



# From Challenges to Transformation: The Professional Development Journey of Transnational Language Teachers in the United States

Yu Wu  et Huan Gao 

Volume 19, numéro 2, 2025

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1118264ar>  
DOI : <https://doi.org/10.22329/jtl.v19i2.8977>

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

University of Windsor

ISSN

1492-1154 (imprimé)  
1911-8279 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer cet article

Wu, Y. & Gao, H. (2025). From Challenges to Transformation: The Professional Development Journey of Transnational Language Teachers in the United States. *Journal of Teaching and Learning*, 19(2), 135–153.  
<https://doi.org/10.22329/jtl.v19i2.8977>

Résumé de l'article

In the context of global educational exchange, this study explores the experiences of Chinese teachers temporarily teaching Mandarin Chinese in United States K-12 schools. Using case-study methodology, this research examines the professional challenges and learning experiences of these transnational Chinese language teachers. Findings reveal that teachers' career difficulties arise from the use of teaching strategies that do not align well with the environments of the host schools and from insufficient cultural sensitivity. Moreover, inadequate pre-service training and limited professional development opportunities exacerbate these challenges, prompting self-directed transformative learning efforts. The findings also emphasize how tailored training combined with teachers' transformative learning initiatives can effectively address and mitigate the difficulties faced in transnational teaching environments. This study provides valuable insights into the preparation for transnational educators navigating cross-cultural teaching landscapes, thereby contributing to the discourse on international teacher-exchange programs.

© Yu Wu et Huan Gao, 2025



Ce document est protégé par la loi sur le droit d'auteur. L'utilisation des services d'Érudit (y compris la reproduction) est assujettie à sa politique d'utilisation que vous pouvez consulter en ligne.

<https://apropos.erudit.org/fr/usagers/politique-dutilisation/>

érudit

Cet article est diffusé et préservé par Érudit.

Érudit est un consortium interuniversitaire sans but lucratif composé de l'Université de Montréal, l'Université Laval et l'Université du Québec à Montréal. Il a pour mission la promotion et la valorisation de la recherche.

<https://www.erudit.org/fr/>

# From Challenges to Transformation: The Professional Development Journey of Transnational Language Teachers in the United States

Yu Wu

*University of Memphis*

Huan Gao

*University of Memphis*

## Abstract

In the context of global educational exchange, this study explores the experiences of Chinese teachers temporarily teaching Mandarin Chinese in United States K-12 schools. Using case-study methodology, this research examines the professional challenges and learning experiences of these transnational Chinese language teachers. Findings reveal that teachers' career difficulties arise from the use of teaching strategies that do not align well with the environments of the host schools and from insufficient cultural sensitivity. Moreover, inadequate pre-service training and limited professional development opportunities exacerbate these challenges, prompting self-directed transformative learning efforts. The findings also emphasize how tailored training combined with teachers' transformative learning initiatives can effectively address and mitigate the difficulties faced in transnational teaching environments. This study provides valuable insights into the preparation for transnational educators navigating cross-cultural teaching landscapes, thereby contributing to the discourse on international teacher-exchange programs.

## Introduction

Educational globalization has brought tremendous opportunities and complex challenges for educators teaching in transnational contexts. This type of teaching refers to the practice of educators working across national borders, often in culturally and socially diverse environments that differ substantially from their home country (Nawaz, 2018; Ospina & Medina, 2020). These experiences provide them with unique opportunities for professional development and personal growth, enabling them to acquire new instructional strategies, cultural competencies, and global perspectives. At the same time, transnational teachers often face a wide range of difficulties,

including navigating social and cultural discrepancies, adapting to contrasting instructional beliefs, and dealing with insufficient support (Alicamen et al., 2022; Gül & Gökçe, 2020; Modesto, 2020). Especially, unsupported, or inadequately supported, teachers struggle to achieve desirable teaching outcomes, or effective classroom management in cross-cultural contexts (Halicioglu, 2015; Hobbs & Porsch, 2022). These struggles indicate the importance of tailored assistance to help transnational teachers acculturate professionally in a new educational environment (Yue, 2017). However, although existing research on transnational teachers has concentrated on their motivations and the cultural challenges that they face (Gül & Gökçe, 2020; Henderson et al., 2018; Poole, 2019), there is still a limited understanding of their professional development experience. More details on how these educators enhance their knowledge, skills, and practices, particularly as they work in diverse international contexts, remain to be explored (Sims & Fletcher-Wood, 2021).

