mentioned above. This fast-tracked the emergence of several training companies focused on teaching/improving English as a second language. To paint a more vivid picture of this phenomenon, Qiang and Wolff (2002) provide an accurate description and breakdown of the landscape when they say that:

EFL/ESL has become a very big business in China. This is evidenced by reports showing that ESL has become a 10-billion-yuan business in China, and of the 37-billion-yuan annual book sales, ESL takes up as much as 25% of the market share.

And a few ESL teachers in Shanghai command an hourly rate of 1,000 yuan (US\$120). Even on average, a student pays 10-20 yuan (US\$1.2-2.4) for one hour of ESL training. (p. 3)

To capitalize on the needs/desires of Chinese parents, ESL training companies or third-party headhunters recruit large numbers of international teachers every year. According to Bunnell and Poole (2023) “the number of international schools has increased more than fourfold between 2000 and 2019, from 2,500 to almost 11,000. The number of students enrolled in these schools increased from 1.0 million in 2000, to reach 4.3 million in 2015, and 5.4 million in 2019” (p. 463). Additionally, Stacy (2020) as cited by Maclean (2021), claim that “during the same period, the number of International School Teachers (ISTs) grew from 90,000 to 560,000” (p. 463). These numbers reflect the dimensions of international schools, but the number of newly recruited ESL teachers may well be on par, if not eclipse the numbers mentioned. It is to the ESL landscape that I focus my attention on, for while the activity/ies of recruiters responding to the desires, beliefs and general attitudes of parents towards international teachers cannot easily be remedied, the efforts here are nonetheless ones that are inspired and driven by hope, hope that believes that deliberate interventions can improve how the relevant actors engage and interact with one another within and without the teaching spaces, interventions that can work towards greater intercultural competence, and overall cultural intelligence (CQ).

According to Moon et al. (2012) (CQ) has received great attention as an antecedent of cross-cultural adjustment, and Ang and Van Dyne (2008) defined it as “an individual’s competence to function and manage effectively in culturally diverse settings (p. 20). Similarly, Brander et al. (2004) claim that intercultural competence through intercultural education “proposes processes to enable the discovery of mutual relationships and the dismantling of barriers” (p. 40). Using intercultural education over multicultural education, as Brander et al.

cite Rey (1996), “if the prefix “inter” is given its full meaning, this necessarily implies interaction; exchange; breaking down barriers; reciprocity; and objective solidarity” (p. 40). With these various definitions on intercultural competence and intercultural education laid, I’ll provide here a primary definition of intercultural education to serve as a sort of home base for proceeding definitions that will come as the result of cross disciplinary considerations and analysis. Intercultural education, considering this projects interest in decolonising and anti-oppressive interventions, can be understood as the knowledge, attitudes, skills, and critical awareness that enable individuals to communicate effectively, ethically, and reflexively across cultural differences. It combines cognitive understanding of cultural norms and practices with dispositional openness, practical skills for interaction, and critical reflection on power, identity and structural inequalities. Intercultural education therefore includes both psonal development and pedagogical practices that seek to challenge hegemonic narratives, and promote equitable spheres of professional activity. While effective reform requires many to come to a far larger party than this endeavor currently has the space to cover, consideration of who comes into these spaces should be at the height of recruiting and academic quality endeavors, along with so-called hurdle requirements to these positions that both screen and prepare pre-service teachers for two interconnected and largely important endeavors; the teaching of learners and the co-operation with cultural “others”.

1.1.2. Purpose

This thesis is thus interested in what constitutes an anti-oppressive pedagogy, why it is appropriate for these landscapes, and how it can be adapted to enhance culture education courses that are positioned as both pre-service requirements and ongoing developmental programs for educators. My starting point will be to give better clarity to some of the many concepts that have, and will be deployed in this thesis, namely, oppression, education, pedagogy and culture, to name a few. However, this dissertation is not merely satisfied with

providing said clarity for clarity's sake, although these serve as the imperative building blocks for this plea to resonate with greater force, it states in no uncertain terms a strong desire to ultimately situate itself as a persuasive argument towards much-needed reform within the Chinese English As a Second Language (ESL from now on) landscape, and the hearts and minds of those working within them. Kennedy & Groessler, as cited in Brookfield (1995), frame this well when they say that:

As the profession of social work continues to evolve, the manner we as trainers and educators expand adult learning should be humanizing. For this to happen, we must first understand that we cannot separate the person from their experiences, as our experiences are culturally framed and shaped. How we experience events may change according to the language and categories of analysis we use, and according to the cultural, moral, and ideological vantage points from which they are viewed. (p. 79)

While the authors speak to the discipline of social work, this sentiment resonates and transfers well to various dimensions in so far as our endeavors are enacted within the global community. Speaking to this endeavor, the emphasis lies in the action agenda of this research, which, stated well by Creswell et al. (2017), consists of working towards reform that may change the lives of the participants, the institutions in which individuals work or live, and the researcher's life. Moreover, specific issues need to be addressed that speak to important social issues of the day, issues such as empowerment, inequality, oppression, domination, suppression, and alienation. While all these concepts will not receive individual analysis given time constraints, they will still be important terms when looking at the primary concepts that were mentioned earlier on.

It is very important to note that this project does not claim to solve all of the problems of international education companies in China or claim to be able to make massive changes in the countries' education landscape. It instead hopes to create the sort of programs that will both

equip and involve several participants with and within the kind of knowledge and knowledge construction spheres that will facilitate more people approaching the table for critical, caring, informed, compassionate and effective conversations that will sow the seeds for intercultural fruit to better bloom. These position themselves as the kinds of fruit that improve cross-cultural relationships, and by extension, improve our in-classroom practices, considering that our well-being outside of the classroom will impact on our teaching, and by extension, learners within it as well. The key focus on international pre-service teachers at this stage should not be assumed as the sole focus or goal that requires no further work or participation from the local Chinese teachers and larger staff, but it is a crucial first step that acts simultaneously as a declaration of intent for changes to be made for the better. Thus, the focus is on current recruiting practices of international teachers to China, a very important part of the ESL endeavor, and will be undertaken in order to critique current practices and recommend an approach to improving it. Let me now proceed to sketch the structure of this thesis.

1.1.2. Thesis Structure

The structure of this paper will look to first set out its intentions and express its observations of the current and prevailing state of affairs. Next, the literature review marks out the key themes and the research question before moving on to the methodology of the project in section 3. This outlines and considers the sort of analysis to be used. The body in section 4 of the paper seeks to answer the research question/s presented, outlining some of the occurrence in connection with the endeavor of education, it will look to provide and outline the dimensions of oppression as a particular area of entry before clarifying the terms most common within the discipline of education in order to best proceed with consistency when tentatively outlining the roles of educators, the educated, the content, the methods, the assessments, and the overall dynamic interplay of all the above mentioned factors in an online, partly synchronous and asynchronous learning environment. I will then proceed by setting out to use

Kevin Kumashiro's analysis of the four approaches to anti-oppressive education as a suitable set of headings for an intercultural/culture learning course which are argued for as an expression of an anti-oppressive pedagogy, this will be in sections 5 and 6, which will then be followed by concluding remarks in section 7, including analyses and responses to challenges and concerns to such a project, before closing with a brief coverage of future research possibilities.

Thus, I bring my introductory section to a close, having briefly set the stage for what is to come next by making mention of the formal education landscape in China, and how this has given rise to extra-curricular and enrichment programs that has opened the door for internationals to venture into the country for teaching opportunities. The intention here was to start the conversation on how and where the seeds of oppression are planted and tentatively mention how they may be pruned. What follows next will be the literature review which will seek to highlight and synthesise the various strands of research that align with the current project's activities and aims.

Chapter 2. Literature Review and Analysis

The following literature review will look to highlight a series of key and sub-key themes that will serve as the primary areas of interest for this project. This serves to enhance the present study but is also be put forward in order to show gaps that present opportunities for innovation. The literature that follows stands on its own, but in each instance fails to cover all the unique areas which this study hopes to tackle. For example, studies have been conducted on culture learning for internationals, or strategies to reduce turnover rates in international schools, but these have not been applied to enrichment institutions such as Chinese ESL companies. Similarly, literature on corporate social responsibility is numerous, but corporate social responsibility as applied to contexts of professional learning and teaching have been less so. As such the intention here lies in effective synthesis of the existent literature, and it is to this that I turn to now.

2.1. Key Themes

Key Theme 1: International Pre-Service Education for Chinese ESL Companies as One Expression of Corporate Social Responsibility

A culture learning and teaching course is informed by a thorough conceptualization of oppression and deemed appropriate given its large emphasis on the plethora of social phenomena commonplace in formal and informal contexts, comparatively construed. This is designed with both the hope of choosing the best possible individuals to teach in Chinese ESL spaces, thus benefiting the entity from an economic point of view but is also positioned as a course that fulfills an enrichment purpose, one that increases the probability of better co-operation, and an overall positive experience of diverse participants working together within a shared space. While economic arguments will not be unpacked thoroughly within this paper, the inclusion of a culture learning requirement is interpreted as part of an enterprise's normative commitment to their mandate of corporate social responsibility (CSR from now on). As such,

the next section of this literature review is committed to briefly highlighting the relevant literature on CSR before progressing to the literature for pre-service teacher preparation/education. The need for CSR arose in response to various business scandals and poor in-house practices both recently and in the past. From the theft of employee pensions in the case of Enron and United Airlines in the West to a spate of scandals and crises from Chinese organizations since 2006 which were responsible for tainted pet food, toxic toothpaste, and fake medicine to name a few (IP, 2008). Werhane (2008) sketches two early definitions of CSR, beginning with Davis and Blomstrom (1975), two of the early thinkers in this field who claim that “[Corporate] social responsibility is the obligation of decision-makers to take actions which protect and improve the welfare of society as a whole, along with their interests” (p.23). Carroll (1979), often cited in this regard, expands this definition by adding that, “the social responsibility of business encompasses the economic, legal, ethical and discretionary expectations that society has of organizations at a given point in time” (p. 500).

Werhane (2008) is right to point out the two-fold problem with both definitions, the first of these problems, when simplified, regards scope, and the second deals with appearance. She argues correctly that:

There is an almost exclusive focus on business/society relationships, neglecting corporate relationships with their employees, customers, suppliers, and shareholders who directly account for and depend on company success or failure. Second, given this definition, CSR has been sometimes misidentified with corporate discretionary responsibilities to the communities in which companies operate, e.g. philanthropy, charity, or community public relations. (p. 270)

Proposed interventions ought to be underpinned by these definitions, while reflecting on their parameters within other cultural contexts, such as current practices in Chinese organizations. In this case, such a programme should, as Ip (2008) argues, be compatible with the reasonable

core elements of local culture and ideology; relevant to China's developmental needs and challenges; problem-oriented; consistent with universal principles of ethics or hyper norms shared by the world community; and able to generate mid-level principles and norms for prescribing behaviors. On this note, I turn now to the next section that analyses the existent literature on anti-oppressive pedagogies, or related concepts.

Key Theme 2: An Anti-Oppressive Pedagogy

Complex are the topics of oppression and education, respectively, and so too then is the endeavor to enact a course that is informed, indeed inspired by an anti-oppressive pedagogy. For enacting such a normatively grounded programme it is important to also consider the existent beliefs, perceived status, and intentions of the enactors, while also considering platform, content, and participants. Keith (2009) suggested that the task of creating educational sites that support difference is acquiring increasing urgency as the interconnected world brings closer contact with ways of being and people that are 'not like us. (p. 540).

As such, when it comes to considerations of the conceptualisation and planning of programs that support difference, Kumashiro (2022) makes a useful set of demarcations regarding a set of, let's call them themes, that every educator can focus on when enacting an anti-oppressive pedagogy. These include.

- ☐ Education For the Other
- ☐ Education About the Other
- ☐ Education That Is Critical of Privileging and Othering
- ☐ Education That Changes Students and Societies

Of course, these are not rigid designators, as there does exist the possibility of overlap and the use of more than one entry point. This project may very well benefit from the use of all four entry points, but this will be unpacked later in this thesis. Education programs such as this are not without their challenges though, especially when it comes to the practical side of affairs, in

other words, the official insertion within the enterprises' learning ecosystem. Baehr (2016) in his paper, *Is Intellectual Character Growth a Realistic Educational Aim?* provides arguments against three objections to a program that looks to create/foster/develop and nurture intellectual virtues. While this project is not at this time focused on the particulars and value of intellectual virtues, there still lies similarities, if not indeed identical aims and desires for such dispositions to be cultivated, albeit in different ways. However, the objections appear to me to be transferable to any educational endeavor that goes against the grain of what is seen as useful, legitimate or necessary regarding approach, content, aims, etc.

The first objection is that there is no such thing as intellectual virtue, the second is that even if they do exist, it is unrealistic to think that growth in these qualities can be fostered in an educational setting, and the third objection is that there simply are not enough resources to fund such complex undertakings. (p. 3). It certainly is of great interest to see where qualities/dispositions such as cultural intelligence, intercultural competence, compassion, understanding, humility, etc. fit in with definitions regarding the various virtues, and it is these connections which make Baehr's arguments imperative in striving towards such humanistic projects. This is again something that will be unpacked in greater detail later, but for now, I turn to the importance of Chinese corporate culture as an integral focus regarding content.

Sub-Key Theme 1: Chinese (Corporate) Culture Learning

Connecting with both of the above preceding themes, I claim, is the emphasis on understanding Chinese corporate culture, and its correspondence to the larger national culture. Researchers such as Bell (2008), Low et al. (2013) and Isac and Remes (2021), to name only a few, all point in one sense or another to the fact that Chinese behavior is deeply rooted in and informed by the legacy left by the Chinese philosopher Confucius (551-479 BC). For more than two thousand years, Confucius' disciples have worked to assure that his legacies have become an integral part of the Chinese social, economic, and cultural inheritances. According

to Chen and Pan (1993), encompassing and linking the key cultural tenets, which include respect for hierarchy and age, group orientation, and preservation of face, is the "...Confucian imperative of working to achieve harmony, to which all other goals are subordinate". (p. 135) This marks itself out as imperative learning elements for internationals, but this ought to also be presented in a comparative manner.

According to O'Keefe and O'Keefe (1997), selected behavioral differences between Chinese and Westerners include:

- 1) communication practices.
- 2) initiative-taking.
- 3) respect for authority.
- 4) treatment of information.

What will follow will be a summary of these differences manifested in day-to-day interactions in a corporate context, figure 1 will review the attitudes of each group's perception of these differences.

Chinese

Communication Practice - When dealing with non-Chinese co-workers on day-to-day business issues, the Chinese tend to be passive and polite in their communications.

Answers to questions also tend to be subtle and somewhat circuitous, rather than direct.

Initiative Taking - As a rule, the Chinese tend to avoid taking initiative in the daily operations of the joint venture. All situations are viewed as being quite complex and full of uncertainty, bringing threats to stability and harmony. It is better to live with the known status quo, rather than initiate a new and possibly disconcerting situation.

Respect for authority - When dealing with authority figures, the Chinese as a rule fulfill their obligations to authority by being obedient. They emphasize vertical relationships and would

not risk offending authority by cutting horizontally across functional or business lines to resolve an issue.

Treatment of information - The Chinese are known as great compilers of statistics and other data which, for the most part, are accepted uncritically as valid, especially if the source is an authority figure. They see themselves as approaching information analysis in a realistic way. Past, present, and future are one. Reality is extremely complex, dynamic, and unknowable. Confucian teachings state that the present can only be known in light of the teachings of the past.

International

Communication Practice - Western communication practices encourage them to be more articulate, direct, and to the point when discussing an issue.

Initiative Taking - Westerners tend to take the initiative, especially in cases where future problems/complications can be avoided. They see themselves as being proactive, acting independently, and thinking ahead.

Respect For Authority - Westerners attempt to respect vertical relationships while pursuing horizontal ones to rely on peers as well as superiors for information and decisions. They treat authority figures as knowledgeable but fallible individuals.

Treatment of Information - Westerners typically accept information as input to the decision-making process and seek to verify its validity independently before applying it. They tend to use multiple sources of input, where available.

Table 1: Behavioral Differences and View of the Other Between International and Chinese Staff in a Corporate Context.

	International's View of Chinese Colleagues	Chinese View of International Colleagues
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Communication	Evasive and misleading in their communications.	Offensive in their directness.
Initiative Taking	Inattentive and constantly avoiding responsibility. Reactive instead of proactive.	Disrupting the harmony of the group. Arrogant, egotistical and disrespectful towards the group.
Respect For Authority	Overdependent on authority figures and unable to behave as individuals.	Rude and impolite, lacking respect for authority. Violating the natural order of things.
Treatment of Information	Lacking in critical thinking skills and unable to discriminate between relevant and irrelevant information. Poor decision makers in "soft" areas such as marketing.	The assumption that reality is knowable, and absolute is viewed as being naive, at best. Prolonged, detailed analysis of information beyond the point where it is intuitively valid is seen as a senseless waste of resources.

O’Keefe and O’Keefe’s (1997) summary is an imperative insight regarding cultural knowledge and is also transferable across professions and disciplines within China. However, their prescription is equally important when considering that:

“Since the Westerners are seeking business ventures in China, they are the guests. It is to their advantage to become more sensitized to cultural history and the practices of their Chinese counterparts. Time spent learning about the Confucian roots of Chinese behavior will help them avoid drawing misconceived conclusions regarding the behavior of their colleagues. This can help to minimize the conflict. The Chinese also need to learn more about Western business behavior, since they are increasingly playing a central role in the world economy. If they are to compete on a global scale, they must improve their understanding of Western business behavior. The Confucian principle of seeking compromise rather than conflict may help both parties to find a middle ground which will help them work more effectively together in their joint business ventures. (p.4)

O’Keefe and O’Keefe are not the only authors who structure the values, attitudes, behavior, etc. of multicultural groups within this sort of framework. Parsons's (1991) book *The Social System*, maps out distinct relational qualities among cultures, qualities that would be summarised and reinterpreted by writers such as Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (2012) as well as Williams (2017), the latter creating a similar framework for student learners in China by emphasizing the identical if slightly reworded concepts such as individualism and collectivism, power distance, masculinity versus femininity, uncertainty avoidance and the overall educational dynamics of the East Asian context. The seeds thus seem to be planted early, and one can make the connection from the earlier literature by connecting, for example, concepts such as respect for authority with power distance.

Similarly, the above writers engaged with similar work as Williams (2017), continuously cite Geert Hofstede (2005), whose book, *Cultures and Organizations*, gives an in-depth treatment of the same concepts mentioned above, such as power distance (ch.2), individualism and collectivism (ch.3), masculinity and femininity (ch.4), uncertainty avoidance

(ch.5) and Confucian dynamism as an additional dimension to cultural difference (ch.7) in China.

If there is to be the creation of successful anti-oppressive pedagogy, then knowledge of the unique corporate cultural dynamics is imperative in so far as they give a concrete basis in which to frame the educational agenda, content, and tasks around. While the establishment of a good pedagogical foundation is of primary importance, the rough sketch of the online framework that will house these kinds of courses will be covered in the later chapters.

2.2. Research Questions

The main question that this project hopes to answer is: How might an anti-oppressive pedagogy enrich a culture learning course for pre-service international teachers looking to teach in Chinese ESL companies?

A smaller set of questions are put forward to assist in answering the above primary question.

RQ1: In which ways does oppression manifest both in the external Chinese environment and potentially within the formal learning and teaching context prescribed here?

RQ2: How can a culture learning course be structured to be both effective, pedagogically, and in positioning itself as a tool for better screening and development of teachers?

With the main, secondary and tertiary questions put forward, I will now look to conclude the literature review section with a summary of what has been said, by way of an expression of the research significance of the project.

2.3. Research Significance

The large amount of research on the individual parts of the current project has been numerous, yet the synthesis of these concepts with the aim of application within the Chinese ESL enterprise and broader Chinese cultural context has been more challenging to come across,

therefore leaving exciting opportunities for tackling existent challenges whilst simultaneously providing opportunities for continued research in the future. Existent research has focused on the Chinese English Language learning industry; continued learning of adults generally, and teacher education and development more specifically; as well as the implementation of culture training programs for individuals and professionals moving to countries abroad. With regards to the Chinese ESL landscape, academics have reported on their results within different contexts, whether they be international kindergartens and schools, or other language training companies. The focus, however, has been more on concepts such as teacher efficacy in the classroom, see Day and Gu (2007). The perceived status of foreigners in the country, or Others have also investigated elements such as turnover rates, see Bunnell and Poole (2023), and the language teaching competency of international teachers in comparison to their local counterparts, see Dewaele et al. (2021) and Brutt-Griffler and Samimy (2001).

The studies on literature have also focused on approaches to life-long learning, or teacher training more specifically, however, this hasn't appeared to place a great deal of emphasis on intercultural and/or culture education for pre-service teachers, and certainly not any for those who are not teachers in the formal sense of the word, but rather those interested in attempting a brief career in teaching for the more discreet aspiration of traveling abroad for fun and experience or vice versa. Work on these programs has also not appeared to place a great deal of emphasis on establishing a firm pedagogical grounding for such programs within these contexts. As such, the significance of this research, as mentioned at the start of this section, lies in its desire to effectively synthesize these valuable research endeavors and, more specifically, develop the theoretical grounding that will allow for an ethically and pedagogically effective culture learning course that can be realistically pitched and integrated into existent online learning ecosystems of ESL companies.

