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"We Didn't See That the Same Way": A Dyadic Analysis of a Cross-Cultural Student Teaching Experience

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Abstract: *The growth of Utah's dual language immersion (DLI) program has led to situations where student and mentor teachers teach in settings far different from their home countries' schools, while supervisors observe lessons in unfamiliar languages. This study examined critical incidents in a cross-cultural student teaching experience consisting of a student teacher teaching in a Chinese DLI classroom and supported by a Chinese mentor and a non-Chinese speaking university supervisor. We collected and analyzed audio from dyad meetings, from a triad meeting, and also audio from one-on-one interviews. Our findings raise questions about differences in how teaching is discussed between triad members, as well as whether such student teaching arrangements inhibit student teacher growth due to language or cultural barriers.*

Keywords: critical incidents; cross-cultural study; dual language immersion programs; student teaching; university supervisors

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Utah's statewide dual language immersion (DLI) model has been replicated in more than 160 schools since 2008 (Sung & Tsai, 2019). Studies of Utah's DLI model and programming typically focus on the model's implementation and students' and teachers' experiences within DLI classrooms (e.g., Li et al., 2016; Sung & Tsai, 2019). Utah's DLI classrooms also can be unique sites of learning for student teachers. One situation that can arise in such student teaching arrangements is the formation of what we call a *cross-cultural student teaching experience*, one in which a student teacher teaches in a classroom using a language the university supervisor does not understand. Teacher education and clinical supervision studies have examined supervisory work in various cultural contexts as well as cultural differences between university supervisors and teacher candidates (Lee, 2011; Williams & Berry, 2016). However, few studies have examined student teaching triads where one member does not understand the language of instruction. The purpose of this exploratory single case study is to provide an initial view of a cross-cultural student teaching experience. We are guided by the following research questions:

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1) What critical incidents or dilemmas occur within a cross-cultural student teaching experience?
2) How do student teaching dyads discuss these critical incidents during student teaching?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Utah's DLI classrooms represent a site of teacher learning that has recently received greater attention from scholars. In the Utah DLI model, participating schools are expected to establish a one-way DLI class in each grade so that native English speakers can learn the target language (Li et al., 2016). The DLI class is actually two separate classes taught by a target language and English-language teacher, who teach each group in one language for half of the school day (i.e., the 50:50 model; Leite & Cook, 2015). Content instruction at each grade level is divided by predetermined percentages of time (Pascopella, 2013). These structural characteristics enable the model to be replicated in Utah schools using multiple languages (Leite & Cook, 2015), including Chinese.

Although Utah's DLI program has been ascendent (Sung & Tsai, 2019), there has been limited attention focused on teacher learning in DLI settings. The growth of Utah's Chinese-language DLI programs has mirrored the growth of Chinese-language programs across the US, which has created an "urgent need" for teachers of Chinese as a foreign language (Peng, 2016, p. 123). While recruiting and retaining Chinese-language teachers for DLI programs is a known challenge, the unique needs of Chinese-language teachers Sung and Tsai (2019) suggested remain underexplored. The literature offers few perspectives on how Chinese-language teachers learn, how such learning may be different from other teachers' learning, and what professional development should look like for Chinese-language teachers.

Despite several studies examining the conduct and challenges of student teaching triadic relationships (e.g., Chang, 2018; Clift & Brady, 2005; Hébert, 2019; Slick, 1997; 1998; Soslau et al., 2019), scholarship investigating cultural and linguistic divisions within student teaching triads or arrangements is rare. When studies do examine cultural divisions between triad members, they typically investigate one or two points of the student teaching triad. For example, Kim et al. (2017) studied several Korean teacher educators' experiences in the US. Lee's (2011) study focused on two points of the triad: American teacher candidates as well as herself as a Korean university supervisor. When the triad is studied together, as in Rushton's (2001) study of a student teacher's inner-city internship experience, differences in perspectives on teaching between mentors, supervisors, and student teachers are not framed as products of cultural differences. Some studies, like Akpovo's (2019) study of a student teaching field experience in Nepal, examine American student teachers' intercultural experiences in international settings. However, these studies do not examine language differences between teacher educators and student teachers, or teacher educators' understanding of the classroom language of instruction.