Over the past two decades, the Center for Language Education and Cooperation Headquarters has deployed over one million Chinese-language teachers to various countries, to meet the growing global demand for Chinese-language education. These candidates are selected based on strong qualifications, including advanced degrees, teaching experience in K-12 schools in China, and bilingual proficiency in Mandarin and English (Confucius Institute, 2023). This paper aims to investigate the professional challenges encountered by transnational Chinese-language teachers in the United States, and how various professional learning experiences lead to their professional growth. Transformative Learning Theory (Mezirow, 1997) is applied to understand how these teachers navigate professional challenges and learning experiences, leading to transformative changes. Through this framework, it is proposed that transnational Chinese teachers, when faced with teaching difficulties, can engage in reflective learning to reassess their beliefs and assumptions about language instruction. This process enables them to adapt effectively to new educational contexts. Exploring the experiences of these instructors enriches the overall understanding of transnational education, specifically, how individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds navigate new educational systems, and how transnational-education programs and institutions can inform initiatives to foster inclusivity, intercultural awareness, and acceptance in diverse contexts. To begin, the literature on transnational teachers' professional challenges and professional development will be reviewed. Then, an outline of Transformative Learning Theory, as a theoretical framework, will be explained, followed by a description of the research context, and key participants of the study. Next, there will be an analysis of the in-depth interviews, using case-study methodology, including twelve current and previous Chinese-language teachers and one director within a Confucius Institute (CI) that is affiliated with a northeastern university in the United States. Guided by the discussion, the implications section offers suggestions for transnational educators, administrators of host institutions, and directions for future research. The research questions are as follows:

1. What professional challenges do overseas Chinese-language teachers face in American K-12 schools, and how do these challenges motivate transformative professional learning?
2. How do Chinese teachers navigate and overcome their professional challenges in cross-cultural teaching environments?

## **Literature Review**

Together, with the expansion of transnational-education programs, there has been a growing body

of scholarship on this emergent field, indicating that transnational teachers experience various challenges in a new social, cultural, and educational environment (Gül & Gökçe, 2020; Henderson et al., 2018; Ospina & Medina, 2020; Sumalinog, 2020). Several factors contribute to their social plights, including limited social networking, language barriers, and not being accepted by the local community (Alicamen & Becamon, 2022; Poole, 2019). For example, Filipino early-childhood-education teachers in Singapore struggled with language barriers when communicating with parents who were not proficient in English, as well as with navigating culturally sensitive situations, such as discussing diverse family structures, which are less commonly addressed in their home country (Alicamen & Becamon, 2022). Professionally, a new educational context leads to transnational teachers' instruction-related challenges. Managing young children's misbehaviour is one of the problems in the classes (Jin et al., 2021; Ospina & Medina, 2020). For instance, due to divergent educational beliefs, Chinese and American teachers respond differently to student misbehaviour. Western teachers tend to employ positive reinforcement, whereas Chinese teachers often resort to punitive measures, such as having misbehaving students stand, or placing them in a corner of the classroom (Ye & Edwards, 2017). Although transnational-Chinese teachers have years of teaching experience in their home counties, they still struggle to deal with students' behaviour issues in host schools (Jin et al., 2021). In addition to the struggles that occur in the classroom context, overseas teachers encounter obstacles in establishing close relationships with school administrators and colleagues (Gül & Gökçe, 2020; Modesto, 2020). For instance, Filipino immigrant teachers shared the difficulty of working with an unsupportive school administrator. This lack of support not only heightened their stress, but also made it harder for them to adjust to the unfamiliar educational and cultural environment in South Texas (Modesto, 2020). All the evidence indicates that transnational teachers need professional development opportunities to adjust to the unfamiliar school climate.

### ***Cross-cultural professional development for transnational teachers***

Teacher professional development is the continuous process by which educators learn and improve their knowledge and skills to better support student learning. It is widely acknowledged for its positive effect on instructional quality and school improvement (Parise & Spillane, 2010; Sims & Fletcher-Wood, 2021). This type of training involves a complex process of how to learn and transform knowledge into practice for students' benefits (Avalos, 2011). It encompasses not only formal structures, like lectures or workshops, but also participating in curriculum development, sharing strategies with colleagues, having peer mentoring, and engaging in collaborative activities (Hobbs & Porsch, 2022; Lai et al., 2016). In the face of the challenges that teachers encounter, adequate and dedicated professional development and preparation are crucial to ensure the quality of education delivery (Ping et al., 2018).

Research on institutional-preparation programs indicated a lack of commitment to preparing transnational teachers to teach professionally (Nawaz, 2018; Tran et al., 2021). Institutional resources for professional learning primarily consist of checklists and tip sheets that are focused on administrative tasks, with few addressing the need for cultural and professional adaptation to the educational settings of the host countries (Popova et al., 2022). For transnational Chinese language teachers, The Confucius Institute (CI) does provide pre-service training before teachers depart to the host country, however, the effectiveness of such professional development is concerning. Jiang and Wu (2012) pointed out various areas for improvement in transnational-Chinese teachers' pre-service training, including theory-based seminars and one-size-fits-all training models. Specifically, the program was primarily geared towards teaching college-level

students or adults, but many Chinese-language teachers were assigned to K-12 schools.

These inadequacies resulted in ill-prepared Chinese teachers and posed future challenges. Moreover, the research on transnational teachers' professional development experience in host countries needs to be further explored. A more in-depth analysis of transnational Chinese-language teachers' professional learning and self-development experiences is needed.