The above literature attempted to position the proposed course as an expression of a company's corporate social responsibility, in so far as ESL companies situate themselves as corporate entities. Part of the content imperative to the success of a culture learning course, is one that takes seriously the professional culture within such spaces, and their correspondence to the larger national context. This would allow for the articulation of the two main research questions, which section 4 will attempt to house answers to. To recap, this literature review necessitated the breaking up of the various parts and synthesizing them in such a way as to strengthen the main argument for the thesis. It required the conversations over corporate social responsibility to be adapted to a corporate educational context, and one that is located within the borders of an East Asian country. It required a preliminary conceptualization to better fit the prescriptive language of a pedagogical discourse that seeks to go beyond mere training.

It also looked to frame this discourse as an anti-oppressive pedagogy adapted to international pre-service teachers working towards teaching in Chinese ESL spaces, and it looked to Chinese corporate culture, and its corresponding national culture to be an imperative focal point regarding content construction. Content that would itself need to be effectively adapted to a digital pedagogical paradigm that would need to be proposed as a suitable and desirable fit for a company's online learning ecosystem, if any exists at all. The significance of this research was expressed as the synthesizing of these various themes into a cohesive whole, which so far has not seemed to be a common fixture in the existent literature. With this now brought to a close, I now proceed to the methodology section of the thesis which highlights the vehicle/s which will assist in guiding us to the answers of the main research questions.

Chapter 3. Methodology

3.1. Emancipatory Research: Auto - Ethnography

The seven years spent working within the Chinese ESL Landscape provided the inspiration for this project, the collection of experiences acting as the raw data which presently situates itself as a wellspring which is constantly drawn from to underpin each claim, proposition and/or prescription. My time spent in both formal and informal settings with members of both the local and international communities, allowed me to connect strands in the form of common themes to serve the present research endeavor, thus working to eliminate the problem of merely making such claims from the armchair. These moments, I believe, co-inside well with O’Leary’s (2012) definition of the present research method as the exploration of cultural groups in a bid to understand, describe, and interpret a way of life from the point of view of its participants. Further, critical ethnography adds a political agenda of exposing inequitable, unjust, or repressive influences that are acting on ‘marginalized’ cultural groups, in a bid to offer avenues for positive change. In other words, ‘Critical ethnography seeks to change existing social systems by exposing their dominant and repressive ideologies. This specific research resonates well with the present project in so far as the ‘marginalized’ cultural group in this case are international educators that are, whether they are fully aware of it or not, both the oppressed and participants of an oppressive enterprise, as this project argues. The positive change is therefore undertaken by giving a preliminary sketch of a critical pedagogical endeavor where none existed before. It seeks, at this stage, to empower international teachers in such a way that their efforts may find greater efficacy within the culture that they will hopefully be better equipped to engage with and within.

Yet, one may, rightfully, argue that the approach to researching the particular social landscape in question, as relevant as it may have been to the spirit in which this first phase study is being written, holds bearing only to the time in which experiences were being had in

the field, and thus is not a method that is being deployed at the present moment. However, this is not altogether true, as briefly stated before. Personal experiences are still seen as holding an important place in progressing with the present research, and the act of drawing from the aforementioned wellspring of those experiences is an activity that is engaged with at most moments when pen is put to paper, and as such, an auto-ethnographical approach to this study in conjunction with hermeneutic approaches to text analysis, is regarded as both appropriate and warranted. As Reed-Danahay (2019) states it “Autoethnography is a multivocal concept and appeals to researchers and writers in many fields who seek ways to place personal experience within wider sociopolitical contexts” (p.3). Denshire (2014) adds to this when quoting Sparkes (2000) who explains that “Auto-ethnographic writing can be ‘highly personal accounts that draw upon the experience of the author/researcher for the purposes of extending sociological understanding” (p. 832). Again, given the importance of personal experience amassed over seven years working within Chinese ESL spaces of various kinds, the auto-ethnographical approach to research as designated under the ethnographic research strategy looked relevant and appropriate. However, while justification of the method for the current project is one thing, the shortcomings of an auto-ethnographic approach is another considering aspects such as personal bias and the limitations of one insider’s perspective. In the instance of personal bias, negative experiences both witnessed and lived were precisely what motivated the present project to begin with, although these could run the risk of presenting a lens which provides skewed/negative interpretations of the landscape while not considering the cultural nuances underpinning events within these environments. Indeed, initial pilot programs of the first intercultural outfitting sessions were ineffective for precisely these reasons. Earlier attempts unthinkingly imposed Western standards and expectations on both local and international participants, presenting verbose concepts that didn’t take into consideration the fact that most participants would struggle to internalise the content due to second-language

cognitive processing . Learning aims were ill defined, and sessions became like lectures in ethics that didn't effectively and practically align with the day-to-day of the training company. Preparations and intra-sessions lacked constructivist components, creating the possible assumption that I alone could correctly interpret the professional landscape on the basis of experiencing events that I perceived to be negative based on my personal and professional values. The personal experiences provided valuable lessons to move forward on, but they also presented a slanted perception of the other not so easily remedied. However, the acknowledging of these shortcomings are the first steps towards further efforts for mitigation and sees the mixed approached under the larger umbrella of a critical ethnography method as integral to supplementing the raw experiences both from the perspective of the researcher and other participants. Second, collaborative efforts will form an equally imperative part of data analysis and interpretation, which will allow for better access across language/cultural barriers that would otherwise act as a hindrance to the expression of local participants, and the interpretation of their contributions, thus assisting in adding greater depth to the insider perspective.

It is here not possible to fully unpack the dimensions of the desired method, but rather to lay the foundation upon which a desired PhD study may springboard off of. For now, it suffices to say that the strength of the auto-ethnographic approach is in its ability to provide a fresh perspective and interpretation of a state of affairs which may establish a newer set of incisive questions for sparking reflection and discussion, questions that veer away from standard interpretations of existent data sets. In a word, experiences do matter, and in this case, allow for a more robust analysis of relational dimensions within unique pedagogical avenues and paradigms. It is through these approaches that I hope to strengthen the arguments going forward.

3.2. Conceptual and Contextual Analysis

For the thesis to effectively argue for its position, conceptual clarification is required for the concepts prescriptively deployed towards the purpose of effective cultural education for greater cross-cultural cooperation and understanding within Chinese Language training companies. However, conceptual clarity is always aware of the various contexts in which they are or will be unpacked. Concepts such as oppression, culture, racism, or pedagogy to name a few, may take on different shapes within different borders, which creates the necessity to provide the kind of opportunities for these concepts to be unpacked within a constructivist framework, which ought to prevent the ready-made provision of immutable answers that can fail to capture the impact that certain cultural landscapes have on these concepts. As Fetterman (2019) explains, qualitative approaches focus on the intentionality or symbolic significance of key terms, phrases, and financial figures. This requires coding the data and interpreting the patterns that emerge within the context of the cultural setting (Emphasis on my own). Of course, while it is important to make the considerations of the context in which the claims, indeed, where the research endeavor/s are taking place within, it is also equally important to make a stand on what one sees as problematic from the belief that there is an objective standard of truth and what is right. As such, while contextual sensitivity in the analysis is important, it must never be allowed to transform the primary claim into one that fits into the realm of cultural relativism. This is the spirit in which the method progresses in as I explore the choice of research material, this is what I turn to next.

3.3. Choice of Material

The previous literature review of a larger doctorate program would be the starting point for a project that would become more refined to fit newly emerged parameters, while still retaining the primary theme of pre-service teacher education. While originally focusing on applied virtue ethics in teacher education, this would be filed as something to focus on at a later period after feedback from the first draft literature review. I began by searching literature in

the domain of corporate ethics, given the particularly unique attributes of Chinese ESL companies. In particular, I would focus on the phrase corporate social responsibility, with individuals such as IP (2008) providing helpful resources on interpreting corporate social responsibility within the Chinese corporate context, not to mention his ability to make a comparative analysis with organizations in the West as well as with the alignment of Chinese/Confucian values with those put forward by entities such as the United Nations. This forms a foundational argument that a pre-service educational course, prescriptively proposed, would be a function, indeed an expression of an institution's commitment to corporate social responsibility

Following this, I would also make use of three important books on culture in the workplace, how culture impacts workplace activities, and what measures can be taken to ensure effective cooperation, collaboration, respect, accommodation, and overall harmony. In books such as *The Culture Map*, *Riding the Waves of Culture*, and similar books, five common themes of difference were charted out in understanding what guides so-called Eastern and Western conceptions, beliefs, and attitudes towards how workplace activities ought to be carried out. Of particular use was *Riding the Waves of Culture* by Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (2011), which was a useful text in so far that it gave prescriptive strategies on how everyone from either end of the East/West spectrum could operate according to the knowledge of the five kinds of power distance that arise in a multicultural corporate setting. Additionally, important to the central discussion on culture, and knowledge of the "other's" culture were the insights gleaned from critical theory, and particularly the correspondence theory on how culture expressed through the activities in the workplace, corresponded with the broader cultural landscape within which it operated. One could not work with cultural on-goings within the workplace without understanding the larger context within which culture manifested.

Against this backdrop, work in critical pedagogy was sought out, with particular emphasis placed on anti-oppressive pedagogies. This operated on two fronts regarding material selection, the front that emphasized oppression more generally, and those that looked at oppression on specific grounds. The grounds of race were given particular attention given its unique flavour within the Chinese context, not to mention its development within the countries intermingled psychological and pedagogical landscapes. As such, works such as Franz Fanon's *Black Skins, White Masks* and essays in Biko's (2002) *I Write What I Like* provided some valuable content that offered up unique questions on color consciousness which provided potential for a greater understanding of Chinese conceptions of race, and the question of Chinese color consciousness, and its impact in professional settings. These were followed up by works focused on anti-racism education, and anti-oppressive education. Of particular interest was Kumashiro (2000) in his work *Toward an Anti-Oppressive Education*. Yet, it should come as no surprise that when it came to discussions on oppression and pedagogy, all roads lead to Paolo Freire, and certainly his main text, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, coupled with a later text titled *Pedagogy of Hope*. These would be the materials that would underpin the argument that the Chinese ESL endeavor is an oppressive one, and as such an unethical one in need of reform, and yet the beginning of this struggle for reform requires hope.

The material focused on better screening, assessing, and developing pre-service teachers was mainly found in the work of researchers such as Klassen and Kim (2018), their papers stressing the need for non-cognitive testing apparatuses such as Situational Judgment Tests as effective screening procedures, along with various tools from the Teacher Success Platform (TSP). These would form another additional frame in which to propose and situate a culture learning course as just such an imperative non-cognitive element to teacher preparation. Other texts were chosen based on participation in an instructional design course that focused on leveraging technologies for effective instruction. This would be crucial in

prescribing viable and effective means of purveying the content gleaned from the previous resources in an effective manner that took into consideration the asynchronous necessity of learning based on recruiting realities, namely, the variety of localities of prospective teachers. Bower's (2017) *Design of Technology-Enhanced Learning: Integrating Research and Practice*, was particularly useful in its chapter on adapting and using technology expressed through various learning theories, with Piaget's Constructivism and Vygotski's Social Constructivism being deemed appropriate for this education course. These situate themselves as some of the key materials for supporting the main arguments, and it is indeed the argument structure that I proceed to outline next.

3.4. Argument Structure

My argument is three-pronged, consisting of a foundational and prescriptive argument derived from the main proposition that the entire Chinese ESL enterprise is unethical and ought to be changed for the better. Part of this change is the prescription of better development and screening processes for teachers, with this specific project focusing on international teachers as a start. The foundational argument, which specifically claims that the entire enterprise is oppressive, is what necessitates the justification for an anti-oppressive pedagogy that underpins a preparatory and developmental course. This is argued against existing prerequisites for teaching in China and argues specifically for the justification of an anti-oppressive pedagogy as opposed to say a justice pedagogy or some similar positive educational concept. The final prong argues for the dimension of effectivity as framed by content and method selection.

3.5. Method of Analysis

Ethnographic Textual Analysis

Ethnographers analyze written and electronic data in much the same way that they analyze observed behavior. However, while the ethnographic theme is important in so far as it takes seriously elements such as context and culture, there is a mixed approach as to the

sensibilities and techniques deployed to bring a clearer picture of the problem at hand. A mixed analysis seems most appropriate for this work, as a complex project may not benefit fully from only a single approach, especially when one considers that this was conceptualized within the very spaces that it hopes to gradually transform. Of course, the importance of the auto-ethnographic approach to research as was described in the earlier part of this methodology section, is crucial in analysing the existent literature on Chinese culture and ESL companies in China, with the experience of the researcher. This is done with the hopes of possibly providing alternative perspectives to conclusions drawn, arguing to some extent against perspectives, or re-evaluating my own conclusions in light of the experience and findings of others.

In this methodology section, I attempted to provide specific details on the research methods used for this study. I emphasised the reasons for selecting an ethnographical research strategy, given its focus on describing and analysing culture. I went further by explaining the relevance of critical and auto-ethnographical approaches, with the former focusing on the political and agendas focused on actions that can bring about change, while the latter places large stock on the personal experiences of researchers within their given fields. I next spoke briefly about the need for the process of analysing concepts with the various cultural contexts kept in mind before highlighting a few important texts that inspired and would continue to influence the progression of the study. In the closing sections of this chapter, I provided a brief outline of the argument structure, before finishing off with the method of analysis, and how the textual analysis would continue to be informed by the critical and auto-ethnographical research strategies. I will next move on to the literature review which will consist of explaining the kind of literature review being done, provision of the databases used, the search terms used for the most relevant literature, the screening process used, and finally, the review itself.

3.6. Literature Review

Traditional Literature Review

I have spoken mostly about the importance of first-hand experiences within the spaces that this research hopes to contribute to reform. This has come in the way of speaking to the initial fruits bore from a grounded theory which gave rise to the gradual development of the project. However, O’Leary (2021) warns that even rich experience is likely to be seen as anecdotal if it is not set within a broader context. As such, a traditional literature review will be conducted to corroborate first-hand experience with existing research on teaching in the Chinese ESL context.

The challenge here lies in the fact that each specific area of focus will be more likely to be found in isolation or at least applied in a different way as to what is focused on within this project. For example, the concept of oppression may exist in the literature, and even be applied in a formal education context, but not applied to an ESL context, or an education corporate context. Similarly, there may be a great body of literature on acculturation studies, or culture training for those working and/or living away from their native countries, but this literature may not necessarily focus on cultural training within or for professional ESL companies.

This makes the task a daunting one, but equally exciting in the potential that this endeavor must contribute uniquely to the domain of culture teaching and learning, or teacher education more broadly construed. However, these assumptions must be tested against the existing literature by searching databases as well as making use of various search and screening techniques to find the most relevant literature for the study. This is what I turn my attention to next.

3.6.1. Databases

With regards to database exploration, I committed and contained most of my search efforts within the University of Strathclyde’s SUPRIMO database given its impressive collection of books, articles, websites, etc. This was supplemented with searches on Google Scholar as well as to other databases on the university Lib guide, which allowed for refinement of searches

based on its option to select discipline-specific databases. This allowed access to databases such as the British Education Index and ERIC, however, given time constraints, the results from SUprimo, in conjunction with literature collected over time, would be deemed sufficient for the study at hand. Given my interest in framing an anti-oppressive pedagogy within the Chinese ESL endeavor and using Chinese culture learning as a component of a specific pre-service teacher's intercultural outfitting based on this pedagogy, the databases were useful in providing the initial pieces to a larger and more complex puzzle of effectively combining these elements within less than traditional education spaces. The SUprimo database allowed for useful and effective filters to locate the literature that would best align with these moving parts. It is to the specific search terms that I turn to now, and the results that they bore.

3.6.2. Search Terms (Field Searching, Filters, and Limiters)

It has been stated already that the challenge with this project lies in the fact that each of its constituent parts presents itself with the potential to be a stand-alone subject of inquiry. Whether it be work in corporate Ethics within Chinese business contexts, or effective culture learning digital pedagogies, each one could suffice and make for meaningful research. However, the attempt to combine these respective areas into what has been described as an anti-oppressive pedagogical framework, presents challenges on many fronts, not least of all in terms of the selection of appropriate search terms on databases. The decision was made to focus on two search terms: 1) anti-oppressive pedagogy and 2) Chinese Culture Learning. The former would cover a good deal of ground with regards to incorporating texts that emphasized concepts such as justice, equality, race, etc. while simultaneously also including worthwhile results pointing to the means of developing such a pedagogy. The latter was chosen given the context that specific educators would be preparing for, and the relevance of this topic based on the development of knowledge of the other.

The searches were particularly enriched using field searching, which allowed searches to be conducted within a selected field of publication dates. Again, different considerations were made for each search term, and the field that publication for anti-oppressive pedagogy was made within, would include publications between the years 2001 to 2024. This was primarily done to include important work on anti-oppressive pedagogy by the likes of Paulo Freire and Kevin Kumashiro. The use of filters and limiters also allowed me to refine the searches by selecting the most relevant areas, including headings such as adult education, pedagogy, and critical theory, to name a few. Chinese culture learning, on the other hand, would use slightly stricter restrictions based on time, focusing on the most recent publications from the last 10 years. This would also be impacted by the lack of publications on pre-service teacher culture learning for Chinese ESL contexts. However, supplementary resources from leading sinologists, Chinese political theorists, and Confucian scholars would continue to be consulted over the course of the literature review.

3.6.3. Screening and Selection of Texts/ Screening Criteria

Anti-Oppressive Pedagogy

Regarding anti-oppressive pedagogy as one of two key areas of inquiry, an initial search bore around 254 search results, 140 more than when the inputted search term was anti-oppression. However, this was judged to be too general a search term to use and was instead replaced by anti-oppressive pedagogy, which still returned 254 unique search results. This was refined to 213 search results after setting the various filters and limiters to include results from 2000 to 2024, as well as filtering out results that focused on the concept applied to disciplines other than education, and adult education more specifically.

This was transported to EndNote, where the removal of duplicates resulted in 209 sources. The screening criteria demanded that resources have as a central feature the application of anti-oppressive pedagogies to tertiary and/or lifelong learning

participants/environments, and had to have as its primary focus, pre-service educators. Preference was also afforded to resources that met these criteria, as well as the addition of this consideration applied within online learning environments. As such, articles that focused on the concept of anti-oppressive education as an addendum, or those sources that focused mainly on the concept as applied to social work or other disciplines were largely omitted, although some were kept if the research could find a seamless transition to other disciplines such as education. 10 resources were selected in conjunction with a further collected set of resources that would come to a total of 15 sources for the concept of anti-oppressive education. I next turned my attention to resources focused on the teaching of Chinese corporate culture to tertiary and post-tertiary international learners looking to travel to China for work. It is to this screening process that I turn to now.

Chinese (Corporate) Culture Learning

This project interprets culture learning/corporate culture learning as an expression and/or virtual component of an anti-oppressive pedagogy. It seeks maximum effectiveness as a first phase and continuous program, all the while being mindful of the practical considerations of the respective enterprises, and what content will be both relevant, realistic, and effective to teach given a plethora of considerations and constraints. The initial search gave 404 unique search results with which to work. The filter and limiter process again included selecting relevant subject matter within which to position this specific search. These filters would include subjects such as Chinese culture, corporate culture, cultural differences, education, globalization, and organizational change.

The date range used would be between the periods of 2013 to 2023, resulting in a refining of the initial search results to 115 results. These were once again exported to EndNote where no duplicates were found. I then proceeded to read through the titles and abstracts of the papers, subjecting them to new criteria which favored papers that focus on culture learning as

a business activity, indeed the screening process for this literature was willing to consider the application of corporate culture education programs within enterprises outside of the educational sphere. Accommodations were also made to the elucidating of unique and commonly used concepts in the Chinese corporate context, and any other literature that included cross-cultural learning interventions for more effective and moral business activities. As such, any results that focused on other East Asian countries/regions such as Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, etc. were removed, as well as results speaking to practices in secondary or tertiary education, with a particular focus on culture education for Chinese nationals living and/or studying abroad. This was mainly done due to the current project being focused on internationals planning to live and work in China.

Chapter 4. Envisioning A Journey Towards Intercultural Competence Through Anti-Oppression Pedagogies

4.1. The Sullied Stage is set

Learning English as a second language is an activity engaged to a lesser or greater extent based on the context. Those moving to a new country where English is the official language may need to learn or improve their English to better assimilate into their new environment. Indeed, university programs often require evidence of English proficiency to enroll in university courses. Native English speakers looking for experiences abroad may also seek teaching opportunities in countries where exposure to English is minimal, whereas it may be difficult to find the equivalent phenomena happening with speakers of French, Spanish, Mandarin, etc. flocking to equivalent institutions where they can teach eager students their native languages in corporate contexts.