Akpovo's (2019) study used critical incident analysis, an approach also adopted in this study. Critical incident analysis descends from scholarship related to reflective practice (Harrison & Lee, 2011; Hébert, 2015). Critical incidents are described as lived experiences that result in a turning point (Tripp, 1994). For teachers, such incidents present a dilemma "in which there may be at least two mutually exclusive courses of action" (Harrison & Lee, 2011, p. 203). These incidents may offer opportunities for teachers to "[explain] the significance of the critical incident" by "unpack[ing] the event in order to examine the judgements that are attached to ways of seeing classroom events and practices" (Akpovo, 2019, p. 148). This study examined critical incidents, as well as the ways these incidents were discussed by student teaching dyads. All names and places referenced below are pseudonyms.

METHODS

This study is an intrinsic case study (Stake, 1995) of a single student teaching triad consisting of Jing (a Chinese student teacher), Songling (a Chinese DLI teacher and Jing's mentor), and Ashley (Jing's university supervisor, a monolingual English speaker). Jing and Songling taught in a Chinese-language classroom at Forest School, a rural elementary school with a K-5 Chinese DLI program. Data sources included audio recorded conversations between Jing and Songling, Jing and Ashley, as well as the full triad. In addition, each triad member participated in a 40-60 minute one-on-one audio recorded semi-structured interview at the conclusion of student teaching. All conversations and interviews were transcribed verbatim, translated where necessary, and initially coded (Saldaña, 2016) for dilemmas and key incidents identified by triad members. Pattern and axial coding (Saldaña, 2016) were then used to identify common incidents and examine the incidents and the dyads' perspectives on them across the data corpus. Below we share two critical incidents Jing identified.

FINDINGS

"[W]E DON'T ACTUALLY DO…ASSESSMENT": USING ASSESSMENT IN THE DLI CLASSROOM

Early in the semester, Ashley and Jing discussed assessment, which Jing revealed was something "we don't really do…a lot" in the DLI classrooms. Assessment, much like lesson plans and classroom teaching, relied heavily on Songling's lesson plans and resources. Jing described assessment as "more informal," consisting of check-ins and quick reviews of student work when students shared what they had done with Jing. Despite the apparent lack of emphasis on formal, tangible assessments in the DLI classes, Ashley encouraged Jing to experiment with more structured approaches to assessment.

In a subsequent lesson, Jing responded by assessing students using Plickers cards, which Ashley and Songling both noticed and praised (see Table 1). The cards included a scannable code that functioned like a QR code. Each student had a unique Plickers card that would share the chosen multiple-choice answer with the teacher depending on how the code was rotated. The Plickers cards allowed Jing to request a response from students by scanning their answers and then to receive immediate individualized feedback from each student. As they observed Jing's use of Plickers cards, the Chinese language did not appear to serve as a barrier for either supervisor or mentor teacher. Both were easily able to note the use and speed of the assessment. They also discussed the ways the assessment provided meaningful data about individual student and whole class progress, as well as the assessment's potential for engagement.

"I WANT TO USE A DIFFERENT WAY TO TEACH CHINESE": DEVELOPING INNOVATIVE APPROACHES

A subsequent incident did require understanding of Chinese and literacy approaches. Songling's approach to Chinese literacy instruction was based on the Mandarin Matrix program, a web-based literacy app Utah's Chinese DLI schools utilize; a routine was implemented where Songling and students regularly read a text from the Mandarin Matrix, played a game, and then completed a typing exercise. In her interview, Jing discussed her own experiences learning to read Chinese as an elementary school student in China, recalling how students spent much more time than Forest School Chinese DLI students reading and learning increasingly sophisticated vocabulary. Likely influenced by her own schooling experiences in China, Jing expressed a desire

to Songling—and later in her interview—to develop alternative approaches to the Chinese literacy instruction she saw utilized in the DLI program.