### ***Transnational Chinese language teachers***

Drawing inspiration from the cultural diplomacy efforts of European countries, the Chinese Education Department launched the Confucius Institute (CI) in 2004. This non-profit international organization promotes Mandarin Chinese language and culture, supports local Chinese teaching internationally, and facilitates cultural exchanges (Gil, 2008). During the past two decades, the Center for Language Education and Cooperation Headquarters recruited and dispatched over one million Chinese-language teachers to dozens of countries and regions across the globe for language teaching (Confucius Institute, 2023). Teachers selected for the program, who would be teaching across national borders, must meet three essential requirements. They must possess at least a bachelor's degree, have prior teaching experience in K-12 schools in China, and have obtained proficiency certificates in both Mandarin and English. Despite the recent decline in the number of transnational Chinese language teachers in the United States, attributed to the current socio-political landscape (National Association of Scholars, 2023), the population of these educators remains significant (Chinese International Education Foundation, 2023). Therefore, exploring their overseas teaching and learning experiences is still crucial.

While existing literature offers valuable insights into the social and cultural challenges faced by transnational teachers in broader educational contexts, limited attention has been given to the specific professional difficulties that they encounter when adapting to culturally distinct environments. Furthermore, it remains unclear how these challenges prompt transnational teachers to reflect on and reshape their previous teaching practices and knowledge. In the case of transnational Chinese-language teachers, some studies mentioned inadequacies in institutional support or pre-service training. However, there is a lack of exploration into their professional learning experiences in the host country, and how these experiences shape their efforts to pursue further professional growth. Thus, this study aims to fill these gaps by exploring the lived experiences of transnational Chinese-language teachers in American K-12 schools. The insights gained from this investigation will offer valuable guidance, not only to transnational teachers, but also to the organizations and programs that support their professional integration and development.

### ***Theoretical framework***

Transformative Learning Theory describes how individuals examine their existing frames of reference to make them more inclusive, open, reflective, and emotionally capable of change (Cranton, 2006). It explains how adults integrate new information, perspectives, and practices into their worldviews as part of the learning process. The theory emphasizes that transformative learning occurs in response to a disorienting dilemma triggered by significant life transitions or crises (Mezirow, 1997). Engaging in learning opportunities and critical self-reflection allows learners to recognize and re-evaluate their frames of reference, leading to transformative learning (King, 2004; Mezirow, 2003). Further experience and knowledge acquisition by this type of learning contribute to personal growth, self-development, and identity transformation (Pitts, 2009).

Transformative Learning Theory offers a powerful lens for analyzing the professional

challenges and teaching experiences of transnational Chinese-language teachers working overseas. These educators, as they navigate unfamiliar cultural and educational environments, frequently encounter disorienting dilemmas—moments that compel them to question their established teaching methods, cultural assumptions, and pedagogical approaches (Mezirow, 1991). Such challenges serve as catalysts for transformative learning, encouraging teachers to critically examine and reconsider their frames of reference, including traditional teaching norms rooted in their home country. By adopting new perspectives and deeply reflecting on their previously held beliefs, transnational teachers can engage in transformative learning, equipping them to adapt effectively to the American educational system and better address the diverse needs of their students. Through professional learning activities, critical reflection about prior practices, and their adaptation to a different educational context, these teachers embark on a transformative journey of growth and modification (Mezirow, 1997; Smith, 2013).

## **Methodology**

The case-study methodology was used to explore transnational teachers' teaching and learning experiences in host educational contexts. Stake's notion of case study, which delves into the "messy complexity of human experience" (Stake, 1995, p.3), emphasizes how phenomena are enacted, experienced, and encountered within socially constructed contexts. Furthermore, this approach involves exploring a bounded system through detailed and in-depth data collection from multiple sources, resulting in a case description and identifying themes (Creswell & Poth, 2016). To assess whether this approach is appropriate, it is essential to consider the constraints regarding the number of examples that can be included (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) and the finite nature of data collection (Yin, 2017). This study is suitable to employ case study, because the total number of CIs in the United States is finite, and all members of the research site were interviewed. Therefore, the teaching and learning experiences of this group of Chinese-language teachers at the research site are defined as the case being examined. Moreover, the research questions in this study are open-ended and heuristic, aligning with this research's mission of interpretation, rather than hypothesis testing (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

## ***Research site and participants***

This study was conducted at a CI affiliated with a university in the northeastern United States. Established in 2010, this institute annually hosts between five and seven transnational Chinese teachers. The director of the CI was appointed from a university in China. The institute primarily supports two to three local school districts, encompassing approximately five to six schools spanning from elementary to high-school levels. Each participating school receives one to two Chinese teachers each year. In high schools, Chinese-language courses are offered for credit, and students can take the Chinese Proficiency Test.