I make mention of the corporate contexts to refer to companies that offer courses for those wishing to learn English as a second language, and nowhere is this more prevalent than in East Asian. Whereas countries such as Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, and others have their own recruiting programs, both formal and informal, legitimate and/or illegitimate, this dissertation wishes to focus on ESL companies in China. Given China's large population and socio-political ambitions, it shouldn't surprise to see the magnitude of its ESL landscape. Considering this, this project contends that the entire Chinese ESL enterprise is an unethical one and in serious need of scrutiny and reform. This claim is made considering both direct experience within these contexts as well as the ongoing analysis of continuing practices to recruit international teachers which expresses itself through various practices that fail to take seriously the legitimacy, authenticity, indeed the dignity of participants both in their capacity as people and professionals. This additionally harms the entire endeavor of education, seen simplistically for now as the means for enlightening, empowering, and encouraging learners at various stages of their development. This is of course not to mention

violations of local laws regarding entry and work in the country, breaches of contract, and violations of best practices to name only a few.

This project does not pretend to be neutral in its argument/s but does nonetheless take seriously the complexity of the task at hand, for reform requires many to come to the party to attack the problems on multiple fronts. As such, the larger project subscribes to an action theory, which finds no satisfaction in only making prescriptions, but applying these for genuine and lasting change to gradually be meted out. For now, the current project hopes to modestly start a conversation on another important front, which is that of the screening, educating, and recruiting of international teachers desiring to travel to China for teaching and travel experiences, but in no way claims that this is the only approach to solving the larger problems. Let me begin this first section by paraphrasing the words of the Production Manager that was tasked with training myself and a new cohort of international teachers arriving in China to teach. He said with great seriousness that “this is not a school, it’s a business.” At first glance, one may not immediately align formal educational institutions with the words business or CSR. Indeed, one would probably think that the word ‘corporate’ does not fit in with any discussion about education. Yet, upon closer inspection, these institutions appear to occupy themselves with endeavors and activities that would speak to the contrary, joining the rank and file of corporate entities more traditionally construed and characterized by their production of goods which are imbued with commodity value by a complex set of social mechanisms, processes, perceptions, beliefs, etc. When it comes to education and its most obvious expression in society, the school, one observes a series of activities that do not strike as those aligning appropriately with the values and ends of education, at least within its conceptualization as those dynamic endeavors that act as an end in and of itself. Instead, these institutions are constrained by rigid ends that manifest as strict curriculums, grade systems, and societal

expectations. Churning out members of a society in true revolving door fashion and providing universities with fresh fodder to mold for the marketplace.

The Chinese educational landscape presents unique challenges considering the country's long and complex history, massive population, and general expectations of their people, generally, and their youth more specifically. However, coupled with an arduous school life are extracurricular institutions that capitalize on the desire for parents to keep their children afloat within the competitive academic landscape. If schools have in some way or another, and to lesser or greater extents, taken on a corporate nature, then a conversation must be had about CSR, and to what extent this conversation needs to be had based on the institutions. It may, as I think, be the case that the term ought not to be used as a term for formal institutions at all, yet these matters of value must find compromise in light of the matters of fact. School systems are radically flawed, but extracurricular companies augment this flaw by again reconceptualising the enterprise of education as something to be profited from. While this same charge can be made of traditional institutions of education, this project places its focus on the phenomenon expressed more blatantly through extracurricular/academic institutions, or Chinese institutions that offer to teach young learners English as a second language.

The requirements to teach in China change based on a variety of factors depending on changing policies both nationally and regionally, but there are core criteria that international teachers must often meet to teach English in the country. The website, China by Teaching (2023), lists the following criteria, although these criteria are not always set in stone and are subject to exceptions on a case-by-case basis. The criteria include:

- o You must be from one of seven approved countries – UK, Ireland, US, Canada, Australia, New Zealand & South Africa
- o You must be a native-English speaker

- o You must hold a bachelor's degree
- o You must have a recognized and accredited TEFL certification – Teach English as a Foreign Language.
- o You must have a CLEAR Criminal Background Check from your home country.
- o You must pass two Medical Checks

The ethics of teacher recruitment is a topic for another project, but a pertinent part of teaching in China is the obtaining of a TEFL certificate, a certificate that often focuses on in-class best practices, and not so much on developing intercultural competence. Sockett (2008) summarises this well when he cites Clifford and Guthrie (1990); Goodlad (1990) and Griffin (1999) who say that:

Most entrants to the profession are now graduates in the liberal arts or sciences and can be assumed to have developed some habits of critical inquiry germane to their field of study, although, like many serving teachers, they may have been given only a weak and intellectually uncritical base in educational theory. (p. 45)

I have attempted here to lay out the basic requirements for teaching English as a second language in China. This illustrates one of many problematic elements of this enterprise, as it serves as one of the forms of oppression . With mention of oppression, I would next like to go slightly further into the specifics of oppression as a worthwhile concept for interpreting the state of affairs with the intention of crafting interventions for and towards change.

4.2. The Specifics of Oppression

This section hopes to briefly sketch the different dimensions of oppression, from the individual and group dimensions to institutional and systemic dimensions. These, of course, do not manifest solely in isolation, but weave their way through one another and through the lived experience of several agents. I will start with a preliminary definition of oppression as both the

intentional and unintentional act of preventing individuals, endeavors, and or/enterprises from fulfilling their potential for good. This of course still strikes as incomplete and vague at this point, as one can ask how individuals fulfill this supposed good and what is this good that we are here concerned with? These are important questions that must be conceptualized in a radically different context for a radically different set of participants working within Chinese ESL Training Companies. The existing literature on oppression in one degree or other assists in giving a better understanding of the above-mentioned concept while also providing good starting points that may assist in pointing towards a form of oppression that is most applicable and appropriate for this context, and as such gives a clearer vision of which to organize the activities towards.

Prilleltensky (2003) claims that oppression is both a state and a process, with the state of oppression being unequal group access to power and privilege, and the process of oppression being how inequality between groups is maintained. Hay (2013) also highlights the ‘group’ dimension of oppression when she claims that oppressive harms are directed at individuals by virtue of their membership in a group of people, in this case, international teachers, or internationals as a whole living and working in China. She uses the example of women, but the example is transferable to other oppressed groups. She claims that in terms of oppressive harms aimed at groups, treatment is directed at a member (Women) not solely as an individual with handicaps or failures, but also as a member of a group – the group comprised of all women – whose members are considered collectively deserving of such treatment.

How does this necessarily translate to international teachers in China? The harm committed here is not always obvious if it even is obvious at all. The challenge here lies in the fact that inequality functions on different fronts, where internationals are under-qualified yet compensated more for less work and benefit from having to serve far shorter probation periods as compared to their local counterparts, yet internationals may and are often excluded from

professional obligations, denied any opportunities for development within the environment, and may be subject to understandable resentment which may altogether negatively impact the work environment. So, while benefiting immensely within the financial dimension, internationals are excluded in the main part due to their inability to communicate in the native language or understand all the social mechanisms at work within their newly adopted environment. To perhaps give one of several existing illustrations, one attempt to integrate internationals into the community, or to at least give that appearance was expressed through a specific program in the coastal city of Xiamen. This program was designed to provide internationals with representation and opportunities to participate in cultural exchanges as well as participate more directly within the community. As reported on by Lehmann (2019) “Despite overseas people’s economic advantage in the Chinese context, they belong to a vulnerable group due to their lower cultural capital” (Emphasis my own). The use of the term, “vulnerable”, is an interesting yet wholly appropriate choice of terminology when one considers that its use often connotes and/or assumes a form of harm that one lies vulnerable to.

However, another important consideration to make regarding these various definitions of oppression, and my initial definition which described the prevention of individuals, enterprises, institutions, endeavors, etc. reaching their full capacity for good, then it has yet to be established who precisely the specific actors are that do the preventing. It is here where it becomes important to differentiate, as Hay does, the distinction between oppressive harms brought about by people, and those that are brought about by the unintentional result of certain social norms and assumptions, the legitimacy of which typically goes unquestioned (p. 118). Most oppressive harms tend not to be the result of the intentional actions of a person but are more often the unintentional result of an interrelated system of social norms and institutions. The existence of this latter kind of oppression means that even if everyone were

well-intentioned, people could still be oppressed because many of the structural barriers of oppression function below the level of what people consciously intend.

In light of what has been mentioned this far, let me turn to Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed as an obvious, necessary, and invaluable contributor to this discussion when one considers what this project hopes to enact as a pedagogy for those who are oppressed, or better, to enact an anti-oppressive pedagogy in so far that it desires to assist in the process of making all its participants, as per Freire, more fully human. This is summed up well when Freire (1972) claims that:

The struggle for humanization, for the emancipation of labor, for the overcoming of alienation, for the affirmation of men and women as persons would be meaningless. This struggle is possible only because dehumanization, although a concrete historical fact, is not a given destiny but the result of an unjust order that engenders violence in the oppressors, which in turn dehumanizes the oppressed. (p.1)

Freire's account is useful because it takes as imperative the long process of overcoming oppression as one that must be a force of and for good to and for both the oppressed and the oppressors. He rightfully describes this process as a struggle, for it certainly is not an endeavor that will promise quick outcomes, but it is a thoughtful one that seeks to avoid a role reversal, indeed, as he claims, for the struggle to have meaning, the oppressed must not, in seeking to regain their humanity become in turn oppressors of the oppressors, but rather restorers of the humanity of both.

What we are seeing is that oppression can be meted out on and by both individual actors and groups, but there lies the question of intentionality, or perhaps the consciousness, or conscious act of oppression and/or oppressing, and so we see that oppression can still be the unintended result of actors acting within a firmly established system.

An equally relevant and important reason for conceptualizing oppression from one reason to the next is to better enable various actors to recognize it when they see it. The extent to which an individual goes along with her oppression typically affects the oppression of others who share a social category. Accepting one's oppression can make oppression appear acceptable, or, even worse, it can make oppression appear not to be oppression at all. The proper conceptual and contextual analysis that texts such as this assist in doing begin to assist in developing one of the first research questions of this paper. and this would perhaps give a preliminary answer as to how it is that a jump can be made in the first instant between cultural education for cultural intelligence, or the lack thereof, on the one hand, and an anti-oppressive pedagogy as the vehicle for spring-boarding it. While I have here touched on oppression at first glance, elaborating on the concept from its different angles, I would next like to also consider questions of race and identity within these concepts in order to broaden the scope of consideration within the present context in order to establish a definition which incorporates both the structural and interpersonal domains that oppression works through .

4.2.1. Considering Race and Place

Conversations about culture appear to be incomplete without consideration and discussion about oppression, as well as the many aspects that oppression works through. Aspects such as identity, which also includes questions of race, ethnicity, nationality, etc. The ESL landscape, I would argue, is driven, among other troubling elements, by the perpetuation of misguided views on race and ethnicity, expressed through the gradually constructed hierarchy weaved within the lived experiences of both the locals and the international visitors. Appiah's (2019) analysis appears to get it right when he claims that "while identity gives people reasons to do things, it can give others reasons to do things to you. Among the most significant things people do with identities is use them as the basis of hierarchies of status and respect and structures of power" (Emphasis my own) (p. 11). This resonates with some

truth when one imagines the outlook on terms such as ‘foreigners’ and ‘foreignness’, and these terms become important when analyzing constructs such as racial hierarchies within the Chinese context. It is a hierarchy that places white internationals at the top of the social ladder alongside the Chinese, while the bottom rungs are left over as the designated province of everyone else who are consciously or unconsciously perceived as the inferior class of persons. This is corroborated by Zhang (2024), among others when he highlights the following:

From the 1890s onwards, leading Chinese intellectuals like

Liang Qichao 梁启超 and Tang Caichang 唐才常 began disseminating a five-category classification of humanity according to skin colour (yellow, white, red, brown and black). They accepted the idea of a racial hierarchy, albeit with the “yellow race,” to which the Chinese belonged, put on an equal footing with the “white race”; all other races were considered inherently inferior. (p.4)

It’s worth looking at Dikotter (1992, 1994, 1997), Sautman (1994), Joniak-Luthi (2015) and Stanley (2019) for a more robust exploration of race and racism in China.

Of course, these questions are approached to understand how they are subject to various forms of oppression, for oppression, as has been explained, is not only an act meted by one agent over another but can also be exercised over oneself or over more abstract concepts and/or ideals that we believe to be and be for some good. In other words, it isn’t only one person or group that can oppress another person or group, but an individual can oppress his or herself with self-deception, self-colonisation, complacency, and/or participation in unethical endeavors. As such, adding to what was tentatively mentioned previously regarding oppression as the intentional and unintentional act of preventing individuals, endeavors, and or/enterprises from fulfilling their potential for good, I add that it can also be understood here as a kind of harm, both towards others and to oneself in so far as one degrades various qualities, or let’s say virtues that are uniquely human and generally good to have. It may be of use to see Foot

(2002) and Hursthouse (1999, 2012) for a more in-depth analysis of why the virtues are good for all humans to possess and/or cultivate.

I think here of Villegas and Lucas (2003), who call for teachers to acquire “sociocultural consciousness”, which means recognizing that people’s ways of thinking are significantly influenced by race, class, gender, and language, and the hierarchical social systems in which they are located (p. 166).

The above too touches on the importance of considering systemic and interpersonal dimension, and as such, inspires an anti-oppressive pedagogy which is here tentatively understood as one in which a series of opportunities are presented that allow participants to become engaged in a dynamic process of teaching and learning in a reciprocal fashion underpinned by a spirit of equality and equity. In a more positive conceptualization, what was earlier mentioned and what is trying to be enacted here is indeed a kind of Freirian pedagogy of hope. Yet, as Freire (1994) said “we cannot operate with hope alone or raw hope, for hope as an ontological need demands an anchoring in practice. Alone, hope does not win, but without it, my struggle will be weak and wobbly” (p. 8).

It may be fair to say that this current project is greatly inspired by the Freirian philosophy of education and will certainly look to deploy a lot of the concepts that make up both his and the broader vocabulary of the critical pedagogy movement. Dedotsi (2019) resonates with this sentiment when she claims that “Freire’s concepts on education can be an inspiring and helpful tool for educators across different disciplines, who are committed towards social justice and want to expose and transform reality in and outside class” (Emphasis my own) (p. 15).

Of course, nice words and sentiments are good, but it is indeed the application of these words and sentiments into carefully considered and constructed education programs that hope to improve intercultural relations, and by extension, the more formal learning environment

which the teachers are tasked with working within. Sockett (1993), as cited in Cochran-Smith (2008), adds further force to the necessity of underpinning programs with a sturdy theoretical foundation when he says:

“Teacher education in general needs a much more rigorous examination of the moral and epistemological underpinnings of practice, if the professional aspiration is to be coherent. Teacher education programs must be grounded philosophically and driven by intellectual rigor in their construction”. (p.47)

I’ve attempted to map out the various attributes of oppression and see how these find purchase within a landscape whose conceptual grasp of such a term may not be at all so straight forward or identical to the English sensibility or as obviously applicable within the local spaces. Yet, at every turn I see a consistency with what has been identified as oppression in relation to the ongoing activities within the ESL enterprise, and believe that considering both the conscious and unconscious act of oppressing, the knowing or unknowing participation and continued perpetuation of oppression, and the systemic nature of oppression, leads to a great need for deliberate educational interventions to find appropriate entry points to encourage reflection on our contributions, both actual and potential, to such a state of affairs.

My initial attempt at a tentative definition of oppression was to explain it as those intentional and unintentional acts which prevent individuals, endeavors, and or/enterprises, etc. from fulfilling their potential for good. I then added that oppression positions itself as a kind of harm, and I’ll finally add here that oppression can be understood as both action/s and simultaneously a sort of malign set of after echoes from said actions that gently pulse through a society in a discreet yet always harmful manner, in other words, it is not simply that oppression is only the result of certain actions driven by negative desires and/or beliefs, but it is an existent landscape in which such actions and their lingering effects are seen and understood as the norm, and which the very concept of oppression is camouflaged and neatly

intermingled into the fabric of the communities' undertakings, its new found trappings best expressed, in some instances, through that classic platitude, "life is unfair". Additionally, I claim that oppression is preventative in nature, and a concept whose preventative quality is negative, and manifests both at the micro and macro levels of and within a community. The ends that it prevents are numerous and include a series of potentialities that would satisfy our various understandings of what constitutes good or goodness. These potentialities may flourish to allow for the sorts of engagements, interactions and/or occurrences that produce a state of affairs that can directly or indirectly increase positive, useful, pleasurable or general happy feelings in various stakeholders, thus bolstering health, improving the probability of good feelings and a general good will, further resulting in greater acts of cooperation, altruism, kindness, and a general increase in the well-being of both individuals, enterprises and endeavors.

In sum, oppression exists to a lesser or greater extent as both the act and persisting presence that prevent, hampers or deters agents, activities, endeavors, or institutions from better actualizing the best fruits of their conceived potential. I wish to now apply this definition through more specific examples to greater articulate the fluidity of oppression within the Chinese context, paying additional attention to the lasting impact of colonialisation and its psychological impact as manifested through perceptions of the Other. As much as it is important to implement the sorts of program that will encourage, enhance and perpetuate a better understanding of the Other, the enterprise of self-understanding, perhaps the decolonising of the mind is a particularly important endeavor that tackles the root/s of the problem concerning the foreigner/native relationship/conception, a decolonising of the mind that is not only for one set of people, but for all who are directly or indirectly impacted by a vicious circle in which colonised becomes coloniser, and vice versa, whether in thought, deed or both. The prevailing state of affairs seems to speak to deep seeded psychological aspects

that lurk within our collective and individual unconscious, it's seeds long planted by the long-standing events of a past that accommodated the colonizer/colonized and master/slave dichotomies. However, we see in the modern day a state of affairs where both the aforementioned, and several other dichotomies may emerge in fluid fashion when we consider China's relationship with territories such as Tibet and Taiwan, provinces such as Xinjiang and other areas occupied with minority groups, not to even make mention of it's complicated, and in many ways, tumultuous relationship with one of its Semi-Autonomous Regions, Hong Kong. Yet, the prescribed decolonising of the mind still seems to me to be an act with fluid propensities, and speaks further to oppression as a state which can easily facilitate role-reversals in such a way that those others which are privileged in some respects, are simultaneously oppressed in another, and thus there is a need to appreciate these complexities, and ensure that they are considered in programs which look to help remedy them. I give greater treatment of this interchange of oppressor and oppressed in a later chapter, but for now it serves to suggest that both international and local participants stand to benefit from working through these complexities/intricacies together.

On this topic, the works of Fanon and similar writers are invaluable, his chapters ringing with a familiarity that may make it appropriate to substitute terms like, the "black man", with the similar designation of the "yellow man". Indeed, while I have left the proposal of future research projects to the tail end of this thesis, I'm compelled to claim that such programs must work hand in hand with a project that places particular stock on the ongoing analysis of the psychology of the native and visiting peoples, a psychology that plays a substantial role in the ongoing acts of oppression that exists in these spaces, the desire for international faces to teach their learners above their fully competent and capable compatriots being one sort of example. To broach this particular question of effectiveness between native and non-native English teachers, researchers like Phillipson (1996), as quoted by Williams (2017), consider non-native

speakers (NNS) of foreign languages to be more ideal teachers, as they have gone through the same process of learning the foreign language that their students are undergoing. This experience sensitizes them to the specific linguistic and cultural needs of their students (p.19). Additionally, Medgyes (1996), as also quoted in Williams (2017), demonstrated that NNS (non-native speaking) educators had an equal chance of classroom success as native speakers. By contrast, ‘native speakers’ language learning occurred as toddlers, and thus they are both unlikely to remember the experience and are unlikely to have ever given serious thought to the hows and whys of the structure of the language they speak every day.

This state of affairs necessitates the ongoing questioning of who we are, and in this case, who are the Chinese, or what is Chineseness? It is perhaps these opening questions that pave the way, along with other interventions, to a state of affairs where internationals, or native speakers of English, will not be needed to teach English as a second language on these shores in the future, considering that, according to Sommers (2007) as cited by Williams (2017), many of the countries whose educational systems enjoy the most success in teaching English as a foreign language, and whose peoples are readily confident in their use of the language (e.g., places like the Philippines, Scandinavia, the Netherlands, etc.) hardly ever make use of native teachers—and never to the extent of importing them in mass, as one sees in East Asia (p.20).