Table 1
Dyad Conversations about Assessment

Jing & Ashley	Jing & Songling
Ashley: And it was fun for me to see you use the technology and the assessment in the same way. Um, did you notice anyone consistently getting things, you know, wrong? Or were they all getting it pretty much right? What feedback did you get from that? Jing: Uh, the, the…[indecipherable]…shows me that they got it. Ashley: Oh yea, they did good. Jing: Yea, they did— Ashley: Yea! They did really good, okay! So I do love about that you get instant, instant data that you can look back and you know who's struggling and who might not be. That's awesome. What else did you like about your lesson?	Jing: (laughs) I think the final assessment is okay, because I can see who is right and who is wrong on the spot, and then I think it's okay if he can answer all of them correctly, I can give him a point or something. Songling: Yes, there can be a reward, or if you see who is right and who is wrong, they are actually determined to win, there is competition, and they learn this kind of competition because this is very similar to Kahoot, so in fact, you can encourage them to do something more, and you have data. For example, if the student can't solve this question, and then you can have some plan for him to help him. Jing: Yes. Songling: So I think you may get better and better after you do it again, and then how do you get them to hold this thing, hold the QR code, how can you test it again, or if they play a few more times, they will familiar with it. Jing: Okay.

Ashley and Songling responded very differently to Jing's desire to innovate. Though Jing never approached Ashley about alternative literacy approaches—likely due to Ashley's lack of fluency and experience in Chinese reading methods—the two did discuss innovative teaching approaches. Table 2 partially documents a discussion with Ashley about station teaching, where stations were utilized to allow students to use their five senses and discuss their findings with their peers in Chinese. When Jing broached the subject of alternative literacy strategies, Songling responded by telling Jing that she needed to "use your own strategy, not just mine." Developing innovative literacy instruction approaches was Jing's—and not a shared—responsibility. Ashley later suggested that these divergent views on innovation might have led to a failure to develop "the whole teacher" since Jing was forced to negotiate conflicting views on innovation in teaching as well as Ashley's lack of familiarity with the Chinese language and reading.

Table 2

Dyad Conversations about Developing Teaching Approaches

Jing & Ashley	Jing & Songling
Ashley: Anyway—but they were, they were loving it. They loved the different stations. Ashley: Um, I thought that was great. I loved that you checked in again with the students to make sure they were focused. I really noticed that the goal we set last time, you really were focused on this time, so that was really fun.	Jing: I actually haven't thought of a better way to read the book. I have thought about it, but I really didn't think of it. Songling: You can, because this is equivalent to my method, you just execute it. Jing: Yes. Songling: You execute well, but you can have your method. Because every teacher's method is different. Then the way of reading is different. So you can also add some of your ideas. I hope you can use your own strategy, not just mine. Jing: Okay. Songling: Become your own class.

SIGNIFICANCE

Though this exploratory case study examined a single cross-cultural student teaching experience, our analysis has surfaced several important issues related to teacher preparation in DLI settings. University supervisors and DLI teachers, whether at the preservice or inservice phase, must have knowledge of the Utah DLI model (c.f., Sung & Tsai, 2019). For supervisors, this nascent understanding must be developed alongside the use of the student teaching rubric, which calls for specific practices like assessment, among others. Even if the DLI model is understood, the language barrier presents a major challenge in cross-cultural supervision: supervisors who are not fluent in the student teacher's language of instruction may struggle to coach student teachers to use specific or innovative teaching approaches in this environment. In the absence of a fluent understanding of DLI class content, supervisors may focus on observable teaching and student behaviors and less on content and language.

In order to ascertain whether student teachers, mentor teachers, and university supervisors in cross-cultural student teaching experiences are really "seeing the same thing," more studies of such student teaching experiences are necessary. Although differences in perspectives and expertise between mentor teachers and university supervisors are hardly new in the student teaching literature (e.g., Rushton, 2001), cross-cultural student teaching experiences are under-researched in the teacher and bilingual education fields. Such scholarship will be increasingly important in Utah in particular, where DLI programs continue to expand into the secondary grade levels, paving the way for future cross-cultural student teaching experiences and teacher education practice.

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