To establish trustworthiness in participant selection, the first author initially contacted the CI program director, who facilitated introductions to the Chinese-language teachers during a professional development activity within the program. This approach allowed the first author to engage with, and interview, these teachers. A total of thirteen participants were enlisted for the study. Of these, eight were in their first-to-third years of teaching tenure and were actively engaged in instruction at schools associated with the CI. The other five participants had concluded their teaching assignments and had returned to China. Historically, the CI has tended to recruit female teachers, due to established recruitment practices. As a result, the gender composition of the

participants in this study is significantly skewed towards females, except for the sole male participant, who serves as the director of the CI. Table 1 provides background information on the participants.

Table 1: Participants' background information.

Name	Gender	Teaching Subject & Level in China	Teaching Grades in the United States	Teaching Status
Chen	Female	Chinese in middle school	5 <sup>th</sup>	Completed
Dai	Female	English in middle school	9 <sup>th</sup>	Current*
Jiang	Female	Chinese in elementary school	4 <sup>th</sup> and 5 <sup>th</sup>	Completed
Li	Female	English in high school	8 <sup>th</sup>	Completed
Liu	Female	Chinese in elementary school	4 <sup>th</sup>	Current*
Ma	Female	Chinese in middle school	6 <sup>th</sup>	Current*
Nie	Female	Chinese in elementary school	3 <sup>rd</sup> and 4 <sup>th</sup>	Completed
Ning	Female	Chinese in high school	8 <sup>th</sup>	Current*
Qu	Female	Chinese in middle school	4 <sup>th</sup> and 5 <sup>th</sup>	Current*
Wang	Female	English in elementary school	6 <sup>th</sup>	Current*
Xiao	Female	English in high school	6 <sup>th</sup>	Current*
Xu	Female	Chinese in middle school	4 <sup>th</sup> and 5 <sup>th</sup>	Completed
Yin	Male	No teaching in K-12 schools, but works as a faculty member at a Chinese university.	No teaching, supervise the CI as a director	Current*

\* The individuals were actively serving as teachers at the time the first author conducted the interviews.

### ***Data collection and analysis***

After initial connections were established with the teachers, data collection occurred between February 2020 and January 2021. In-depth interview data was collected, because it allowed for a nuanced exploration of the participants' experiences, perceptions, and insights regarding transnational teaching (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The first author conducted all the interviews, to ensure consistency and establish a rapport with the participants. To gain an in-depth understanding of teachers' transnational teaching experiences from various voices, interviews were conducted with current and past Chinese teachers, as well as the CI director. Face-to-face individual interviews were conducted with the current cohort of seven teachers and the director of the CI, while online interviews were held with five former teachers of this CI, who have since returned to China. All online interviews were supplemented by regular, virtual conversations and informal chats through WeChat, a popular social networking platform enabling texting, voice, and video communication across long distances.

Semi-structured interviews were utilized, wherein the interview questions were flexibly worded, comprising a mix of structured and open-ended queries (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Each interview lasted about one hour. The interviews followed an interview protocol that covered participants' background information, domestic and overseas work experiences, as well as their feelings and attitudes toward professional learning and self-development. Special attention was given to the professional challenges faced by teachers, interactions with new colleagues, and professional learning experiences. Due to the shared language background between the first author and the participants, all the interviewees preferred to converse in Mandarin Chinese. All the interviews were recorded with the informants' consent, and pseudonyms were used for participant usernames to ensure confidentiality.

The analysis was conducted on the Chinese transcripts, to ensure accurate interpretation and capture teachers' meaning-making complexity (Blair, 2016). The transcripts were imported into the qualitative-data-analysis software, ATLAS.ti, to facilitate the coding procedures. A two-round coding strategy was employed. In the first round, structural coding was utilized to organize the data, based on the main interview questions, and then, descriptive coding, involving the use of words or short phrases, was applied to identify the fundamental topics that were present in the data (Saldaña, 2015). Additionally, emotion coding and values coding were used to capture the inner cognitive perceptions of the interviewees. Emotion coding encompassed labeling emotions, such as "helplessness" or "isolation" when encountering professional challenges. Values coding assessed the teachers' attitudes, beliefs, and values concerning teaching and professional development, using codes like "culturally bonded" and "motivated" (Gabloe & Wolf, 2012).

In the second coding round, pattern coding was utilized to establish connections between thematic categories and subcategories within the array of codes that were generated during the first round (Saldaña, 2015). Pattern coding aims to consolidate summaries into a smaller number of sets, themes, or constructs. To implement pattern coding, the first-cycle codes were reviewed to assess their commonality, and various pattern codes were then assigned. For example, while examining the challenges faced by the Chinese teachers, the pattern-code "boundary" was applied. Under this identification, sub-patterns, such as "cultural boundary" and "professional boundary" were identified and analyzed. This process facilitated the synthesis and categorization of the codes into meaningful themes. Furthermore, a versus coding method was used to identify differing answers to the same questions from the Chinese teachers and the CI director. For instance, in terms of instructional material support, codes such as "sufficient materials support" and "insufficient support" were recognized through versus coding, indicating the conflicting perspectives between the CI director and the Chinese teachers.