The conception that seems to be the most common regarding foreigners are as individuals who are modern, well-educated, wealthy and generally belonging to some kind of upper or higher class of person. Let’s consider two general examples of this perception. With reference to the past, Hughes (1937) gives a few sketches of the fledgling impressions of the West/East outlook, speaking of middle-class families barred from their ‘ancestral villages’, with some belonging to Christian churches that have played a role in further barring them from traditional appeals. “They have cultivated a taste for Western style houses, furniture, food and clothing, the well-cut foreign suit was a sign that the wearer was one of the ‘new people’”

(p.268 - 269). The use of the word, ‘new’, is significant regarding the second sketch of this perceived notion that foreign, or internationals within that context connotes culture, progress, success, etc. whereas local customs and culture are seen as old, inferior, irrelevant, etc. As will be touched on later on, Angela Lehmann was at the heart of a community project that looked to better integrate and involve the very visible international community into the day-to-day ongoing and activities of a community in the coastal city of Xiamen. A city with a rich history of its own, especially regarding a relatively long-standing foreign presence. As Lehmann and Leonard (2019) report:

As foreign business visitors and expatriates arrived, the area witnessed a rise of businesses aimed at the foreign community, including the development of ‘Coffee Street’, a row of expensive coffee shops on the edge of the lake; ‘Bar Street’, a small laneway of pubs and bars selling imported wine and beer; French, Italian, Indian, Mexican, and Japanese restaurants; and a popular foreign-franchised gym and supermarket. These businesses are considered up-market and appeal to upwardly mobile Chinese middleclass tastes, creating an area which is attractive to those seeking to attach themselves to a cosmopolitan lifestyle. There is a strong contrast between the physical spaces representing the ‘new’ aspirational and cosmopolitan China of ‘Coffee Street’ and a more traditional, *older* China (Emphasis My Own). These two distinct physicality’s of urban space are described in a government report on the area as evidence that the ‘Guan Ren Community is an international community with *Chinese characteristics*’ (Emphasis My Own). (p. 209)

The above is quite striking, my understanding of these distinct physicalities being that the former represents wealth, success, culture, power, education etc. while the latter represents poverty, backwardness, lack of education etc. These serve as only two examples of how the ‘other’ is perceived, but this brief diversion into the psychology of these participants was

necessary for the continuous framing of the proceeding program against a backdrop that has several dimensions. Progress in these endeavors is dependent on the critical analysis of ourselves and the need for a genuine, authentic and reciprocal recognition of participants for who they are if the hope of a paradigm shift, a decolonising of the mind, of substantial change as a whole is to be realised. I see once more the ongoing phenomena as stated in Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks*, as summarised by Bulhan (1985):

The disaster of the black man (yellow man) rests on the fact that he was once a slave. Because of this dual disaster, human history and psyche have taken a peculiar turn. The white man is sealed in his superiority complex; the black man is insulated in his inferiority complex. The former wants to elevate himself to the status of a demigod and seeks to keep blacks in "their place. " The black man wants to become white or, this wish frustrated, reacts with envious resentment. (p. 115)

The mention of superiority and inferiority complexes ought to also remain central to ongoing programs aimed at reform. As a country that was indeed semi-colonised, China's fascination/reverence/hostility to the West is best understood through the understanding of a tumultuous history that took on a particularly strong emphasis during 1839 when the outbreak of the Opium War ended with the Treaty of Nanking in 1842 (Hughes, 1937, p. 17), opening China to the Western influences of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries that, as Hughes (1937) articulates quite well, created influences that effected the mind's, souls and bodies of men. Real transformation, and the sort of transformation that such programs strive to ultimately help guide towards is one that may create a different kind of orientation pertaining to the above-mentioned minds and souls. However, before proceeding, it's important to acknowledge that in making such claims on superiority and inferiority complexes, I must acknowledge the wading into treacherous waters, and that such claims must, as best as possible, be made carefully if we are to not run the risk of contradicting the anti-oppressive theme of this paper

by assuming ourselves as the more knowledgeable persons who get to tell others how oppressed they are and how some select few can instruct them on how to better make their choices concerning how they experience, interpret and generally live their lives. And so these approaches, these various dimensions that influence our thoughts, feelings and interpretations of the world must be constructed, worked with and through with a consideration of the autonomy and dignity of the participants, but also not be ignored as to not be positioned as important components to understanding a very real state of affairs which underpins negative thoughts and actions with experiences with and through the past. In connection with this, I find interesting and useful Ahmed (2014), who is very helpful in highlighting these traps that educators of anti-oppressive educational programs may fall into:

The traditional approaches to emancipatory and anti-oppressive education are grounded in a pedagogical myth that is a part and parcel of an explicative order—be it educational, social, or political. I discuss how anti-oppressive pedagogues may end up (re)producing inequality, despite their earnest efforts to bring about equality and emancipation. The central thesis of my argument, therefore, is that emancipatory and anti-oppressive pedagogies often stultify the oppressed by pointing to their ‘ignorance’ of power relations and their inability to change their situations by themselves. In the hope to be emancipated, the oppressed submit to the intelligence of their emancipators who explicate various methods of empowerment. (pp. 734 - 735)

Ahmed (2014) emphasis his claim by pointing to the work of Jaque Ranciere. Ranciere contends that stultification is the opposite of emancipation, and that emancipation is possible only when the explicative order is abolished. This explicative order works as a myth in most systems of schooling.

This certainly calls us to reflect on our roles as educators and our preconceived notions and beliefs, our understanding of the ‘there’ of our participants, of their world and their word.

All the while still working to balance this out with our roles as “authorities” in some instances, or as Tonner (2022) calls, ‘virtuous authority’, described in Kenklies et al. (2022) as “authority exercised from the point of view of ‘a larger experience and a wider horizon’” (p. 4).

Let us proceed as I attempt here to demonstrate some occurrences previously mentioned by referring to a situation within a more traditional educational context with a study conducted by Stanley (2013) which sought to gauge the experience of international teachers teaching at a university in China. In light of what was mentioned, participant Val states it bluntly by adding:

Minimally qualified Western teachers may be motivated to work in China for reasons other than teaching and, perhaps as both a cause and effect of foreign teachers’ association with ‘backpacker teachers’, English language teaching may be regarded as a low-status expatriate role. Val explains: TESOL has that image; it has an image problem. ... If you want to travel and earn some money, then, yeah, you can be a backpacker and teach. ... It’s not associated with people who know what they’re doing. (p. 1)

The expression of this teacher’s experience should not be taken as only being common within the province of tertiary education but is a common phenomenon from training companies to kindergartens within China, and several other countries where English is not spoken at the native level. Particular attention should be given to the terms, “Minimally qualified”, “low-status expatriate role” and “backpacker teachers”. These already point to the reciprocal process of what I would interpret as one form of oppression, the ongoing oppression of the very discipline that is education. However, it seems incomplete that Val does not make mention of the responsibility that the host nation ought to have in better screening educators more effectively, thereby increasing the probability of a more effective kind of education for their youth, which simultaneously affords the profession of education the dignity and respect that it

does deserve. Unfortunately, the situation appears to communicate an utter lack of caring for these lofty ideals. This is again illustrated accurately by a different participant in Stanley's (2013) study. Regarding what students gain from foreign teachers, Dan candidly states:

They can acquire some experience with foreigners ... but 80 minutes, once a week, maybe they acquire the sight of a foreigner ... it's like going to the zoo because they go and see this unique creature in a safe environment ... and they get to interact with us in a safe way ... like, some kind of a petting zoo, or in some cases a heavy petting zoo [Dan is referring to the PSU teachers who pursue sexual relationships with their students]. ... As a teacher, do I want to stay in this zoo? No, I don't. (p. 4)

The picture drawn here is troubling, and yet the zoo metaphor is perhaps accurate and even appropriate for this study when framing this enterprise as one that is indeed dehumanizing, which can be construed as an attribute of oppression, more broadly understood. It was within this section that I attempted to demonstrate the means in which the ESL enterprise in China, and of course in similar landscapes elsewhere, fit this description when one considers the various moving parts of the activities, and the underlying attitudes, beliefs and desires that inform them. I would further state that oppression, in so far as the question of contextual appropriateness and effectivity is concerned, is a bad in any culture, for even those who would indifferently call it a necessary evil for example, would nonetheless still be speaking of an evil. The use and focus of this topic, and the challenges/problems of deploying it as a focal point of a culture course will be tackled in the proceeding sections, with conceptual clarity of educational concepts be the immediate next step.

4.3. Clarity In Education Parlance

The following section looks to attempt to work through the brush of educational terminology and provide a working definition that will be appropriate for the presence purposes. This isn't to set out to try and add an original contribution to concepts that appear to

be subject to regular change, interpretation and disagreement by the experts, but hopes to at least latch onto a few common strands to focus the most appropriate concepts for pre-service ESL teachers.

As such, this section will begin with a definition for both education and pedagogy, seeing as these two concepts have a certain air of authority about them when it comes to studies and conversations on education. The fruits of this analysis may not be immediately forthcoming, and more questions may very well be the results of the following sections, yet such an analysis remains an important addition to new programs, in so far as they emphasise the importance of reflection on who each of us are within the broader ongoing process. For while intercultural education may hope to foster better self-other relations, it must also broaden the perspective of the various cultural dimensions, the professional culture of education being one that has its legitimacy, authenticity and unique set of challenges. One's professional beliefs and ambitions are important provinces to investigate if these programs, I believe, are to have substance.

4.3.1. Education

I would like to first begin this section by trying to understand what it is that we mean when we refer to the province of Education. Carr (2002) points out, that different socio-cultural constituencies and interest groups are inclined to endorse or canvass their distinctive conceptions of education, and one may not expect to find any generally agreed definition of the term. One starting point for some of the concepts lies in their etymology, Carr makes mention of what he calls, “the time-honored strategy of examining the mentioned etymological derivations of the term from such Latin terms as ‘educate’ and ‘educare’.” (p.3)

Powell (2015) provides good clarity about these two terms:

Modern theorists of education sometimes distinguish between divergent, classic, modes of instruction by citing two related Latin terms. Latin *educere*, to “draw out,” is aligned

with that approach to education which seeks to develop a young person's aptitudes. Latin *educare*, on the other hand, is taken to mean "to form," with the stress not on the individual's inherent qualities but on a given body of knowledge, or type of behavior, which is to be imposed. (p. 93)

The etymology may provide even greater clarity if aligned with, say, Carr's categories of conceptual grouping. These works highlight the relationship between education and learning, learning and learners, the links between education, learning, and teaching, and finally, the association between education and schooling. The Latin terms are not passive in their presentation, as the terms "draw out" and "to form" suggest a very active practice or exercise. The two terms coincide with Carr's view that:

Whatever is learned in the course of education or related enterprises could hardly be other than a matter of the acquisition of skills, capacities, dispositions, or qualities not previously possessed although it may also be a matter of the development of already given (innate) qualities or potentialities. (p. 4)

The second group speaks to the agency, or what agencies there are in education, highlighting the need for there to be both subjects of education and education in subjects. Third is the interchange of the terms education or educating, and teaching, which, in slight agreement with Laska (1976, p. 11) are sometimes used interchangeably, with the addition of instruction and, to a certain extent, with training. The final grouping of Carr's four emphasizes the tendency to associate education with the sort of institutions in which education is held to occur, more specifically, in schools.

As it has already been established, any attempt at pinning down a satisfactory classification of the concepts thus far mentioned is a challenging one. Terms such as schooling, education, pedagogy, instruction, learning, training, etc. have come to form a large amalgam, with each term being present in the other if one were to look and reflect on them individually

within their respective and intertwined backdrops. An educational dimension sometimes need not have any of the formal constraints laid out above, or those common within the traditional classroom.

Teachers in some respects need not even be human, necessarily, as some could poetically report on learning about patience from a fruit tree, or some, such as the Native Americans, have reported on the lessons learned from imitating the eating habits of bears. Teachers have been varied and so too have methods, and so it shows once more the great length and breadth of education as a dynamic field.

I gravitate towards a Platonic definition which corresponds to Plato's definition of Justice as the harmonious workings of the virtues within the state and the citizenry, in which justice positions itself as both a fellow virtue, and the overarching umbrella which houses all of the virtues under the title, Justice. I desire to create a parallel between this sort of definition, in so far as Justice is seen as Real, in a dependent ontological sense, Necessary, in so far as it allows for societies to operate better, and Good, in so far as it situates itself as a virtue which is the fruit of uniquely human endeavors to best develop our rational and affective dispositions towards the flourishing of the individual and the whole. In addition to the Good property of Justice, Justice is defined in *The Republic* as something that can't/shouldn't harm, and in so far as definitions offered by the interlocutors of Socrates make mention or imply harm, they are understood as not pointing to Justice on the basis of the agreement that Justice shouldn't or can't harm. Consider a passage from one of the earlier dialogues between Socrates and Polemarchus in *The Republic*, as translated by Ferrari and Griffith (2000):

“And it is certainly not the property of the good to do harm, or treat people badly, but of its opposite?”

“Apparently.”

“And the just man is good?”

“Yes.”

“So, if anyone says it is just to give everyone what is due him, and if he means by this that what is due from the just man is harm to his enemies, and help to his friends, then whoever said this was not a wise man. What he said was wrong, since we have clearly seen that it is not just to treat anyone badly under any circumstances.” (p.12)

Similarly, I understand Education to have these same qualities, it is both included in the virtues, and the entirety of the process that we understand as Education. It is Real, in the dependent ontological sense, Necessary and ever present, manifesting itself in both formal and informal ways, and Good, as it develops the potentialities of the citizenry and cannot/ought not harm, as this would not make it Education at all, but rather some kind of malign perversion of education such as brainwashing, conditioning or coercion, which fails to harmonize it's activities(virtues) with that of the others, and thus deviates from our definition. Thus, different forms of education meted out by extreme nationalists or cults, for example, fail this definition as they forego important qualities that make up Education in the same way that acts of injustice may forego virtues of wisdom and/or temperance, thus making it not reach the definition of Justice as set out in *The Republic*.

Considering this, I define education as a dependent ontological concept, entity and process that walks hand in hand with us all by manifesting itself within both formal and informal spheres which in themselves contain education both as its highest standard and as one of several normative properties that dynamically shift in primacy based on the manifestation. Thus, schooling and training embody these qualities, but give primacy to some qualities over others, without discarding said qualities all together. So, in light of this definition and what was mentioned before, a pre-service MOOC may have as it's primal concerns, education, collaborative construction, pedagogy, and moral education, etc. but still have elements

common in other formal settings, whilst not giving primacy to said qualities unique to let say, schooling, training or passive learning.

Table 2: Education and It's Dimensions

Education				
Education As Schooling	Education As the Acquisition of Knowledge	Education As the Process of Learning	Education and the Moral Dimension	Education As an Academic Subject
		Pedagogy		
Qualities (Virtues)				
Theoretical	Practical		Moral	
Wisdom	Practical Wisdom		Justice	
Scientific Knowledge	Craftsmanship		Lovingness	
Intuitive Reason	Humility			
Contemplation	Tolerance			
	Temperance			

I am aware of the challenges that come with such definitions, or problems of enumeration when it comes to defining of virtues either moral or intellectual that I believe should be fostered in all potential educators, and people more generally speaking. However, I think the above table illustrates my definition in such a way that shows the hierarchical nature of education, and its relevant aspects. I think this definition suffices for the present purposes and desires of the project and avoids sacrificing aspects of education by establishing the concept of primacy among the terms relevant to the project. I next look to pedagogy, and why indeed ought such programs be understood and/or be informed by a robust pedagogical

framework, indeed, what does it mean to say that such and such pedagogy is a pedagogy of such and such, and why is this necessary for a hurdle course, and how does it improve it? I attempt to answer these questions in the following section.

4.3.2 Pedagogy

Teachers were often described as those tasked with teaching the so-called three Rs, Reading, Writing, and Arithmetic, whereas pedagogues were in some instances given greater esteem in the addition that they needed to also mold the character of students. McLaren (2000) summarises this in an effective and relevant manner when he states:

Teaching is a process of organizing and integrating knowledge for the purpose of communicating this knowledge or awareness to students through an exchange of understanding in prespecified contexts and teacher/learner environments. Pedagogy is distinct from teaching in that it situates the teacher/learner encounter in a wider context of historical and sociopolitical forces in which the ‘act of knowing’ recognises and takes into account the differentiated politics of ‘reception’ surrounding the object of knowledge by the students. (p.185)

The designations perhaps connoted the larger enterprise of education, whereas training and/or instruction would have a more focused outlook on developing a particular skill and or competency with a very specific end in mind. Such as learning how to weld, glass blow, or perhaps cook a specific dish. This becomes even more complex when one says that not all pedagogues are teachers/educators, and not all teachers are pedagogues. Similarly, all instructors or trainers are teachers, but not all are pedagogues.

I placed pedagogy as the third key term in the table above. Pedagogy, another complex term whose meaning has come to morph as time has gone along, and transform to be, as John Loughran claims, a catch-all term for such things as teaching procedures, teaching practice, instruction and so on (p. 2), needs defining.

Even in light of this, let me now attempt my own definition of pedagogy, which appears as a term that is not the same as education, and yet is very much a part of it. I have come to understand and define education as a very broad sphere of learning potentialities, manifested in both formal and informal dimensions, yet pedagogy appears to give a certain structured focus to the otherwise incidental learning potentialities of the Education landscape. Let me take a sea fairing metaphor in which education is like the large ocean complete with vessels with no headings, rudders or purpose, but with much potential. The pedagogical process comes in to provide this very dynamic and deliberate set of bearings, headings and direction enhancing tools. Thus, in conjunction with the large landscape that is education, which provides experiences in and of the world in which learning can take place, pedagogy makes the addition, or perhaps requires and/or insists on the addition of two important prongs for purposeful structure, these prongs represent the educator and learner, and in keeping with our sea fairing theme, are the two prongs that give our three pronged trident, with Education running through the middle, its full potential.

Of course, there are further requirements for the term pedagogy to ring true, and that is that the educator and learner, or educand, must have certain cognitive capacities within this process, indeed, they require a conscious, self-awareness not only of the process, but of themselves and their dynamic role within this process. It is precisely this very human, meta-cognitive requirement that allows us to differentiate pedagogy from education as taking place in incidental and deliberate modes. Let me illustrate this better with an earlier example of education taking place between a Native American and a bear in the forest. We can certainly say that an education is being obtained, but due to our criteria, we can claim with confidence that there is no pedagogy. For while the Native American is positioned within a learning experience, his teacher is not only unaware of his/her learner, indeed, the awareness of its learner may have grizzly consequences, but the bear is also unaware of its role as an educator,

and equally as unaware of any process taking place, and so as far our trident only has two prongs, it fails to meet our requirements to be accurately and legitimately classed as pedagogy. As such, I define pedagogy as an exclusively human activity and process in which the broader sphere of education is given form, order and direction by the addition of an educator and learner/s in a dynamic, tripartite structure, and fleshed out, in this instance, as a very large and dynamic enterprise in which educator/s, students, and the content in a specific context are worked through and expressed as ongoing critical conversations that address a range of matters, but more specifically in this project, matters such as dehumanization, and oppression more broadly speaking and contextually understood. Considering our earlier attempt at clarifying the myriad titles used for teachers/educators, I arrived at the need to use the designation of educator as those both identifying as or having the desire to be seen as educators in the professional sense of the word. Pedagogy is then understood as not merely the method, but the method as informed by a broad spectrum of considerations, from large and small-scale institutional goals to the needs of the learners and the normative beliefs of the teachers. As such teachers may lay claim to a pedagogy, in other words, their pedagogies as educators. One may express a behaviorist pedagogy which entails designing the teaching process as one that rewards good behavior and punishes bad behavior, thereby motivating students to align their behavior in the desired direction to receive the benefits of it. The educator may go further by saying that his behavior pedagogy is an expression of a pedagogy of discipline, in so far that it expresses his normative outlook on how students ought to approach education, to become disciplined individuals. The teacher views this as a good outcome, in so far as it reinforces the belief that society needs disciplined citizens in whatever walk of life they choose. So, what a teaching pedagogy, or X pedagogy can be understood as is an expression of a larger pedagogy of Y, which is to say a larger set of beliefs, desires, or normative outlooks. Does this now exist for pre-service international educators

looking to work abroad in China? The short answer, I argue again, is no, and the existing TEFL certification courses can be judged to be nothing more than hurdle courses that are done to merely check boxes and give the appearance that a process is being taken seriously. In all likelihood, this requirement could and would most likely be jettisoned by those hoping to get foreign faces into their programs as quickly as possible as to reap the large monetary rewards of parent interest. As such, a pre-service preparatory education program ought to be conducted on the backdrop of a rigorously considered pedagogy that reflects the intentions and beliefs of the educators hoping to screen and prepare these potential educators. In light of the previously mentioned example, a culture learning program is part of the expression that is here called an anti-oppressive pedagogy, and this is indeed a pedagogy of hope, in so far that it is guided and strengthened by a hope that such interventions may eventually lead to the important large scale changes that bring in, say, the sort of educators that will have to demonstrate a large knowledge and command of the culture and language of the host nation.

Chapter 5. Teaching and Learning Towards Intercultural Competence

In light of what has just been said, an attempt will be made to provide a rough outline of a culture learning program that is understood as an anti-oppressive pedagogy. However, this still requires reconciling, for it may not be altogether clear why the lack of learning the culture of the “other” could be interpreted as oppressive, or why indeed an online culture learning course is a solution as opposed to let say more team building outings/activities or the building of communal spaces in the workplace. The more specific contention from the one mentioned before is that the entire ESL enterprise in China is oppressive of its educators, the enterprise of education, ideally construed, and the learners who are the recipients of what we can call the negative spillover effect of these modes of oppression. It is here argued that major components of oppression may be expressed through indifference, dishonesty, and greed. In terms of the larger enterprise of education, it is oppressed in the sense that it is denied the opportunity to reach its maximum potential, a potential that is characterised by an integrity in its workforce, an honesty and inclusivity in its content, a fairness in the selection and treatment of its flagbearers, and it’s methods that aim towards the inflaming of imaginations and instilling of various qualities conducive for the shaping of the lifelong learner. The recruiting of under qualified educators is to act with indifference and outright ignorance as to how education's potential for transformation and empowerment is best brought by those who seek to do justice to its best qualities. In the form of the educators, internationals are not so much expected to develop as good educators, but rather expected to entertain and amuse, thus oppressing (aligning with my definition of oppression as something preventative) some in their genuine desire to grow and contribute more to and within this professional endeavor. This goes without evening mentioning how local educators are denied an equal footing to their international counterparts, whether in respect, pay, and/or general treatment (pointing to systemic oppression that is accepted as the norm). This all must still be scrutinized and

unpacked in such a way that these examples of oppression can be connected and understood as an additional cultural phenomenon to what has already been defined, and how a culture learning course guided by an anti-oppressive pedagogy and its components, can be a great first phase approach to challenging it. We turn to this treatment now.