Only the quotations presented in this paper were translated from Mandarin Chinese to English. To increase the reliability of this study, the transcripts were shared with the participants for member-checking, enabling them to review and verify the correctness of their statements.

### ***Ethical considerations***

Aligned with the ethical standards that are essential for maintaining research integrity, this study, involving transnational Chinese teachers, adhered to rigorous ethical protocols. Informed consent was initially secured from all the participants, who voluntarily engaged in the study, with the freedom to withdraw at any time without repercussion. To safeguard their anonymity, pseudonyms were used instead of their actual names. Additionally, each participant was thoroughly informed about the study's purpose and anticipated outcomes, and was given the opportunity to review the findings to ensure transparency and confirm understanding. To maintain



the confidentiality and privacy of the participant data, a stringent data-management protocol was established. All signed consent forms and interview transcripts were digitally stored on a password-protected external hard drive, with plans to retain the data for five years post-interview. Access to this sensitive information was strictly limited to the principal researcher, thereby preventing unauthorized access, and ensuring that the participants' contributions remain confidential.

### ***Positionality***

In this positionality section, we reflect on our unique perspectives and experiences, which potentially enriches the study's depth and context. The first author combines her scholarly expertise in teacher-professional development, with prior practical experience as a Chinese-language instructor in a U.S. university, providing a nuanced understanding of the challenges that are faced by transnational-language teachers. The second author, an assistant professor in language and literacy education, contributes a valuable firsthand perspective from her previous role as a CI teacher, further enriching the research with her direct experiences. Together, our diverse backgrounds and broad engagements in the field provide a rich foundation for exploring the professional development of language teachers.

### **Findings**

Based on the data analysis, two primary themes emerged that address the first research question, regarding the challenges faced by transnational Chinese teachers in American K-12 schools, and what motivates their transformative learning. First, these teachers encountered professional challenges in their teaching practices, due to unfamiliarity with the local schools' teaching habits. They also experienced other difficulties, stemming from insufficient cultural sensitivity, when delivering this type of related knowledge. Additionally, the teachers' mixed feelings about professional-development training, and their varying efforts to adapt to the new school climate, often led to divergent paths in professional growth. The third theme, which answers the second research question, reveals that teachers highlighted the significance of self-oriented, continuous learning, through diverse methods. Also, these Chinese teachers expressed a strong need for targeted support that would help them to navigate these instructional and cultural challenges within the host country's context.

### ***Challenges of teaching across borders***

The transnational Chinese-language teachers in this study faced professional challenges daily. They quickly realized that the lecture-oriented and teacher-centred approach, that they were accustomed to using in China, was not aligned with the student-centred educational environment in the United States, regardless of the grade level. This struggle was exemplified by Mrs. Dai, who had six years of experience teaching English in a Chinese high school, and embodied the traditional Chinese-teacher archetype.

It was tough... I had to teach concrete knowledge for the Chinese credit course to help students with exams, but also, create a student-centred atmosphere, not a teacher-centred [one]... I need more practice to get it right...

Mrs. Dai acknowledged the difficulty of striking a balance between teaching concrete knowledge for foreign-language exams and fostering an active classroom atmosphere. Similarly, Ms. Jiang's experience demonstrated the challenge of managing American classroom dynamics. She said:

You know, I misjudged what 'American-style freedom' meant in class... I was clueless about when to step in and what was considered normal behaviour for students. I started off being too laid-back, and by the time I realized it, trying to get them back on track was like trying to herd cats...

The disparity between the teaching practices of transnational-Chinese teachers and those prevalent in American educational contexts necessitates that these educators manage the transition to different instructional methodologies adeptly. Mrs. Dai's and Ms. Jiang's experiences further illustrate that evolving into a student-centred educator demands continual practice, adaptation, and learning.

In addition, some Chinese teachers experienced confusion when delivering instructions that involved cultural and religious content, occasionally introducing inappropriate material into the language instruction inadvertently. Mrs. Li recounted an incident during Easter, when she taught her students how to say, "Happy Easter," in Chinese:

So, it was Easter time, and I thought it would be cool to teach the kids how to say, "Happy Easter" in Chinese. I even showed them a quick video about the history of Easter. But then, my principal pulled me aside and said [that] I shouldn't be teaching anything religious... I didn't realize it was such a big deal, and [thought that] it wouldn't hurt to discuss it. But apparently, that's a no-go. Now, I'm baffled about what's okay to teach culturally and what's not.

Similarly, Ms. Xu mistakably mentioned liquor during a class, and later learned that discussing alcohol-related topics is discouraged in the American educational setting. Ms. Xu recounted:

I accidentally mentioned alcohol in my class. I was teaching colour words, and I mentioned tea. You know we have black tea (we call [it] 'red tea' in Chinese), then I thought, we have wine (this word also has 'red' in Chinese), I can also teach them how to say wine in Chinese! Right? Just a simple connection, but we are not allowed to mention words like liquor or cigarette. I felt wronged, truly! I did not mean that, you know... Later I began to consider potential risks to children...