5.1. Culture Learning Course as The Enactment of an Anti-Oppressive Pedagogy

A culture learning course for better equipping and preparing international educators for their time in Chinese ESL companies, and China more broadly speaking, is designed to act as a first, or an important first phase process towards a better-functioning workspace in which intercultural relationships will be effectively constructed and maintained, and thereby spill positively into the classrooms in which the educational endeavor may better flourish. This course then hopes to not only be constructed in such a way in which knowledge is provided to possible candidates but also affords the opportunities for the knowledge to be cooperatively interpreted and from it, new knowledge to be brought to light, not only with the focus on Chinese cultural elements and experiences but also the experiences of international cultures that shouldn't be understood as wholly or equally monolithic. I echo the sentiments of researchers such as Migueliz et.al. (2020) when they claim:

Anti-oppressive pedagogies involve centering marginal experiences and providing opportunities to think critically about how these experiences relate to broader social issues. (p. 346)

The marginalization is another particularly interesting concept given it's dynamic, shifting nature, and how various individuals can shift from various contexts that has their relation to this term change based on the environment and general situation. The strong assumption as to the motives of this particular selection of knowledge is that purveying and receiving of it will have a positive effect on the recipients. Knowledge that will facilitate and increase the probability of certain desirable dispositions being developed such as patience, compassion,

agreeableness, respect, etc. So, in summarising outcomes, this sort of course hopes to take existent knowledge of international (potential) educators and equip with both new knowledge and the means of constructing new knowledge in such a way as to interpret and apply it in novel, effective and innovative ways.

. Additionally, participants will feel more confident in their ability to work in culturally different professional landscapes and be better equipped to deal with the challenges that may arise in a positive manner. To summarize this better, let me jot down the points in regards with what participants will be desirably equipped with by the end of the course:

By the End of This Course, Learners Should:

1. Have an understanding of how a national culture impacts on the culture of a workplace: The participants should be able to explain the basic constituents of Chinese culture, and how these manifest in a workplace.
2. Understand and appreciate the unique dimensions and differences of workplace cultures, and appropriate responses to tasks and challenges within these spheres: Participants will be able to speak to the different relational properties of their and the “Other’s” cultures and provide solutions in relation to the host nations professional landscape.
3. Develop a stronger sense of understanding, respect and compassion with the local employees within their native spheres: Internationals should be able to explain with understanding the roles that different individuals have within the given space, and how this corresponds to the national culture more broadly speaking.
4. Appreciate and recognise the shifting cultural norms and dimensions in multicultural workspaces: Participants will be able to better demonstrate the ability to shift approaches based on who they work with at various times.

5. Develop the skills to negotiate between the strengths and weaknesses of the various cultural norms and expectations within the professional setting.
6. Better appreciate and respect the profession of education, and that there is more to it than the mere transference of knowledge: Participants should be able to better understand and speak of the education system of the host nation and respond better to the needs of learners and their approaches to learning. This will be the case for both the students and fellow colleagues.

Additionally, an evaluation framework will also be developed to measure the efficacy of the intervention. The means of evaluating participants may potentially include:

1. Situational Judgement Tests and Other Evaluation Tools: Relevant, in-office scenarios will be presented for participants to work through which presents them with a scenario which may be interpreted as perfectly normal within a Chinese corporate context, but problematic, or even unacceptable to a foreign sensibility. Performance is evaluated to determine what follow-up work is required for effective alignment and will essentially position itself as an intercultural competency assessment tool. Additionally, tools like the Miville-Guzman Universality-Diversity Scale (MGUDS-S), as seen in Miville et. al (1999), can assist in measuring attitudes toward diversity and connection with others across cultural differences. It is particularly useful, in so far as it foregrounds empathy, openness, and mutual recognition rather than cultural competence as “mastery”, fitting in well with the projects overall scope as an ongoing process that doesn’t suggest quick fixes, but continued construction and effort.
2. Reflective journals are written and compared during different phases of the program to track change, if any, in attitudes, beliefs and understanding of the new environment.

3. Progress of the experimental group is compared with control groups to check how effective an intervention of this sort is.
4. Feedback surveys will be provided after a year of teaching to evaluate the degree to which the intervention improved the teacher, and what elements of it need to be improved.

Proceeding forward, one framework this project seeks to adapt for the purposes expressed is Kumashiro's four approaches to anti-oppressive education, which may be helpful in guiding the creation of content that will best inform each section.

Kumashiro divided this pedagogy into what I feel are appropriate designations for this particular course. These are arranged as follows:

1. Education For the Other
2. Education About the Other
3. Education That Is Critical of Privileging and Othering
4. Education That Changes Students and Societies

It should be further clarified that the above four approaches represented Kumashiro's helpful organization of common themes expressed in the literature of various educational researchers, and the prescription here is that any anti-oppressive pedagogy should focus on some, or more desirably, an amalgam of them all. This sets up, regarding this project, a useful shell, in which each approach positions itself for a section heading to house relevant content. This content will not be spelled out in precise detail now but rather will make up effective suggestions with brief elaborations on the importance of the specific content selection. The selection of content that aligns within these categories must take various practicalities into account. Indeed, here in lies the further challenge of an online culture course, which is the various realities about time, place, and relevance. I will here attempt to take each of these practicalities in turn for the

selection of content to maintain a high degree of effectiveness while remaining practical, all things considered.

Chapter 6. Effective Online Courses and Theories of Learning

It is here not the intention to spell out the specifics to the letter of such a course, further research focused on this endeavor will certainly have its day, indeed such a necessary and future endeavor would concern itself with the timeline of such a course, it's an enactment in either a separate or integrated capacity to or with existent TEFL courses, it's final structure, it's duration to complete or which methods of assessment will be incorporated for each learning unit. These will only be covered in a preliminary sense within the previously mentioned frame and will also consider theories of learning. With that said, the first step is the consideration of the participants. As this is focused on the international pre-service educators, we ask ourselves which internationals will in all likelihood be participating. Regulations in China have earmarked regions where English is spoken as the main language, although this may again differ from region to region, however, for the most part, citizens from North America (USA and Canada), The UK and Ireland, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa are the individuals often encouraged to apply for these positions. As such, a logistical challenge comes in the form of the above-mentioned time and place and required considerations when it comes to timelines provided for the completion of tasks, the arranging of appropriate call times for video conferencing sessions, and the availability for teacher educators to offer support and guidance to each of the individuals. Additionally, a culture learning course must also be sensitive to the fact of cultural differences among international teachers, avoiding the common pitfall of the false dichotomy that assumes that all internationals, or "Westerners" are essentially the same and/or that all Chinese individuals are all the same. As such, an anti-oppression pedagogy must be a flexible pedagogy that also adapts its style to appropriate theories of learning. Given the variable cultural sensibilities that each participant may bring to the table and a need for their voices to be harnessed in the creating of new knowledge and understanding, it is here deemed appropriate to incorporate constructivist and social constructivist theories of learning

within each stage of this anti-oppression pedagogy. Before turning to each stage and how these learning theories hope to leverage emerging technologies for learning, it is first appropriate here to give a clearer understanding of what these theories are and why they are deemed appropriate for this project.

This culture learning course, or any such course ought to have as its dynamic aim the effective equipping of internationals with the competencies that will allow them to best prosper in the country that they hope to contribute within, however, it equally ought to see the course as an end in and of itself, and ideally should provide something of value even for those that do not go on to meet the desired standards deemed appropriate by the evaluative body. In a word, the course should ideally provide value regardless of its outcome. For this to be realized, a course such as this though important as a requirement, should still create value through a process of actively involving participants in interpreting knowledge together, constructing new knowledge in light of their unique standpoints, and applying it in relevant scenarios. This sentiment is echoed by individuals such as Dedotsi, et. al. (2019), who highlight the relevance of Freire's work in this regard:

Education needs to involve a thematic investigation process of search-dialogue-action through deconstruction and reconstruction of knowledge and reality. Freire described this process as a cycle: co-learners identify the problems/circumstances they want to investigate, then they critically reflect on these, and lastly, they are involved in praxis through exploration of new concepts, further experiences and reflection. (p. 14)

Considering this, constructivist and social constructivist learning theories position themselves as being appropriate for this endeavor. The former theory, with Piaget as one of its main advocates, is focused on precisely this process of constructing knowledge. What is useful about this theory, according to Piaget, is that an emphasis is placed on the active process of alignment in response to misalignment, which when interpreted within this context,

takes seriously the fact that a legitimate misalignment may exist in internationalists regarding the Chinese landscape, culturally sensibility and how it manifests itself in workplace activities. This active process allows for an alignment that is useful both within the professional landscape and without.

Additionally, the social constructivist theory, as advocated by Vygotsky (1978), is a constructivist approach that emphasizes the social dimension of knowledge construction and the impact that social aspects and culture impact on our ability to construct knowledge. These learning theories are important in so far as their alignment with the general desire for a course like this is concerned. What will follow next will be the taking in turn each section of the Kumashiro anti-oppression pedagogy, and how these can be adapted to the already touched upon teaching and learning elements. Kumashiro's work towards a theory of anti-oppressive education is here used not only for the insights that it works towards but also for its potential to be adapted to various contexts. Within this context, each approach creates a good heading for the content presented in both an asynchronous and synchronous way to allow for both independent and cooperative reception and interpretation of it. However, it does help to ask ourselves how this does differentiate itself from already existent resources that could be leveraged to achieve the same outcomes. Should educators start from scratch in the designing of such interventions with a framework such as this in mind, or could collaboration with existent programs/resources be a more efficient and effective means of bringing these insights to potential educators?

I would argue that effective collaboration can satisfy the criteria of efficiency, efficacy, and achieve overall reciprocal benefit, but the challenges one may face include the large body of available resources that one would need to comb through, we can perhaps call this a sort of enumeration problem. The other would be how one could systematically and logically bind these resources into a kind of sensible program that could provide the means of passive and

active learning, or perhaps better understood as how to fit these platforms and their respective content into the kinds of constructivist learning paradigm that was mentioned earlier. Finally, how can this be appropriately inserted into a company's requirements for teaching, indeed, how can this be effectively added to the list of existing requirements needed to teach in these spaces. I will make an attempt at given a suggestion for each particular area of concern.

6.1. The Enumeration Problem of Content and the Connectivist Learning Theory

The world wide web has made access to information easy and seamless, and it certainly wouldn't be difficult to gain access to the kinds of apps, programs, videos, websites, etc. that could equip individuals with the sort of knowledge that this thesis claims is imperative to increasing the probability of achieving success within different cultural contexts, or at least feeling confident within the new cultural sphere with the knowledge of its unique dimensions. The challenge of navigating this vast landscape of knowledge has also created the exciting opportunity to rethink how individuals learn and how best to approach teaching activities in light of this new state of affairs. The connectivist theory marks itself out as a recent interpretation of this vast ecosystem of digital knowledge purveyors and was argued for by George Siemens, to name at least one. Bower (2017) summarises Siemen's position by highlighting his observation that "traditional learning theories did not adequately account for the digitally networked world that we now live in, including the access to vast amounts of knowledge, the hyper-complexity of information, the nonlinear way in which learning occurs, and the distributed nature of learning between people and machines" (pp. 46 - 47).

Cormier (2008) goes further by stating that from a connectivist perspective, learning can occur in an organic or 'rhizomatic' way, an example of this being the rise of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), such as that run by Stephen Downes and George Siemens in 2008 (CCK08), learning was, according to Downes (2008) cited in Bowers (2017), spread across a network of wikis, blogs, forums, social networks, aggregators, social bookmarking systems,

and other Web 2.0 sites, most of which was initiated and developed by learners and took place outside the official course website. However, not all MOOCs are the same, or connectivist in nature, with a distinction needed to be made between the kind of organic, unstructured MOOCs, or cMOOCs mentioned above, with the more structured, traditional MOOCs, often called xMOOCs. The pedagogical issues regarding these models are spelt out well by the likes of Kop (2011) and Milligan et al. (2005), with the former emphasizing that developing students' sense of presence, their self-directed learning techniques and their critical literacies to process the unstructured information can all be challenges to learning. The latter in addition stresses that while many students in connectivist learning environments may be actively engaged, others may prefer to lurk or be frustrated by the less structured approach to learning

These considerations are important given the nature of pre-service international recruitment into Chinese ESL companies, in so far that the pre-requisites are meant in the home country of each applicant. As such, any and all courses will be taken online, and so a decision needs to be made on whether to go with the less traditional cMOOCs, which could bolster innovation in learning and teaching, and create exciting new avenues for developing the desired competencies, or to go with more traditional xMOOCs which still affords the opportunities for different teaching and learning approaches whilst still ensconced in a structured online course. Let me turn to the kind of online resources that could hopefully make up such a MOOCs with the aim of tentatively selecting which may be more appropriate for the present program. Taking the connectivist approach, my understanding is that participants could be directed to an ecosystem of relevant wikis, blogs, social networks, etc. to organically and naturally construct this knowledge in meaningful and collaborative ways. The teacher educator may play a facilitating role, create a "timetable" for learning, putting forward aims while leaving it up to participants to explore the digital landscape to find the best means to reach these aims. Restated, the teacher educator/facilitator can possibly guide the exploration, and possibly "grade"

participants in their ability to reconcile the knowledge across platforms into a sort of portfolio that gives evidence of an understanding of the content worked through, all the while providing innovative means to solving the problems put forward. So, for present purposes, we would say that the kinds of relevant websites to be used in this culture learning ecosystem could be, for example, a language learning resource which would allow learners to gain basic language knowledge of the host nation they will be working and living within.

Both cMOOCs and xMOOCs come with various benefits and pitfalls, but only feeling as if one option should be preferred over the other would be to create a sort of false dilemma when a mixed MOOCs approach may be very beneficial to provide a well-rounded learning and teaching experience. While some sections may make use of discussion over case studies and scenarios, others can allow for more passive reception of content while other weeks can be dedicated to research on a particular question, presentation and feedback. This, of course, represents a rough draft of the possibilities that a Connectivist pedagogy brings to the table, but it is further encouraged by existent research on the use of MOOCs in different contexts. Castano - Munoz et al. (2018) focus their efforts on motivations for using MOOCs for Teacher Professional Development, highlighting its advantage in removing participation barriers. Their profiling data helps set realistic enrollment and completion expectation by taking seriously participation motivation, an important factor in this current project considering the complex set of motivations harbored by international teachers. Motivations often times motivated more by economic incentives than professional development. Jitpaisarnwattana (2024) report on the effect that a language MOOC (LMOOC) has on learner attitudes, pointing to the need for curated MOOC materials that are adapted for contextual relevance. Avineri et al (2018) also demonstrate through their research, the measurable change in participants when subjected to MOOCs with job embedded tasks, once again pointing to the need for knowledge of the corporate culture of the other, and how one could practically navigate through different sets of

professional expectations. While detailed specifics of which platform to leverage and how to design such a MOOCs in accordance with these examples of existent research and implementation will not be the focus here, the next section will go into a discussion on the kind of content that may be beneficial for the individuals wishing to teach in China, more specifically, I will be taking in turn each section of the Kumashiro anti-oppression approaches to education, and how these can be adapted to the already touched upon teaching and learning elements.

6.2. Kumashiro's Approaches to Anti-Oppressive Education as a Prescriptive

Framework

In the last section I attempted to provide a brief distinction between a cMOOCs and xMOOCs, concluding that both could be meaningfully deployed in order to provide a well-rounded learning experience for international pre-service educators. This next section hopes to again provide at the very least an idea of the kind of content that could fit into the anti-oppressive pedagogical framework that has been put forward. This takes into consideration elements such as duration and relevance, which to say that on the one hand, a certain amount of time needs to already be committed to successfully completing the TEFL course, with its focus primarily geared towards preparing pre-service educators for the classroom. The culture learning course/intercultural education course focuses its efforts towards introducing international teachers to the professional landscape of their destination and working towards updating the critical culture lens in order to best thrive within these spaces and the larger society as a whole. Several questions arise in conjunction to the questions pertaining to content. These can be seen as the logistical questions, and could include questions such as should the latter course be tacked on to the existent TEFL course, thereby extending its duration by a further three months or so, indeed, what would be the ideal time frame for such a course, all things considered? While this thesis argues for the imperative act of rolling out such course as official

and imperative for those wanting to teach abroad, it must also be realistic to not become all together unappealing, all due consideration to courses such as these being good to participate in for their own sake.

Alternatively, should the course stand alone and be made available via third parties outside of the hiring company, or should this all be combined into a new TEFL course that is offered by the hiring institutions? I am drawn to the option of combination, and would even go as far as to say that the duration of the existent TEFL course could even possibly be reduced to three months to accommodate an additional three months for the culture learning course, considering that many of these institutes will continue to provide post and intra training on effective teaching methods in the classroom when internationals arrive in the host nation. I would however now like to take some time to consider content, starting with language learning.

The “Other”

Kumashiro’s suggestion on various focuses when enacting an anti-oppressive pedagogy is here utilised as a framework in which each proposed section acts as a heading for a module within the larger course, or MOOCs, that contains within it the relevant content. We start with the notion of the “other”, which covers two headings, specifically designated as education for the other and education of the other. As to the former, Kumashiro (2000) claims that “the first approach to addressing oppression is by improving the experience of students who are Othered, or in some way oppressed, in and by mainstream society” (. p 26). Kumashiro’s approaches are based on oppression that manifests within traditional classrooms, but from here on out an attempt will be made to see how these can be related to the working environment where the participants in question are involved in more informal modes of teaching and learning on different levels. In a word, the oppression that manifests within ESL companies in China are no less real than those that one encounters in your typical school setting, but are also fascinatingly unique, in so far as they don’t appear so obvious as to be seen or understood as

oppression at all. This can stem from the fact that various concepts, such as race and oppression take on different meanings in differing cultural landscapes, and in the case of China, these concepts are sometimes argued as Western terms that do not translate into the Chinese consciousness or experience. They have sometimes even gone as far as to say that the Chinese cannot be racist, and perhaps by extension, oppressive, although this will be covered in slightly more detail later on.

Regardless, it's nonetheless important to step lightly given these unique dimensions in which participants from different cultures understand various concepts, but international participants ought to first be made aware of the fact that they will all form the group which will be demarcated as the "other". Whether from New Zealand or Scotland, all these eventual teachers will be seen as foreigners, but of course, within a section on education for the other in the Chinese context, the Chinese participants will be framed as "others" from the perspective of the international visitors, but this will not be the focus here. As was mentioned at the close of the previous section, education for the other must operate on two levels; the level of framing these potential educators as the collective "others" in the new space, and the fact that we will at some level or another be dealing with "otherness" in the very course within which this preparation is taking place, with participants coming from countries where English may be the native language, but where the multicultural dimension of these countries brings participants from various walks of life to the doorstep of such interventions. Kumashiro (2001) highlights that "researchers using this first approach have conceptualised oppression in two ways; the first places emphasis on the space in which the Other is treated in harmful ways, in the school context, this harm is meted out by other students and even educators, and manifests in the forms of discrimination, harassment, physical and verbal violence, exclusion, and isolation" (p. 26). Relating this to the ESL teaching experience, we may say that these manifestations within the

school setting side on the extreme, but these manifestations are certainly not unheard of in our area of focus.

The oppression in these spaces may be more subtle as to be increasingly hard to notice and is difficult to navigate when one considers that internationals are treated, in many instances, far better than their local counterparts. However, discrimination can be the result of race, with ‘white’ foreigners being the preferred candidates for these positions, setting themselves out, apparently, as the most authentic of the native English speakers, according to the host nation. Next regarding harassment in this context, this can sometimes come from local authorities, law enforcement, and sometimes even from citizens not too thrilled to have internationals within their spaces. This is again the difference between how some internationals are perceived in these spaces with some being afforded superstar status, while others are seen as forces for bad.

Verbal and physical violence is thankfully not a common occurrence, but there are some horror stories that may often be swept under the rug, the recent case of a South African teacher working at a kindergarten in Shanghai acting as a prime example, with a breakdown over contract negotiations resulting in hostilities, and even an alleged beating at the hands of her HR manager, an act that was denied by the alleged perpetrators, and dropped due to a convenient lack of CCTV footage, a series of events that sounds similar to the police raid of an internationally owned bar in the Guanren experimental zone in Xiamen. Finally, the manifestation of exclusion and isolation are also common place, indeed as has been mentioned in the literature review, the inability of internationals to speak the local language, and indeed, the fact that no language requirements are set by these hiring bodies, results in the internationals finding it challenging to build the kind of social capital needed to truly thrive in their new environment. The fact that complex transactions also require third party assistance, may take its toll on their confidence and lead to possible frustration, augmented by the proceeding feeling and sense of isolation. Additionally, internationals are excluded, in many of these

organisations, from promotions into senior positions, or even inclusion in meetings. One gets the sense that some English meetings give more fluff than substance, with the real meetings beginning only when the internationals have been requested to leave for the sections that they will not and even should not hear and understand. The thinking here is often that with the compensation that the internationals are receiving, they should have nothing to complain or be unhappy about, and some will even claim that they are lucky to not have to sit in long meetings or be expected to fulfill the cultural obligations that their local counterparts must. However, this may work to undermine the professional dignity and authenticity of some of these participants who want to be actively involved in the ongoings of the organisation and generally take their professional roles seriously. Again, this is often problematic considering that there appears to be the understanding from the host nations that the internationals are there for fun, not for said work. This exclusion is a means of isolation, and as such, another manifestation of oppression.

The second way that researchers have conceptualized oppression is by looking at assumptions about and expectations for the Other-especially those held by educators-that influence how the Other is treated (Kumishiro, 2001, p. 27). Within our relevant setting, various assumptions and expectations are thrust onto the international teachers. Even though internationals may come from various countries, they are lumped into one category and are often simply labeled and understood as Americans by the public at large. This is similar to how various individuals from East Asia may also simply be lumped into the category of Chinese, even if they come from countries such as South Korea, Indonesia or Singapore. Yet, the assumption and expectation held by professionals and even civilians of international educators in China are that they possess, indeed ought to possess unique (American) characteristics. They are assumed to be funny, or the kind of people that make jokes about everything, not to mention being perceived to be energetic, loud, arrogant, romantic etc. These qualities are seen as good,

especially considering the ESL context as internationals are often put center stage and made to do dances and sing songs at marketing events or during demonstration lessons to sell more courses. Seeing as marketing teams are dependent on the selling of these courses to make commission, they often make a point of creating instrumental (professional) relationships with these internationals that have these desirable qualities and often ignore those that may side on the more introverted side of the spectrum, or simply not have the “marketable” looks that others may have.

Local teachers may also attempt to forge relationships with internationals by “acting foreign” themselves. This manifests itself in the form of overcompensating when in the presence of internationals and can come in the form of showing their vast knowledge of international (pop) culture, international politics, or demonstrating their ability to dish out “Western” style humor and/or sarcasm. It is these expectations and the general act of stereotyping that again manifest as forms of oppression, even if some of the internationals enjoy the attention, praise and genuine satisfaction that this attention and treatment brings them. Kumashiro (2001) speaks to how some respond to these oppressive treatments and dispositions, starting with actions that come across as "overcompensated" by hyper performing such as in the case with local teachers expecting all foreigners to act like Americans while some of them themselves attempt to prove to their international counterparts how internationally minded and capable they are. Others may also pick up on the favourable treatment that the more entertaining and energetic teachers are receiving and attempt to imitate or emulate them. Some simply do enough, and while Kumashiro mentions participants staying true to their sense of ethnic culture and community, other may also stay true to their personalities, and simply play to their strengths and do what they can within these those parameters. Some have resisted the dominant values and culture of the company, with rejection of Chinese culture unfortunately also being a part of this, and some have endured depression, turned violence onto themselves by abusing

drugs, starving and scarring their bodies, even attempting or committing suicide (Orenstein, 1994; Uribe & Harbeck).

This final category, as to the others, are focused on the traditional classroom setting, but their similarities are striking and can be adapted to the workplace, where learning and teaching are occurring in a holistic manner. While self-harm and suicide are not common occurrences, depression, substance abuse and/or physically lashing out in the workplace due to disagreements have occurred in the past. So, what is to be done within this first section? The manifestations of oppression have been briefly spelled out, but how do we tackle them? This first phase course positions itself in one way to present the opportunity to bring these elements to the table for discussions to be had and strategies devised to deal with them. Effectively dealing, or responding to them, requires knowledge of the culture both within the space and without, something covered in greater depth in the section on Education about the other, but the first step can be to gauge the participants of the course to ensure that the course in itself does not create a context of oppression, and moving through these manifestations together through cultural positioning and understanding cultural lenses. Knowledge purveyance, case study analysis and collaborative discussion. While Kumashiro mentions that these spaces should be transformed to better accommodate the “Others” that will occupy them, this prescription must be adapted to fit the reality of the area, which is to say that accommodations must be respectful of the host country and their dealings. The second prescription however is important in so far as it stresses representation for the internationals, not unlike the Guan Ren experimental community program in Xiamen that hoped to involve internationals within community building. In sum, bringing these realities out into the light is an important first step for both international and local educators who will be presented with these potential manifestations to better position themselves to work through and with them. While we looked

at how we can accommodate the other, all things considered, the next section focuses more specifically on better understanding the other.

1. Education of the Other

The previous section focused on one part of this desired course in positioning international teachers as the “other”, a unique exercise given that some participants may come from backgrounds that gave them direct experience to being othered in various ways and now join a larger group that will to lesser or greater extents experience a unique form of being othered in a radically different cultural context. This may not manifest in obvious ways but may none the less come to pass based on perception and expectations of foreigners, both professionally and personally, the lack of any representation, space or support that can not only speak the language of the internationals but also understand them from their cultural perspective. A part of this first phases course hopes to provide the equipping of these various points of importance and create the space for discussion on how “othering” is understood, what expectation have been developed pre-departure and what can be done to address these dimensions of oppression.

The following sections will focus on education of the other, which is a very important section given that it will be the one that specifically equips the participants with knowledge about the environment they will be working in, the culture of this environment and how it informs the behaviour and attitudes of its local participants, not to mention how this culture corresponds to the broader national culture. For this section, it’s not the desire to give a long winding history lesson, but rather, following the lead of Trompenaars and co. to instead focus specifically on the work culture and the most relevant underpinnings that can best explain what internationals can expect from these spaces. This realigns expectations and encourages

participants to adapt their own workplace expectations and values developed within their cultural contexts and attempt to reconcile with the space they will be operating within.

Let us return now to Kumashiro's second heading and look at how the challenges can be addressed.

2. How We Perceive Others

An education of the other is here explained in two ways, the first way appears to be relatively straightforward, in so far as our task appears to be concerned with better

Understanding the other, and perhaps more importantly, understanding them in relation to their "world" and of "products" of that "world", however, before setting out establishing the crucial knowledge relevant to the specific environment and situation we are interested in, let us frame this within the two kinds of knowledge that Kumashiro highlights, and how these may, or may not relate to this landscape.

Kumashiro summarises these as knowledge which in the first place, defines what is normal and normative. As such, otherness is seen in contrast to this norm and normative standards. As to the second kind of knowledge, we come to see and understand the other through stereotypes and myths, in sum, "knowledge that many have of the other is either incomplete because of exclusion, invisibility, and silence, or distorted because of disparagement, denigration, and marginalisation. This continues to be augmented through the media, and even in texts books in schools. Two strategies are prescribed for this approach, the first is to include specific units on the other, while the other strategy stresses the importance of integrating otherness throughout the curriculum, or in this case, throughout the course. We may once again run into two problems regarding this area, these include choosing the key aspects of Chinese culture, but it also includes considering the lens in which the international teacher

sees the host nation through. It is here where a very important insight is gleaned from Kumashiro regarding the learning about and hearing about/of/from the other.

Students need to learn that what is being learned can never tell the whole story, that there is always more to be sought out, and in particular, that there is always diversity in a group, and that one story, lesson, or voice can never be representative of all. Lessons about the Other need to include learning to resist one's desire to know, to essentialize, to close off further learnings. The goal is not final knowledge (and satisfaction), but disruption, dissatisfaction, and the desire for more change. (p.34)

This thought does well to inspire and frame the overall belief, desire and hope of this program, a program that believes that knowledge can inspire change, that cogniscience of certain things can change the way in which events are seen, analysed and acted upon, that knowledge can inspire us to change things for the better. This is punctuated well by Nussbaum (2010) when she states that, “knowledge is no guarantee of good behavior, but ignorance is a virtual guarantee of bad behavior” (p.81). This should form a key stage in which discussions are focused around, and then supplemented by Trompenaar and Hampden Turner’s five relational elements and how these relate to important cultural characteristics. Let us take these in turn. The two authors put forward five dimensions of human relationships, understood as value orientations that greatly influence people’s ways of doing business and managing as well as their responses in the face of moral dilemmas. Of course, these categories may be subject to criticism in so far as it simplifies the complex and dynamic interactions of various individuals, possibly reinforcing stereotypes. However, this approach does not at all claim that boxing individuals within these groups will ensure perfect compassion, empathy, understanding, etc. in the face of challenges and/or various workplace dilemmas. It sees them rather as a good starting point where little else exists, an imperative kind of knowledge that at least provides a

springboard from which phenomena expressed and experienced through a cultural sphere can be better framed in order for good solutions to be sought in the event of difficulties, and overall good will and sentiment retained, or at least the probability of such outcomes increased. It is unhelpful to claim oversimplification in order to falsely claim that no discernible differences exist between cultures, and that we can simply continue on without this sort of knowledge. So let me now turn to these five dimensions, and the prescriptions that Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner provide participants working within these spheres.

Universalism vs. Particularism

Individualism vs. Communitarianism

Neutral vs. Affective

Diffuse vs. Specific

Achievement vs. Ascription

From the first category, we understand a difference between rule-based societies, ones in which there exist to lesser or greater degrees, obligations to adhere to standards that are universally agreed to by the culture in which we live. It tends to imply equality in the sense that all persons falling under the rule should be treated the same. Consider, for example, some countries where crossing a red light even if there is no traffic is an action that would be frowned upon. This is again not to say that there are no exceptions to these rules, but for now, these brief sections have as their main desire, the tentative explanation of each category. Particularists in comparison, focuses on the exceptional nature of the present circumstances, each circumstance requiring a different approach based on its variables, and most importantly, based on who is involved in the scenarios, interactions, situations, etc. Let's take one example to illustrate how these relations manifest in the form of the contract. Weighty contracts are a way of life in universalist culture, and serve to record an agreement on principle, codifying what the respective parties have promised to do. However, in particularist societies, the

emphasis on weighty and rigid contracts are seen as ignoring the importance of relationships, and in these kinds of societies, are seen as representing rough guidelines or approximations. Particularly in East Asian business contexts, these elements manifest themselves in particular ways, in which locals will expect a flexibility in the staff in tackling various duties that may not be a part of their contracts. However, by going beyond one's contractual duties, one is able to build a positive relationship with superiors and reap benefits down the line. In contrast, internationals who may be more inclined towards universalistic propensities due to hailing from territories that have a history of a very pronounced rule of law, may see these kinds of acts and expectations as a breach of contract, and possibly as a way of having one person do more than they have been contracted to do without fair compensation for the additional work. Consider again the case of the South African kindergarten teacher who saw inconsistencies in her contract when she was renegotiating with her employers. So, in light of this information, how are international teachers to proceed? The authors offer up useful advice to; first, recognizing and understanding the differences, and second, prescribing means for participants on either side of these relational dimensions to best proceed. This is the structure of all the previously mentioned dimensions. As this course is focused on the international pre-service teachers, we will cover the particularist differences.

Focus is more on relationships than on rules.

Legal contracts are readily modified.

A trustworthy person is one who honors changing mutualities.

There are several perspectives on reality relative to each participant.

Relationships evolve.

Considering this, the following tips are provided for those leaning more towards a universalistic outlook to lesser or greater extents. The following may not be wholly applicable

to every situation but may still be worth looking out for when engaging with members of the host nation.

- Be prepared for personal “meandering” or “irrelevancies” that do not seem to be going anywhere.

This strikes me as being particularly relevant to, for example, defining roles within a contract or possibly renewing a contract. Attempts ought to be made to be patient in these interactions, constantly engaging with the knowledge that developing good relationships is key.

- Do not take personal, “get to know you” attitudes as small talk.

To the best of one’s ability, attempt to put aside the, “get down to business” Attitude that may be more common elsewhere. This may come across as being rude.

- Carefully consider the personal implications of your legal “safeguards”.

Again, work with the knowledge that creating and maintaining relationships is key in a country that made use of alternative forms of agreement and assurance aside from a rule of law.

Again, these elements and tips are dynamic, and it must be reinstated that this is not a fool proof means of always effectively dealing with individuals or solving all problems perfectly, but they do provide a useful basis for considering a given state of affairs and analysing phenomena in the workplace and outside. I have attempted to highlight the distinction between universalistic in contrast to particularist sensibilities, as laid out by Trompenaar and Hamden Turner. This suggests that China sides more on the particularistic side of the spectrum with regards to human engagement, while the international countries in question, such as USA, UK, Canada, New Zealand and Ireland, appear to side more in the spectrum of universalism, according to the questionnaires reviewed by the authors. I turn now to matters pertaining to the group and the individual.

o Individualism and Communitarianism

Next, we have the distinction between countries that are perceived as more individualistic and those that are more community focused, or communitarian. Again, this does not suggest a rigid dichotomy in which there is a clear-cut division between, let say, “Western” countries as being strictly individualistic while East Asian, and some parts of Africa settle exclusively in the territory of communitarian. These areas, and their individual countries do fall on a spectrum where these two concepts increase or decrease depending on the circumstances. However, Trompenaars and Hamden turner do well to emphasize that these designations, indeed all the suggested designation are not naturally opposing, but can rather be framed as complimentary. Indeed, the large thrust of this section, indeed this whole project, is to take these cultural sensibilities/preferences/occurrences, and work towards creating dispositions that can lead to complementary outlooks with the goal of compromise in the various spheres of life that they manifest in. Let us look at some of these aspects within the culture that our teachers will reside in. Again, the Chinese are greatly influenced by the legacy and prevailing force of Confucian values. An ideology that placed great emphasis on the family unit, and its broader extension into society at large as one that ordered itself around hierarchies of age, position and gender.

Within these dynamic social contexts, individuals would be guided by a particular etiquette and outlook. Consider our example of naming, and the positioning of the family name before the individual’s name. One can also consider eating arrangements, in which each member is not presented with an individual plate for them to eat their food, but will rather get one bowl of rice, and all eat from a large “communal” pot of food with chopsticks, an exercise that seems to place a strong emphasis on sharing. It’s also commonplace for food to be taken and placed in someone else s bowl first before serving oneself. Consider further still that some,

if not most stories concerning dating and marriage seems to steer far from the idealised “chance meeting”, or “love at first sight” tropes glamourised in the West, but it is rather more common for people to meet their partners within their close circle of friends, or to be introduced by friends, family and/or even colleagues. How then do some of these aspects manifest in the workplace? Negotiation, decision making and motivation are highlighted as crucial areas where the individualistic/communitarian sentiments may manifest clearly in a professional setting. Once more, these are a few points to consider when differentiating between individualistic and communitarian outlook, with specific focus on internationals understanding some of the unique aspects of the communitarian dimension.

More frequent use of the “we” form in contrast to the “I” form.

Decisions are referred by delegate to the organization as opposed to executive decisions being made on the spot.

People ideally achieve in groups, which assume joint responsibility as opposed to initiative taking in which the individual achieves alone and assumes personal responsibility.

Vacations are taken in organised groups or with the extended family, whereas people from more individualist cultures may choose to travel in pairs, or even alone.

Internationals again can make considerations during interactions with the host nation by keeping in mind, the significance of strong communitarian leanings. As such, tips to professional interactions can be regarded as follows:

- Showing patience in situations where time must be taken to consent and consult superiors as opposed to taking responsibility and making executive decisions on the basis of the situation.
- Agreement from the host nation can be made tentatively at first, but can be withdrawn after consulting with superiors.

- It's good to keep in mind that Individuals surrounded by helpers is an indication of high status within the company.

- When conversing/negotiating/acting, keep the group in mind and keep in mind the building of lasting relationships.

o **Affective and Neutral Cultures**

Another interesting dimension that exists among cultures is the fascinating role that reason and emotion play in our everyday interactions. Cultures that show a lot of emotions are here understood as emotionally affective, while others that tend to better hide their emotions during interactions are understood as emotionally neutral. This again is grounds for finding compromise or developing an understanding of emotions to find appropriate compromises. So, for example, Chinese friends or colleagues who don't show a lot of emotion when interacting, are not necessarily cold and uncaring but may just not want to show their hands. Additionally, to control one's emotions in various situations are often interpreted as a sign of maturity. In contrast, showing a lot of emotions does not necessarily communicate an inability to control oneself or rudeness, but can often be understood as an individual being passionate or insisting on demonstrating an interest in what you are doing or saying. Again, these can manifest in myriad ways, from the tone in which one speaks to reactions to negative criticism. Let us look further, considering this, considerations that we can make here regarding emotional activity and neutrality.

When interacting with colleagues, bear in mind that they will not always reveal what they are thinking or feeling. This does not mean that they are disinterested or bored; it means only that they do not like to show their hand.

Bear in mind that cool and self-possessed conduct is admired in emotionally neutral countries.

o **Specific and Diffuse Cultures**

Matters pertaining to specificity or diffuseness, focus primarily on how much the different spheres of a person's lived experience overlap. For example, some cultures feel that their professional and personal lives are mostly, if not almost entirely separate.

Diffuse cultures by contrast operate in such a way where every life space and every level of personality tends to permeate all others. Again, referring to the East Asian context, and specifically China, managers are accorded a high and favorable status in any social circumstance, with their opinion on any and all matters being seen as better than those of his/her subordinates. This often needs to be considered and kept in mind when engaging with such managers, and it certainly isn't rare for employees to go way beyond their common duties if the manager makes a request, no matter how inconvenient. The knowledge seems to be that by showing this willingness to sacrifice one's own time, reward will eventually come from a manager who recognizes a subordinate as being flexible, reliable, hardworking and enthusiastic. This can mean forming a better relationship with one's employer, which can lead to opportunities, security and other big possibilities down the line. I would like to make two examples here, one lived experience and one questionnaire put forward by Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (2016).

Let's turn to a second example that demonstrates the thinking of specific and diffuse cultures. The following situation was put forward:

A boss asks a subordinate to help him paint his house. The subordinate, who does not feel like doing it, discusses the situation with a colleague.

The colleague argues: "You don't have to paint if you don't feel like it. He is your boss at work. Outside he has little authority."

The subordinate argues: “Despite the fact that I don’t feel like it, I will paint it. he is my boss, and you can’t ignore that outside of work either.”

Participants from 38 countries would be asked to choose either A or B, highlighting the extent to which these countries aligned on the specific or diffuse spectrum. 80% of participants who answered that they would not paint the house, were mainly representatives from Northern European and North American countries, with countries such as the UK and Canada scoring 88% and 87%, respectively. Countries whose participants answered that they would paint the house, consisted mainly of African, East and Southeast Asian nations, with China sitting at the highest position with 78% of participants answering B. Of course, these sorts of questions must take a range of factors into account, and answers may possibly change as time goes on, but these changes certainly don’t happen overnight, and these salient cultural differences do exist to greater and lesser degrees and are worth knowing if effective communication is to be fostered in order to build good relations whether personally or professionally.

As such, suggestions for operating within diffuse environments, or perhaps certain elements of these environments to be aware of include that professional meetings for example, may not be structured or have an agenda. They are often allowed to flow naturally, and in some cases, are done to simply report that meetings were held. Whatever issue is being discussed, try to be respectful of a person’s age, background connections and title, even if their title and skills are irrelevant to the present conversation. Finally, prepare for ambiguity in speech, or general engagements that are often indirect or circuitous.

o Achieved Status vs. Ascribed Status

The fourth important piece of knowledge regarding relational aspects within different cultures is how we accord status. Once again, we have two concepts balanced on a spectrum, in which some cultures will lean more towards placing more weight on achieved status, while

others may focus on ascribed status. The Chinese may fall a little more to the ascribed side of the spectrum, and place specific emphasis on seniority and titles. To perhaps paint this in a simpler manner, let us take post-secondary studies as our illustration of achievement orientated societies and ascription-orientation societies. In the former, many may ask what you studied, while the latter may care more about where you studied. Chinese ascription-orientated culture finds consistency in the Confucian ethic once more when one considers the importance of positioning, both in the family and within other structures. An older brother, for example, is ascribed honour and respect, not for necessarily having earned it, but in virtue of the being the eldest. Similarly, a manager or other senior figure will be accorded reverence, respect and admiration, not for necessarily being competent and good at his job, but in virtue of having a title and a particular position.

Having said that, one may come to see this according of status as ultimately negative, but it's important to see its positive sides too, and the means in which it can be effective. To ascribe status can be a means of showing trust, and in some cases, this trust is often rewarded with the individual working hard to live up to the belief that an individual or individuals have in his capabilities. Again, there are several means in which these elements play out in lesser or greater degrees, but understanding the cultural communitarian underpinnings to such phenomena, may provide one with greater tools in navigating through scenarios related to positions, competencies, titles, etc. So, a few things to keep in mind in these landscapes include:

- Respect for superiors in the hierarchy is seen as a measure of people's commitment to the organization and its mission.
- Respect the status of and influence of managers or other senior colleagues even if you suspect they lack experience. Do not make them feel foolish.
- Do not underestimate the need of your counterparts to make their ascriptions come true. To challenge is to subvert.

What I have attempted to briefly sketch in rough form, is one approach to better understanding the other through relational factors that find uniqueness in different cultural contexts. While how we manage or see time and how different cultures relate to nature are also important points to cover, I wanted to point out five elements that will most likely play out in an office setting. Knowledge of these elements may start a journey of continued conversations on accommodation and reasonable compromise, providing third ways that work to bolster co-operation, innovation and efficiency in the workplace. Oppression, however, manifests in several ways, and it's to the next section that looks to shed light on one of these ways.