Both above examples illuminate that despite transnational-Chinese teachers' good intentions to deliver culturally relevant content to U.S. students, they lack explicit knowledge regarding what is permissible and what is not. When teaching ideas were disapproved by the school authorities, misalignment existed between the teachers' assumptions and the expectations of the school on the teaching content.

Moreover, transnational-Chinese teachers' insufficient cultural sensitivity also extends to teachers' dialogue with students. For instance, Ms. Liu once taught her students how to use cosmetics to imitate Peking Opera facial makeup. The initial step in this application involves applying white powder to the entire face, followed by the addition of various colours and patterns

to craft the desired opera character. Upon observing that the face of a student (who is African American) appeared darker than the expected shade, after applying the white powder makeup, Ms. Liu, without any intention of causing offense, inadvertently asked, "Why does your face still appear dark?" However, she immediately realized her mistake, Ms. Liu shared,

I was so stupid... I should not have asked such an inappropriate question. Then I promptly apologized to that kid... As you know, we do not have such ethical diversity in the classroom. I did not even consider this before. Now, I begin being mindful of my words and actions to avoid any unintended offense or discomfort to my students.

Ms. Liu unintentionally demonstrated a need for more cultural awareness in her interaction with students. Such cultural insensitivity can be traced back to their home-teaching environment, where racial diversity is not as evident as it is in the United States. Since then, Ms. Liu began to be more mindful of her words and actions, so as not to cause offense or discomfort to her students. All in all, transnational-Chinese teachers face professional and cultural challenges in their teaching practices that stem from a lack of familiarity with the teaching customs of their host schools, and a lack of cultural awareness. Transnational-Chinese teachers realized that they need to be more socioculturally sensitive, and careful to deliver appropriate and respectful language classes.

### ***Professional development experience***

The data analysis revealed a second emerging theme concerning the impact of different professional development opportunities for Chinese teachers' ability to address teaching challenges. Regarding pre-service professional training, and the professional support provided by CIs in the host country, Chinese teachers' feedback varied.

*Pre-departure professional development:* Before embarking on their teaching assignments in the host country, these teachers receive a one-month pre-service training, organized by CI Headquarters, which has developed the Standards for Transnational-Chinese-Language Teachers. During the interviews, Mrs. Chen was the sole teacher who provided positive feedback, appreciating the training as a chance to enhance her linguistic skills. She reflected, "My major was Chinese Education in college, and the training was a helpful refresher of what I had previously learned. It was a rejuvenating experience."

On the contrary, other teachers described the pre-service training as off-target. Ms. Ma voiced her dissatisfaction, and highlighted that the training only focuses on one type of American school, neglecting the diverse conditions that teachers may encounter in different locations. As Ms. Ma shared:

American schools differ greatly by state, district, and type, such as public versus private or urban versus suburban, but our pre-service training does not account for these variances. The training gave us a sense of teaching in American schools, but once I started teaching here, I realized [that] there were many differences from what I learned before. We were taught some difficult or interesting knowledge points, but those were not applicable at all.

The challenges teachers encounter upon entering the classroom demonstrate the limitations of traditional pre-service training models in adequately preparing transnational-Chinese teachers

for the complexities of real-world teaching environments. In addition to the criticism regarding the lack of comprehensive understanding of American-school conditions, theory-oriented workshops received critique.

There were too many theories! I understand [that] the invited speakers are renowned linguistic professors, but do we really need such highbrow content? I don't think so....We need more practical learning.

Chinese teachers' needs, as reported in the above extracts, include learning about the local school settings and more practical information, rather than relying solely on standardized theoretical knowledge. If the Chinese teachers had opportunities to know what kind of schools they would be assigned to beforehand, and if the pre-service training was targeted towards practical teaching, transnational-Chinese teachers would feel more prepared to change their instructional approaches and beliefs in host-school settings.

*On-site professional development:* The CI director in the United States organized training workshops for in-service professional development, intended as platforms for sharing and learning, which were generally well-received by Chinese teachers after their arrival in the United States. When the experienced, local, Chinese teachers were invited to the workshops, those in this study got some opportunities to exchange teaching knowledge and experiences. Mrs. Xu told us,

Overall, the training is useful... Our director invited local, experienced, Chinese teachers to workshops. We can share our confusion, challenges, or pressures with them, and they share their class activities and management experience with us.