3. Privileging and Othering

We progress on to our third out of the four headings within Kumashiro's entry points to anti-oppressive education. With regards to this heading, he highlights the importance for educators and students to examine not only the ways in which some groups and identities are Othered, but also how some groups are favored, normalized and privileged. Additionally, he also highlights the importance of fostering understanding of how this dual process is legitimized and maintained by social structures and competing ideologies. This section serves as yet another valuable opportunity to provide insights into a landscape that will frame participants experiences in a challenging and fascinating light. Internationals will be entering into spaces where contact with internationals is not a common occurrence in some parts of China, and it's perhaps here where we can recall one international's interpretation of the environment being akin to a zoo, with the internationals being the fascinating animals on display. As such, it is not an uncommon occurrence for locals to ask for pictures with internationals, or sometimes not ask at all, choosing instead to covertly snap pictures or record videos. In other instances, racial slurs may be muttered or acts such as hair touching has also been reported. This, however, only grazes the surface of how internationals may be received

and interacted with in these environments and gives weight to a previously mentioned title of a research paper appropriately named, Foreign Superstars or Devils. It is within sections such as these where discussions can be had over motivations for travelling to China and gauging any knowledge that participants may have of these landscapes, for while some are completely oblivious to this vast country and its massive population and the way in which its citizens perceive the outside world, others appear to know full well the treatment they may receive based on their appearance and country of origin. This will once again lead to conversations not only of nationality, but of race again, and there is much to be said about race in homogeneous countries such as China, far too much to be covered in this section, but it is worth saying that sections such as this ought to strive for as much transparency as possible, while also presenting the complex grounding of perspectives and beliefs amongst the host nation. Let us consider a few cases pertaining to race which could act as opportunities for analysis, reflection and discussion. It was already mentioned that there appears to exist a race hierarchy, reinforced by various inferences regarding the social situation, the history with the West, and the education that perpetuates distinctions based on colour. For example, individuals with darker skin are understood to be those that spend more time under the sun with hard, manual labor, while white skinned individuals are seen as those who do not need to labour as much if at all. The desire for 'whiteness' is certainly not a made-up phenomenon in China, and one may even have a good chuckle when a trip to the beach consists of witnessing beach goers draped from head to toe in coverings to avoid a darkened skin. In an amusing set of YouTube videos, since removed due to not painting Chinese society in a good light, a variety of sketches were played out by both international and local Chinese actors to visualize the difference between Chinese and Western cultures. As funny as these videos were, they also disturb with the degree of accuracy in which they represent the ongoing situation. One example that is closer to the experience of the ESL context included two teachers who were interviewing for a teaching position and after

their respective interviews, were brought back for the results. The black American male sits and listens to the HR manager explain to him that he didn't get the job due to his lack of experience. The black male sits confused as he explains that he's been teaching for 10 years and has the necessary qualifications to prove it, in which the HR manager responds, apologetically, that the parents will not except it, which of course was a nicer way of saying that the parents don't want a black person teaching their children. In the second instance, she speaks to a white American, who with a beer in the one hand and feet propped on the table, listens indifferently as the hiring manager tells him that he got the job as the teacher. Now this is an extreme example that would never unfold the way that the video portrays it, the point being to poke fun at the specific underlying realities of teaching English in China, but that does not change the very real underlying reality of what is perceived, desired and executed within these spaces, and how they provide opportunities to unpack race and racism in a different context. Kumashiro (2000) summarises this as follows:

Researchers have argued that schools (and other social institutions) serve two functions: they privilege certain groups and identities in society while marginalizing others, and they legitimize this order by couching it in the language of "normalcy" and "commonsense. (p.36)

One can mention more examples such as the controversial Qiaobi detergent advert which saw a Chinese women place a detergent pod in the mouth of a black man before placing him into a washing machine to produce a "clean" and "handsome" light skinned male. Or on the reverse side, the use of black face in promoting Sino-African relations by portraying Africa as a damsel in distress in need of rescue by the superior China. Justifications for these have been sort on several grounds, from representational revenge, which points to Western countries and the way in which they portray East Asians in popular culture, to arguing that questions of race and racism cannot be understood in the same way as it is in the West, and that

a nuanced approach is required to navigate these social dimensions within China. A section like this would hopefully be designed to work through and with these nuances, fostering the sort of belief that does not assume a uniform racist dimension, but that simultaneously doesn't stick its head in the ground and claim that some nations have a green pass to act racist towards others in one form or the other. With regards to this third approach(heading) Kumashiro makes the following prescription:

The third approach to working against oppression advocates a critique and transformation of hegemonic structures and ideologies. This process begins with more knowledge, especially knowledge about oppression.

The process of learning about the dynamics of oppression also involves learning about oneself. Students need to learn two things about themselves. One, that some of their identities and experiences may be those they are studying about, and thus, that they may be privileged in some ways. Two, that they (often unknowingly) are complicit with and even contribute to these forms of oppression when they participate in the privileging of certain identities. (p. 36)

The act of learning about oneself and understanding the positioning of oneself within these new environments is of the utmost importance within this entire program and this sections more specifically. Knowledge of these situations are one thing, but knowledge of how we may all contribute to these forms of oppression may well also encourage a deeper reflection of who we are and how we can make small steps to ensuring that we are represented and represent others in a dignified, respectful manner. This is not claiming that this or any of these sections will guarantee change, but what it hopes to do is have individuals reflect on their motives, understand their positioning better, and generally add elements to their existent perceptions/cultural lenses, which increases the likelihood of responding to a situation in a

dynamic, patient and innovative way. These three headings have covered the importance of how we see, respond, and ought to respond/work with ourselves, with others and how environments can best create a flourishing environment for both groups. I will now move to the fourth and final heading, which will cover the macro sphere, thus we move to the heading on education that changes students and society.

4. Students and Society

Kumashiro's final entry point into educating for an anti-oppressive education is the critical analysis of the very discourses/frameworks in which these programs are couched within, and the fostering of the deep awareness of the preexisting notion we have and connect various concepts to. In other words, our understanding and/or notions of others is deeply entrenched within past discourses and histories, with stereotyping, as a primary feature, being the result of an almost fixed account of individuals which then enters into the consciousness of individuals within various interactional spaces. For example, images are readily brought to light when one mentions the word 'man', which elicit connotations of strength, aggression, provider, hunter, etc. This approach, for me, appears to be a means of going deeper than actions, intentions, and even education programs such as these which operate within a particular framework, but to get to the root of the problem and disrupt the various courses that forge the connections in which we make sense of others.

As such, the suggestion appears to be that several frameworks ought to be explored when it comes to questions of race, culture, persons, etc. for other unique solutions may be gleaned from disciplines outside of the critical pedagogical or philosophical frameworks within which interventions such as this may operate within. The scholarly landscapes of psychoanalysis, for example, may present us with the insights to better understand the various unconscious processes that underpin our desires to learn only those things which affirms what we already know and our own sense of self. In fact, it could also be argued that we

unconsciously desire to learn only that which affirms our sense that we are good people and that we resist learning anything that reveals our complicity with racism, homophobia, and other forms of oppression. Apart from psychoanalysis, other recommended sources have been those which fall well outside of traditional Western tradition, with insights from other continents also possessing unique insight that may encourage unique perspective on these themes.

The efforts to change these mechanisms are incredibly challenging, and as Butler (1997) and Kumashiro (2000) have argued, “critical awareness of such states and phenomena are not enough to bring about change but must be supplemented with active involvement in the change process, indeed, change requires that all labour towards the desired ends” (p. 42). This is much to ask for from an ongoing project, let alone for a single course being offered to pre-service educators. The role of changing the way an entire country perceives/interprets or understands events and others is not a realistic goal of such a project, nor does it claim to be the aim. However, this course does hope to provide worthwhile knowledge that will assist in the journey to becoming more culturally competent/intelligent, and sound at best a rallying cry to be change agents within the small social spheres that we all engage within. We cannot change the whole world, but we can positively change “little worlds”, and act as examples as to what is possible in multicultural environments. We can sow the seeds for change and create the sorts of environments that will not only increase the likelihood of flourishing within the workspace but also enable us to bring the fruits of that flourishing in our classrooms and give our pupils positive experiences that flow from a joyful positivity, hope and desire, which overcomes the fruits of frustration, anger and hate. It is considering these dynamic ends in which projects such as these are worth continuously creating and refining.

Chapter 7. Taking Stock (Conclusion)

I would now like to take stock of what has thus far been proposed in this thesis by way of a conclusion. I've come to make two large and yet interconnected claims regarding the Chinese ESL endeavor. The first claim is that the entire enterprise is an unethical one, in so far as it acts as an ongoing mechanism that perpetuates harms in a variety of guises. My use of the word 'guises' is deliberate when one considers that these harms have become so common place as to not be perceived as being harms at all. I point these harms out on a variety of levels, going so far as to claim that they are indeed oppressive in one form or the other. I've come to classify these as oppressive acts that impact not only on individuals, but on the very concept of education as a discipline and transformative endeavor that organises its activities around those human engagements that are believed to be good and aim at some good. It is oppressed by dubious hiring practices which select unqualified and, in some instances, unfit international teachers to enter their spaces of education and engage with their children. This ongoing exercise deprives more qualified and capable local educators from guiding their students towards linguistic competence and confidence. It oppresses its local educators by paying them less than their international counterparts, while qualified, well-meaning and capable internationals become the target of resentment otherwise aimed at less respectful and less qualified colleagues. These landscapes oppress internationals by depriving them of professional dignity, framing and demanding them to become side show attractions rather than legitimate and authentic educators. Finally, parents and the local citizens at large oppress their own authenticity, dignity and legitimacy due to the continued perception and framing of the international teachers, and their views and way of life as modern, exotic, desirable and all together superior to that of the local landscape. This is expressed, in some ways, through the desire to use English names, to have their children attend international institutions, to teaching them to speak like Americans or British citizens.

I attempted to argue that the larger project for considering these two large claims would indeed be too large to fit into the current thesis, but at least the question of responsible recruitment and the gradual yet deliberate efforts to foster harmonious co-operation could be a first, important and realistic first step. I would go on to argue that one approach to improving the quality of the international educators selected and the improvement on intercultural relations would be to make compulsory the completion of a cultural outfitting course which could be situated alongside the mandatory TEFL course requirement, thereby adding an important further cognitive/non-cognitive component to the teacher screening and preparation process. With oppression at the heart of my concern, I argued that a culture learning course would be best and most appropriately underpinned and expressed as an anti-oppressive pedagogy, in so far as it would bring to light these various dimensions of oppression, contextually construed, prescribe suggestions for addressing them, and encourage problem solving through dialogue, situational judgments test along with research and investigation by both course creators/facilitators and the course participants. This would be done all the while simultaneously being vigilant as to not create an oppressive learning environment for these international teachers, always being aware of the diversity that would be an important feature in such courses. Earlier in the paper, this was interpreted as falling within the pervue of CSR, given the unique positioning of Chinese ESL companies as precisely that, companies, and as such the general spirit of this paper felt this to be an appropriate alignment of its activities, and construed as deliberate efforts for a company's value statement to go well beyond cosmetic posturing. The focus on corporate culture was mentioned as a crucial area of knowledge purveyance, one that would bring to the fore both competing and complimentary corporate values that could establish a mutually inclusive and collaborative value plans for ensuring that voices and values align across cultural spheres. To put it more explicitly, the prescribed course grounds itself in CSR principles by positioning ethical engagement and cultural respects as

professional obligations rather than optional skills. Just as it requires corporations to act with awareness of their social and cultural impact, pre-service teachers are trained to recognise their positionality and the ethical consequences of their pedagogical choices in host communities. By embedding CSR-inspired values, such as social accountability, stakeholder sensitivity, and sustainable relationship building, into preparatory educational ecosystems, the program increases the likelihood that international teachers entering China approach their workspaces and classrooms not merely as cultural outsiders, but as ethically aware participants in a shared social enterprise. Typically, challenges to these attempts would also have to be unpacked, with particular consideration being given to how much a host nation should accommodate guests, professionally speaking, is there time and resources to afford the alignment of corporate values, and whether or not corporate elements in the West naturally translate to the East Asian spheres and sensibilities. These are dimensions that must be tackled in follow-up research endeavors, but what they continue to assume is the need for CSR to be a key feature within future discussions and continued research. Of course, it was mentioned several times that this course is not a once off quick fix that is exclusively designed only for international educators but eventually must be adapted for local staff and management too, and be subject to continual follow-up, assessment and updating. This project has claimed that there needs to be a starting point for any program, but it also didn't feel complete arguing abstractly for a good course and its pedagogical sentiment, it hoped to also tentatively flesh out a rough framework which would facilitate a diverse and complex set of content and procedures. What was highlighted was the vast digital landscape that participants would be exposed to, and this landscape's potential for innovative means for teaching and learning. As such, it became important to highlight the prevalence of the connectivist learning theory, and the potential/necessary pedagogical approaches to meeting these new learning spheres. This discussion necessitated further discussions on the best means of consolidating these vast repositories of knowledge into a

structured course that would take into consideration the various ways in which students learn. I differentiated between the more unstructured cMOOCs to the more structured xMOOCs, suggesting that our choice as course creators, teachers/ facilitators needn't feel compelled to choose one or the other, but to rather seek to leverage the strengths of both. Presenting content and encouraging active participant in the structured MOOCs, while encouraging exploration of the wider digital information landscape to find solutions to problems posed in the course. In addition to the connectivist consideration, was the strong prescription to advance the constructivist and social constructivist learning theories to encourage the collaborative construction of knowledge to truly own new insights gleaned from the existent knowledge. In sum regarding the tentative

specifics of a course such as this, course creators would make use of LMS (Learning Management Systems) such as Moodle, Blackboard or Coursera, along with other third-party applications. As to the frame for the content, the work by Kevin Kumashiro would be adapted to the present purposes, his four approaches to anti-oppressive education being leveraged as module headings as opposed to stand-alone approaches to ensuring anti-oppressive practices and sentiments. These four sections would bring to light the importance of knowing and framing ourselves as the Others, understanding the Others of a different nation and cultural context. Being aware of Privileging and championing an education that would work to change students and society. This final course would be argued for as either an additional or stand-alone course to be taken in conjunction with the existent TEFL certification requirements that most organisations require in or to process work VISAS. It was argued that as teachers will be provided with ongoing training in classroom best practices, the TEFL course could afford to be reduced in length to include in addition to its in-class preparation, a section on preparation for what goes on outside of the class, and outside of the workplace. This was all argued for on the basis on a larger prescriptive backdrop, that of a desire to foster authentic, legitimate and

healthy cross-cultural relations, and the success of such a desire lies in both knowing our fellow global citizens better, as well as their “word”, and their development through the relation of this word to their “world”. We do this through learning, together, we do this through educating, together, and we do this by acknowledging shortcomings so that we may all grow. Each of these sections have potential for many exciting research projects to take shape and grow out of, and so I complete this thesis by briefly outlining some of the avenues that may be ventured down in the future.

7.1. Course Concerns and Challenges

In the previous sections, I have laid out a very rough sketch of a cultural outfitting course that I believe could act as an effective and imperative approach to developing higher culture IQs among international teachers working within Chinese ESL Training Companies and additionally serve as tools that can evaluate teachers and effectively screen them for the jobs on offer. Of course, this is an ongoing project that does not suggest excluding local teachers, marketing staff, managers, and teacher trainers, but rather suggests that we learn to walk before we run, that we start somewhere, make mistakes, learn from the mistakes, and refine such a course as we go. I have also attempted to align, inform, and underpin this project with a critical pedagogical perspective, more specifically, an anti-oppressive pedagogy that sees the situation in such ESL companies as being oppressive in many forms. I've suggested, among other things, the use of Kevin Kumashiro's approaches as anti-oppressive education as a useful set of headings for organizing content around and within and encouraging various pedagogues to meet the various theories and prescriptions of learning that inform the course.

I would next like to dedicate this next section to addressing concerns/challenges to the proposed course, which aims at terms that I feel possess common threads, if they are not the same altogether. These concerns can be divided into two categories, the first addressing the primary claim of the thesis, and second, concerns pertaining to the proposed course itself. This will not be a thorough unpacking as such given various constraints, but rather the acknowledgement of potential counter arguments. I very briefly mentioned in an earlier section how the claim that the ESL enterprise and endeavor in China is an oppressive one moves beyond cultural relativism, in so far as there is good empirical and/or discursive evidence to suggest and demonstrate the ambivalent, critical, and/or dissatisfactory feelings the local populace possess in relation to the privileged positions foreigners sometimes enjoy both within

and outside the workplace (See Stanley (2013), Poole & Nehring (2025) and Lan (2022a)). Of course, this varies from city to city, and from one industry to the next, necessitating the need for further empirical work. Additional consideration must also be given to work by researchers such as Kefala & Lan (2022) and Lan (2022b), who point to the decline of white skin, or foreign privilege due to China's growing influence and overall position in the global community. However, I continue to contend that this outward facing attitude still plays at odds to internal, unconscious beliefs and drivers which continue to express themselves in and as contrary forms. Be it general perceptions of the other, the desire to occupy international spaces, to the competitive edge in possessing international qualifications, and/or the general outlook on whiteness in relation to dimensions such as preference in romantic partner/s to name only a few. These represent exciting avenues for continued research and investigation. Continuing on the challenges from and against the primary claim, some may argue along utilitarian lines that the amount of good that such institutions bring far outweigh any negative elements that may be produced after the fact. This represents arguments from ethical considerations, while others may argue on and from linguistic considerations, claiming that the interpretation of a state of affairs as oppressive, is not appropriate and too extreme in the case of young learner ESL contexts. These two examples, in conjunction with the literature, are not exhaustive of potential counterarguments, but will suffice in their broader potential for future evaluation. Additionally, regarding the course itself, the work of Jason Baehr will, like Kevin Kumashiro, provide another useful framework in whose arguments find good application and transferability to the present endeavor. However, like the aforementioned Kumashiro, Baehr's (2012) paper, *Is Intellectual Character Growth a Realistic Educational Aim?* appears to be concerned with more traditional institutions of teaching and learning and so requires adapting to the unique dimensions of extracurricular/enrichment enterprises such as these Chinese ESL companies. I would first like to proceed with the anticipated concerns with the course that I prescribe before

turning to Baehr's rebuttals to arguments against intellectual character education, which I believe provides good arrows for one's quiver when facing the opposition to such interventions. I will start by making the connection between cultural intelligence or CQ, and intellectual virtues, claiming that CQ requires the development of intellectual virtues. Next, I take each concern in turn, starting with the strong claim that the ESL landscape and endeavor is an oppressive, and overall unethical one, in its present form. This claim may fall victim to the charge of being oppressive in its own right, in so far as it makes the assumption of oppression on behalf of others and takes unasked responsibility for lifting the oppressed out of their present state of affairs. Next, I touch on the concern of who should be entrusted in creating and running these courses? Can a course lacking in representation call itself anti-oppressive? In other words, can an international do justice to a course which focuses on Chinese culture? Let's assume this points to what we may call the representation argument. Third, is it accurate, even necessary to call a course an anti-oppressive educational course, or even underpin it with beliefs of oppression? Phrased differently and additionally, does the use of terms such as oppressive or anti-oppressive approaches add unnecessary bells and whistles to a simple culture learning course, and/or why is a culture learning course argued for as the necessary or most effective approach to dealing with multicultural environments that may benefit better from less formal interventions? We can name these two-pronged objections the efficacy and superfluity arguments. Finally, do these proposed additional requirements make the entire enterprise unattractive to individuals looking for easy access into East Asia, and what impact will this have on recruiters, headhunters, schools and/or training companies? We will call this the accessibility argument.

I first wish to connect the idea of CQ as one that requires certain intellectual virtues, and so what this course happens to be striving towards is the gradual development of intellectual virtues that would assist in the gradual, ongoing and prescriptive task of increasing

and attaining to a high CQ. Such virtues conducive for this kind of intelligence include open-mindedness, empathy, adaptability, curiosity and respect for diversity. Given these are key towards our goals, and these key elements are intellectual virtues, we can argue that this project is attempting to teach towards these ends, and as such make for an appropriate parallel with the work by individuals such as Baehr. Let me now take the concerns that were briefly outlines in the introduction to these sections. I start with the main claim of this paper which asserted that the Chinese ESL landscape is an oppressive one, and one in which its participants are engaged in a fluid, ever changing set of oppressive practices. However, the very claim itself seems to be made from some position of absolute certainty over the status of these participants and assumes their oppression without the consent of those that are supposedly oppressed and in need of some savior/saviors to lift them out of this oppression that they may not even be aware of. I think that this concern must take into consideration the positions that the primary claim comes from. I identify three positions that each make up a separate set of spectrums. To be more precise, a person making the claim from the armchair with no direct experience of these landscapes beyond biased news or general assumptions or generalizations, would indeed be irresponsible, and most likely incorrect in assuming that groups of participants are oppressed. Yet, from this position comes the second one, a position in which the claim dents the primary concern by being in the environment itself and making the claim based on experience and collecting the thoughts and feelings of other participants who are both locals and internationals.