By facilitating the exchange of teaching knowledge, experiences, and strategies, these workshops offer valuable opportunities for peer learning and mentorship. Mrs. Xu's upbeat assessment of the training underscores the significance of peer support in addressing the challenges and complexities of teaching in a new educational context. For many teachers, the training activities also foster a sense of cultural bonding and camaraderie within the community. The opportunities to gather with other Chinese teachers during workshops were highly valued, as it allowed them to connect with colleagues who are often dispersed across different schools. This sense of community and support within the network contributed to a feeling of safety for Chinese teachers. As noted by Ms. Jiang,

I do feel safe and relaxed... When we have a whole-day seminar with all other overseas Chinese teachers, I am happy to go! We are separated in different schools; it is not a usual thing to meet each other in person...

The CI director was also confident about CI's supervising and consulting work. The director said:

I usually visit teachers' classrooms from time to time, listen to their classes, and give them feedback. I always tell them that if they have any class issues, they can talk to me directly. If teachers need to buy some custom Chinese outfits for their class activities, I will help them order...

While these efforts contribute positively to teacher satisfaction and instructional

effectiveness, it is essential to recognize that individual experiences may vary, and some teachers may encounter challenges or issues that the director ignores. For example, some new teachers expressed a desire to connect with the teachers who previously worked in the same school to gain insights into the school context and student profiles. Ms. Jiang was a new transnational, Chinese-language teacher; she had only been in the host school for five months when she was interviewed. Ms. Jiang hoped that the director could help these newcomers build connections with previous Chinese teachers who had worked in the same school with similar student groups.

New teachers need to get used to the new school. I hope my previous teachers share their experiences with me, so [that] I will know some basic information about the course and my students... The more information [that] I [can] get, the more prepared I will be, but the director kind of ignores this. I feel regretful for their work...

These findings shed light on the positive aspects of CI support, such as the collaborative workshops and cultural bonding opportunities. Connections to previous Chinese-language teachers were limited. Still, such connections were valued and preferred by novice Chinese teachers, with a desire to have updated and tailored responses to their specific needs and school contexts. There is room for improvement, in terms of providing appropriate teaching resources and fostering connections between previous transnational-Chinese teachers and current teachers, which novice teachers believe may give them tailored responses to their specific needs.

### ***Professional growth through self-directed learning***

Besides the collective training, Chinese teachers improved their professional development through self-directed learning. The teachers highlighted the significance of continuous learning through diverse methods, including engaging in discussions with fellow teachers, observing classes taught by their peers, participating in workshops and conferences, and reflecting on their own work.

*Dialogue dynamics among teachers:* Some novice Chinese teachers got support from veteran Chinese teachers, if they work in the same school. The pedagogical skills of the experienced instructors, which effectively adapted to local schools, provided novice ones with insights into teaching in a new school context.

Ms. Wang is not only my best friend here, but also my informal mentor. She has taught me techniques, like using appropriate gestures to quiet children... As I gain more confidence in my instruction, we discuss course schedules, and share educational games and music that can be used in classroom activities...

The mentorship extends beyond mere pedagogical advice to include collaborative discussions on course schedules and the sharing of educational resources, such as games and music, enhancing the novice teacher's confidence. This highlights the value of informal mentorship relationships in fostering a supportive professional environment conducive to the growth and development of novice teachers. However, not all new teachers were lucky enough to work with other Chinese teachers within the same school. Most of them are the only Chinese-language teacher in their schools. In this situation, American teachers become transnational-Chinese teachers' mentors. Some Chinese teachers regularly visit their American colleagues' classes, and believe that some teaching and managing skills are transferable. As Ms. Ning shared,

I usually visit other classes if I get other teachers' permission. Spanish, math, reading... there are so many classes [that] I can observe and learn from! I also engage in conversations with American teachers; sometimes, I adopt their class management skills, and sometimes I combine them with my own style...

Ms. Ning's experience reflected a recognition of the value of cross-disciplinary learning and the potential for gaining insights and strategies applicable to a Chinese class. In addition to actively visiting other classes, some Chinese teachers received assistance from their American colleagues in their daily tasks, such as writing student performance reports, as elaborated below:

Since I'm not a native speaker, I have my colleague check my emails to parents... They give me pointers on what to highlight, and offer suggestions to improve my writing style (Ms. Li)

When I was giving feedback to parents about a student's performance, I wrote something like, 'Even though this kid isn't the brightest, he's been putting in a lot of effort in Chinese.' Then, my American colleague suggested I change 'smart' to 'gifted,' and use more encouraging words... It might seem like a small thing, but I really appreciated my colleague's kindness and insight. (Ms. Ma)

The experiences shared by Ms. Li and Ms. Ma underscored a collaborative approach to communication that bridges linguistic and cultural barriers, ultimately enhancing the effectiveness of parent-teacher communication, and fostering a sense of inclusivity within the school community. All the interactions that transnational Chinese-language teachers had, with both Chinese and American colleagues, underscored the significance of informal mentoring. This addressed the needs of transnational-Chinese teachers, such as becoming familiar with the current school climate, managing class instruction, and communicating appropriately, as mentioned by some interviewees. While American colleagues may not offer direct pedagogical support to Chinese teachers, they are still regarded as role models, inspiring Chinese teachers to explore suitable teaching practices and communication approaches with parents.