The final position, which would gradually continue from the second, and is indeed the path that this project positions itself as a key steppingstone towards, is reinforcing the claim with further empirical data from the environment itself, and in conjunction with the existent literature that confirms initial intuitions and assumptions. This current project believes that it situates itself high up in the second positions spectrum and thus feels justified in its original claim for the reasons provided but nonetheless strives for further reinforcement within the third

position, which will hopefully be a PhD study that allows more ground to be covered. Next, what I called the representation argument can be constructed as follows; a project such as this, with its diversity of participants and complexity of subject matter, requires individuals that are grounded in the various cultural contexts in order to give effective representation for each of the participants, thereby remaining consistent with the anti-oppressive thrust that this project proposes. A single international educator cannot assume this complex role from only one cultural perspective and therefore runs the risk of representing only a few individuals within this course, an outcome that can be construed as oppressive. I take this concern to be one that is made from the assumption that as an international with the experience underpinning this proposed project, will be the only person involved in its construction and delivery. I find this to be a bad assumption to make, since nowhere in this entire thesis has it been claimed that this responsibility will fall on the shoulders of only one person. This program, as has been stated, will require many to ‘come to the party’ as it were, although it may be understandable that this was not sketched in greater detail regarding who these so-called “many people” are. However, it is this courses’ desire to gain the insights and skills as and with as many relevant individuals as possible, within reason. As discussions are being had of Chinese culture, naturally it will be desirable to request the expertise and experience of those who best understand that cultural landscape, and supplement their participation with individuals who can also, as far as is possible, provide further representation and perspectives to this ongoing program, given the range of international participants. In addition to this, we may also allude to what is included content wise that represents participants and the ongoing states that may act as points of possible conflict. We may also be asked to what extent are we to present and frame a certain situation as informed by cultural norms? Put another way, we have spoken about several troubling states of affairs within these spaces, and we may say that bringing to light very negative elements of each participant’s respective culture, may be fraught with representational

pitfalls. How do we maintain and authenticity and honesty without casting a negative light on anyone? This is hard to answer now and may possibly only be answered in the dynamic process of collaborative conversations in the planning and construction stage of such a MOOC. All that can be said now is that there is a desire and intention to be as honest as possible of the points of tension that have caused the greatest concerns within these spaces, but to do so with a sensitivity, and a strategic bent that corresponds the activities with the expectations of the institutions, and the cultural norms more broadly speaking. With the correct knowledge, and the approaches as sketched out earlier, these realities can hopefully be met with a balanced understanding, a sense of empathy and compassion, as opposed to being met with suspicion, fear and possibly disdain.

Next, let me turn to the arguments of or from efficacy and superfluity. This challenge, as mentioned at the start of this section, may be seen as two pronged, with its first prong asking whether or not the anti-oppressive pedagogical thrust is one that does not add unnecessary complexity to the already complex task of cultural/intercultural relations or outfitting/education/preparation. Second, why would a course be argued as the most desirable or effective way of tackling the landscape that has hereby been referred to throughout the course of this thesis? Why, for example, could we not just build communal spaces for holistic interactions between members of different countries, or increase the frequency of team building activities outside of office hours? It is by way of the second prong that I hope to simultaneously touch on the first. I think I would start by answering that this program is not setting out to create an either/or situation. Of course, team building and more spontaneous opportunities for learning about the Other's culture is greatly encouraged, but I fear that even these may not be as effective as they could if not grounded in specific knowledge of how different cultures understand and engage in leisurely activities, for example. The slightest deviation from a typical dimension fraught with social expectations, may immediately result in negative

assumptions being formed if these expectations are not met. For example, if a team building activity concerns watching football in a pub when the majority of local teachers in the ESL space consist of women in a country that does not have convenient screening times, does this lead to exclusion and/or the continued engagement between those from the same or similar cultural landscapes? Or how do internationals react when they attempt physical contact through hugs with the local counterparts, who don't and won't necessarily feel altogether comfortable with these gestures of affection?

These are simple, and perhaps not even the best examples to put forward, but these, in conjunction with professional acts and expectations, have resulted in conflict and/or genuinely bad feelings all due to a misunderstandings. What this project is interested in is enhancing the probability of good responses to the results of social interactions within a given space. I claim, that holistic occurrences, while indispensable, have a reduced probability of producing understanding, respect and compassion to a particular social occurrence, than if it were underpinned by not only a robust course that tackles our unique socio-psychological sensibilities, but one that is ongoing and provides avenues for reminding, reinforcing and re-framing these ongoing interactions by way of regular contact sessions which serve as necessary follow-up programs to the original onboarding course. As such, I think the holistic settings are enhanced by the inclusion of more formal preparation courses and increase the probability of the efficacy of holistic encounters. With that said, I draw this concern to a close and next focus on the question of whether the framing of the entire project as an anti-oppressive pedagogical endeavor is appropriate/accurate, indeed, whether or not the interpretation of the ESL landscape in China as oppressive is a good/accurate conclusion to draw. This is a fair and good observation, for experiences that do not take into consideration certain cultural nuances, may create flimsy foundations upon which we may proceed with such projects. However, equally problematic is the use of cultural relativism as a sort of 'get out of jail free' card, which allows

for acts of atrocities to be committed without having to hold individuals or institutions accountable. I would argue that those putting forward the contexts and creating the opportunities and possibilities of collaboration among peoples of different cultures and/or creeds, must also take responsibility when it comes to reasonable accommodation of the fact that these participants will also come with their own cultural lenses. I understand the use of the word ‘oppressive’, as being appropriate not only from my first definition, but also in its alignment with other definitions provided by, lets’ say, the Miriam Webster dictionary, which defines it as an act, a state, an exercise or feeling, encapsulating acts of authority that are unjust, acts that restrain, or create a state of affairs that adversely impact people in a negative way. I do not see oppression as being translated in any positive way, even when framed as a necessary evil or something of a similar nature. Yet, it still serves as a useful entry point but should also be seen as secondary to the primary desire to get started with work that is not altogether interested with merely quibbling over definitions for the sake of quibbling. An alternative middle ground concept is readily welcome if it focuses its activities around achieving a higher CQ, which is conducive for creating the sort of multi-cultural environments that are effective, respectful, harmonious and altogether mutually beneficial to participants, and the larger problem of oppression, as has been defined in previous sections.

Back to the first prong, the anti-oppressive pedagogical bent is seen as the necessary theoretical foundation for such interventions, and is argued for as necessary and appropriate considering the nature of the environments that participants will find themselves in. Yet, the concept itself is not necessarily part of the sort of knowledge that is hoping to be purveyed, in the same way that pedagogues organising their teaching around the behaviorist theory of learning, will not begin their lessons by telling the class that he/she will be teaching them about the work of B.F. Skinner so that they will understand when the teacher uses a Behaviorist approach to teaching. The aim is not to learn about behaviourism, but to produce desirable

behaviour in the classroom. Similarly, students do not learn about oppression as the end of this proposed course, but rather the aim is to build cultural intelligence, with the anti-oppressive pedagogy being that set of beliefs/theories/attitudes that interpret a state of affairs and selects its content and approaches as appropriate to meet/deal with that state of affairs. As anti-oppressive educational approaches deal with understanding our own cultures, those of others, and spells out other problematic aspects of our lived experiences with a desire to impact the arena that has been defined as oppressive, it appears to me to be appropriate and all encompassing.

The final possible challenge to this sort of course in general is whether it will not put potential teachers off from teaching in China, and if making entry requirements harder will not impact on companies negatively, or perhaps even result in more under the table dealings on the part of the headhunters/recruiters who are too attracted to the large returns that hiring foreigners brings. This project cannot cast such a wide net as to change the character, attitudes and dealings of recruiters, and it's fully aware that internationals may feel frustrated that what was otherwise a route towards easy money and fun times at others expense, has now been made to be a little less accessible and slightly more demanding. However, let me consider three angles to this concern. First, this program still wants to create accessibility to teaching opportunities in China, in so far as there do exist well-meaning individuals who have great potential to be good educators, but those who are willing to do the hard work to get into these programs, can be judged as those most desirable to be trusted with the children within these local contexts of teaching and learning, and also more likely to immerse themselves in the host culture. Better still, if such requirements will necessitate the use of more local teachers to take up ESL roles, then all the better, considering arguments that local teacher who can speak in both the students' L1 and L2, are better choices in these spheres, and ought to work to gradually dispel the desire for selecting teachers for cosmetic purposes only. Second, the course may present several

options of delivery and length, based on ongoing research, conversations and negotiations with such enterprises. The first, as has been suggested already, would prescribe reducing the original content of the pre-requisite TEFL course, instead deferring the classroom sections to the actual environment where the new teachers will receive their instructions anyway, and inserting the cultural outfitting content to fit into the existent six month or so period to round it out. As such, it will take the same period to complete the course, while giving the additional benefit of better equipping the teachers with what is to come. Alternatively, the pre-requisite TEFL course can make the addition of this course content to create a legitimate one-year certification course, and while this will be longer, it should be conferred with the kind of academic weight as to make it a worthwhile certificate that it will have value beyond the use in Chinese ESL environments. Of course, a fully accredited course may demand a significant amount of time and money to bring to light, a reality that will be covered a little more in the costliness objection that Baehr (2016) mentions later on, and so permission access course within the companies teachers development and learning ecosystem, may be a more feasible option, but one that may sacrifice rigor in content and engagement opportunities. So in sum, while such interventions will not at all guarantee that back doors won't be used, the hope is that it does attract the sort of persons that are willing to put in the effort to not only learn the skills necessary to begin a journey as career educators, but are also willing to learn about the cultures of others, while also learning more about themselves. This will hopefully also lead to more local teachers being entrusted to teach English as a second language to the children of their native lands, who will benefit from those who can communicate with them in their L1.

Now that I have tried to address possible challenges to such a program, I hope to now add further re-enforcement to such an endeavor by using one paper by Baehr as a framework for defending the enhancement of intellectual virtues as a realistic educational aim. I mentioned three possible arguments/concerns towards such a program, in which Baehr's paper adds an

additional three, which I believe to be equally relevant to this endeavor as it is to the more traditional school context. While I will not go into massive detail regarding the arguments and Baehr's specific responses to them, I will attempt a summary before adding how these may relate to our current focus while making additional comments to the arguments. Baehr mentions first the situationist argument against educating for intellectual character growth, which claims that there is no such thing as intellectual virtue, and even if there is, it is a very rare phenomenon. Second, he highlights an objection which he calls the transformation objection, which claims that the intellectual character of most students has already been substantially formed before they enter the classroom, and it seems unrealistic to think that teachers can foster the kind of transformation central to intellectual character growth. Finally, the costliness objection, which argues that a program such as this would require a major expenditure of scarce educational resources, resources which most schools and teachers possess in very limited quantities.

Let me start with the first concern, Baehr addresses the two experiments whose conclusions inspired the situationist objection, claiming from the data that most people lack intellectual virtues. Yet, Baehr contends that intellectual virtues can be possessed in degrees, and failing to make the distinction between the idea that few people are intellectually virtuous to any extent at all, or merely that few are maximally or fully intellectually virtuous does little to undermine the idea that intellectual character growth is a viable educational aim, if indeed the research shows merely that maximal or full intellectual virtue is rare. More specifically, the set of artificial parameters does not altogether paint an accurate or fully reliable picture of how participants could react to a situation in other contexts that could to lesser or greater extents require actions that stem from possession of certain intellectual virtues. In addition to this, I understand this approach as one that appears to believe that concepts must have some empirically valid ontological status to be relevant or worthwhile in our endeavors. However, I

do not see this as a particularly useful activity that would change these sorts of programs for fostering positive intercultural relations, relations that are dependent on good degrees of CQ, which are informed by intellectual virtues. As an example, let's take robust arguments for the view that we do not have freewill. It seems absurd to me that even the best of arguments will not change the fact that we will still frame our actions as those which we freely choose and produce choices that have consequences that we need to stand by. Similarly, robust arguments by physicists that physical objects such as tables, do not really exist given the amount of empty space between their molecules, would not do much to change the fact that we call this physical item a table, or that we will use it to place certain items on, as opposed to throwing it out in order to find something that has a level of satisfactory ontological standing. As such, talk of intellectual virtues and their ontological standing do not depend on or are much impacted by such experiments, but rather focus on what it is that matters, which is those deliberate attempts to foster higher probabilities of desirable outcomes in specific environments. If these are argued to be better understood by a different term, then so be it, as it does not change the desired project and the intended outcome, and it is my hope that such efforts to show that intellectual virtues are not real, is not simultaneously the desire for affairs to continue as they are, fostering higher possibilities of miscommunications, misunderstandings, or other negative activities that are born from arrogant national fundamentalism and/or a refusal to see the perspectives of others, to name a few. This project does stand on the belief that there are such things called intellectual virtues, that they can be developed through deliberate, collaborative efforts, and that they are, ala Baehr, worthwhile educational aims.

Now to the transformational objection, which stated that it is hard to transform students who enter an educational setting with their characters mostly already formed. Baehr once again presents a useful way of thinking of such an objection by claiming that its target is ambiguous, and that while some approaches may be unrealistic, others are not. Baehr insists that we take

seriously factors such as who is undertaking the effort, at what developmental level, what is the quality of the relevant efforts, what is the expected magnitude of the impact, what is the expected scope of the impact, and what is the relevant time frame. This produces yet another useful set of criteria in which to frame the present program but let me take a look at scenarios that Baehr presents in line with the aforementioned criteria/questions. The one stands as unrealistic and the other as a realistic program. As to the former, Baehr asks us to consider the following:

Scenario 1: (i) A single inexperienced instructor (ii) at the university level (iii) proceeding mainly based on her own best guesses (iv) fosters high levels of intellectual virtue (v) in all of her students (vi) over the course of one semester.

This scenario appears to be unrealistic, but let us now look at one such scenario that I feel could be, with necessary amendments, closely associated with the present program:

Scenario 4: (i/ii) A university (iii) employing the best available research develops a program that is for (v) for the majority of its students (vi) in their four years at the school, (iv) raises the students' awareness of the nature/value of intellectual virtues, increases their understanding of their own intellectual character strengths and weaknesses, creates systematic opportunities for them to practice a wide range of intellectual virtues, and provides extensive qualitative feedback regarding these efforts.

This scenario appears to be close to the present program considering the stage the students are most likely to be in and the specifics regarding timeline, activities and feedback. Let me attempt to create a new scenario for both the first phase course, which this paper

tentatively structures and argues for, and the larger ongoing program that will involve all participants within the specific space:

Scenario 1: (i) Multiple experienced educators (ii) at the graduate level (iii) employing the best available research develops a program, for (v) graduate international students looking to teach in China (vi) in their six months prep period before departing. This (iv) raises the students' awareness of the nature/value of cultural intelligence and the underlying intellectual virtues, increases their understanding of their own intellectual character strengths and weaknesses, creates systematic opportunities for them to practice a wide range of intellectual virtues, and provides extensive qualitative feedback regarding these efforts.

Scenario 2: (i) Multiple experienced educators (ii) at the graduate level (iii) employing the best available research develops a program, for (v) Local Chinese and international students teaching in a Chinese ESL company (vi) in the next 1 to 3 years. It(iv) raises the students' awareness of the nature/value of cultural intelligence and the underlying intellectual virtues, increases their understanding of their own intellectual character strengths and weaknesses, creates systematic opportunities for them to practice a wide range of intellectual virtues, and provides extensive qualitative feedback regarding these efforts.

I have thus attempted to summarise Baerh's efforts at arguing that just because such programs require a kind of personal change or transformation, does not mean that it is not a good educational aim, considering additionally that such programs don't frame themselves as permanent solutions that will solve all these unique challenges, but can make ground with the right kind of resources, methods, and support. Baehr summarises this in the following way:

While we cannot, from the philosophical armchair, be certain about their prospects, my suggestion is that cautious optimism about these prospects is warranted. That is, it is not implausible to think that with the right kind of resources, methods, and support, educators could hope to have a significant positive impact on the intellectual character of many of their students. (p. 20)

We now move to the third and final concern as put forward by Baehr, the concern known as the costliness objection. As he mentions quite rightly, such programs are demanding, and require, at a minimum, substantial teacher buy in and training as well as ongoing commitment and effort from teachers and school leaders (Baehr, 200). The differences in this case between a, let's say, traditional K-12 school and an ESL company, have various similarities, particularly in terms of the strict time parameters that may otherwise make such endeavors appear to be cumbersome and time wasting. This is certainly a large obstacle to overcome, especially considering that ESL companies, which are often quite clear on their designation as "companies", will constantly look at how such programs can better impact on their bottom line, and if this is not made obvious, then these programs simply never get off the grounds in a substantial way, or worse still, they are done as marketing ploys to make the company appear more attractive as they create narratives of togetherness, multiculturalism, etc., even if this is not the case at all in these work spaces. Baehr attempts to deny these concerns may not find as easy a cross-over effect as it does with the previous two concerns, in so far as the aims are for teachers to be adequately trained in such a way that they may engage their learners in activities of the intellectual sorts, which is to say that the exercise of the intellectual virtues are central to a healthy democracy. Yet, this program aims are more aligned with a harmonious workforce through better intercultural outfitting, which as a result, will positively spill into the classroom, not so much in the sense that teachers will be taking what

they've learned and applying it in classrooms where the focus is on learning English as a second language, but rather that they will bring a good attitude in so far as they do not carry as heavy a burdensome weight as those that would've come as a result of frustration, annoyance and defeat at the hands of cultural norms, or situations that unfold due to them.

More evidence of resources saved due to lower turnover rates may only come over time, while the best that can be done is to show that, while it isn't obvious that that programs will make/save a company more money, even though data does exist that would suggest that it does, all things considered, it can at the very least be proposed in such a way that does not add additional cost or burdens to the existent activities. If an additional MOOC can be created for the pre-service international teachers to participate in prior to their journey, and further additions can be made to the on-boarding training that pre-service teachers take during induction, then one can imagine that not too many objections would be raised, and that through committed efforts, refinement, follow-ups and collaboration, such programs can operate as dark horses whose results will be undeniable to major stakeholders in the future.

This section has attempted to address six concerns pertaining to programs that focus on the positive development of certain aspects/dimensions of people's character. I've attempted to align the efforts of a culture learning course for pre-service international teachers travelling to China to teach English as a second language with efforts by individuals such as Baehr to teach for the intellectual virtues. I claimed that the aims of my project, which can ultimately be framed as deliberate endeavors to increase CQ, is reliant on the development of intellectual virtues. I put forward three possible argument/concerns against such a program, providing rebuttals to each, before summarising an additional three arguments/challenges to educating towards the intellectual virtues as put forward by Kurt Baehr. I will now look to put forth suggestions for future research possibilities.

7.2. Outlook to Further Research

This thesis has attempted to act as only part of a larger prescriptive program that hopes to work both within and outside of the Chinese ESL enterprise, and perhaps even get the ball rolling on adapting such teacher education courses to other ESL landscapes within places such as Japan, South Korea, Thailand, and many more. The larger upkeep and refining of such interventions may well be the primary focus, but it will also provide several small areas of interests to investigate. For example, the flip side of this course, which focuses on preparing and screening international pre-service ESL teachers, can be applied and analyzed from the perspective of the Chinese ESL teachers, considering their perspectives, expectations and ambitions of and within the discipline. Aside from that, other exciting research possibilities could include the research and monitoring of turnover rates in Chinese ESL companies, focusing specifically on Chinese work culture, well-being and professional identity. Speaking on identity, the question and ethics of using English names over given names, a subject that was briefly touched on earlier, may also be a very interesting area to further unpack, homing in on considerations such as the aftereffects of colonisation, the sacredness of names, and the concept of justice as reciprocity, or fair exchange. Additionally, mention was made of those international teachers entering these spaces, and how they are seen more as luxury commodities than respected professionals, which provides opportunities at investigating various forms of capital. The work of Bourdieu (1977) may be one of several useful points of entry for analysis of this sort, with his concepts of *field*, *habitus*, and his forms of capital serving to give sophisticated articulation to these phenomena. Grenfell (2008) serves as a good starting point for this investigation and analysis. Whilst still within the vicinity of identity, perceptions of the other, self-knowledge etc., the potential for further research in what benefits psychological interventions may bring to education contexts may also be worthwhile areas of investigation.

I'm especially taken by the works of Fanon (1991) and Tabensky (2016) in their analysis of individual and social neurosis as an explanation for inferiority and superiority complexes. This can lead to exciting cross-disciplinary approaches to better structuring decolonising education programs and/or courses. Touching on justice again, my earlier definition of education suggests the existence of prescriptive virtues or qualities that educators ought to develop or come with. The education of these virtues may also make for a fruitful endeavor, given existent literature on character education more generally, and virtue education more specifically, see Carr (1991), Baehr (2013) and Kristjansson (2017). This could be coupled with comparative methods that apply and compare with Confucian perspectives on virtue, and their effective application to various learning stages and environments. There are indeed several exciting possibilities that come from this initial and desired project, but the larger desire is to continue the efforts to provide an effective education for all participants within this context as part of the ongoing and dynamic process for better global citizenry. Again, there is no claim whatsoever of quick fixes and a one size fits all approach. Rather, there is genuine desire for continued conversations and efforts, conversations and efforts that must own up to the shortcomings, missteps, and overall ugliness of our respective contexts if we are to develop solutions towards improving and possibly overcoming them. This thesis attempted to express a desire to start somewhere, for no journey can ever get under way unless we have the courage to take the first step and give action to our hopes, the hopes for the horizons that are the fruits of our endeavors to create spaces of accommodation, understanding, respect, dignity and love.

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List of Tables

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