*Conferences informing teaching practices:* More than half of the Chinese teachers interviewed in this study have attended conferences, such as the National Chinese Language Conference (NCLC). Mrs. Wang explained why she attended the conference:

My school sponsored my attendance at NCLC. It is funded by the CI's annual \$10,000 for teacher professional development in Chinese teaching. I chose to attend to enhance my teaching skills and professionalism... The conference was enlightening. It can significantly alter my approach to utilizing teaching materials creatively.

Likewise, Ms. Nie wholeheartedly agreed with Mrs. Wang's perspective on attending conferences. She had been grappling with how to engage her students' interest in learning Chinese, "I discovered that I could incorporate a bingo game, or use arithmetic to teach reading numbers. I also learned how to introduce the Chinese zodiac using animals."

Attendance at conferences demonstrates Chinese teachers' proactive approach to professional learning and their commitment to improving their teaching practices. Compared to

the regular professional development activities of transnational teachers, the content of conferences was much more extensive and comprehensive. Chinese-language teachers could acquire instructional strategies that suited students' interests in playing Chinese character-learning games and gain inspiration for facilitating class activities, ultimately benefiting their students' learning experiences.

*Illumination from self-reflection:* Exposure to various learning opportunities is essential for meaningful changes in teaching, but such modifications require teachers to be self-motivated and self-initiated. Data from the interviews indicate that Chinese teachers who were able to adapt to the current school culture and climate are those who engaged in self-reflection with proactive attitudes and practices. Some teachers recognized that learning from others first and reflecting on their instructional approaches allowed them to adjust for better outcomes.

For instance, Ms. Ning shared her experience of trying out activities that she had learned from the conference, only to find that her students were not very engaged. Ms. Ning reflected on why the class activities did not work, and she eventually concluded that real-life materials, such as Chinese commercials and food recipes, needed to be incorporated into scenarios. "I finally let my students have an interest in learning Chinese characters. I am happy [that] I did not give up, and feel [that] the class atmosphere is [now] engaged!" This instructional shift not only sparked her students' interest in learning Chinese, but also facilitated an involved engaged learning climate.

Similarly, Mrs. Xiao, who had not previously used the internet extensively in her teaching, recognized the new teaching environment that favours the affordance of digital technology, which pushed her to leverage online tools to make her classes more interesting. As Mrs. Xiao noted,

So, I've been figuring out how to search and mix up all kinds of online stuff to refresh my lessons... Back home in China, we usually team up in small groups for each subject, and we tend to stick to the same old PowerPoint slides... But here, I tried to ditch my old ways and try out some new tricks.

By actively seeking out and experimenting with online tools, Mrs. Xiao demonstrated a proactive approach to professional growth and adaptation. Her willingness to break away from familiar teaching practices and explore new strategies reflects a commitment to continuous improvement and responsiveness to evolving educational contexts. The experiences of both Ms. Ning and Mrs. Xiao exemplify the importance of reflecting on one's own instructional approaches to adapting and improving teaching outcomes. Through reflection on their own experiences, and the adoption of new instructional changes, Chinese teachers strive to create more engaging and effective learning environments for their students.

## **Discussion**

This study found that transnational Chinese-language teachers face working challenges, and that insufficient professional development opportunities drove them to seek extra support through self-directed, transformative, learning efforts in American K-12 school settings. The professional challenges facing Chinese teachers stem from pedagogical and cultural-content reasons. Specifically, Chinese educators encounter academic difficulties in adjusting to Western classroom-management styles and student-centred teaching methods. This finding complements previous research, by enhancing the understanding of the challenges faced by Chinese educators (Jin et al., 2021; Polin, 2023; Yue, 2017). On the other hand, the cultural-content challenges denote transnational-Chinese teachers' confusion and hesitation when addressing issues pertaining to

sensitive topics, such as religion and race, within their teaching practices. Moreover, the accidental crossing of cross-cultural boundaries, like integrating inappropriate content into teaching, offers a new viewpoint on the professional challenges of transnational teachers. This contrasts with earlier research, primarily focusing on the difficulties arising in typical cultural situations (Poole, 2019; Ye & Edwards, 2017). This study further illustrates how teachers' insensitivity to the host culture leads to their professional challenges.

Examining the professional-learning experiences of transnational Chinese educators reveals mixed views on the adequacy of their educational training. Corresponding to the previous literature, criticism is directed at the pre-service schooling for its inclination towards workshop-oriented seminars and limited exposure to practical learning activities (Jiang & Wu, 2012). The one-size-fits-all model disabled the transnational-Chinese teachers from having enough understanding of American K-12 school settings. In terms of the professional development training in the United States, most teachers take it as a means for professional growth, as well as an opportunity to build a sense of belonging within a community bound by shared cultural experiences. Despite the director's rating that professional development activities provide substantial support for teachers, some teachers have voiced a desire for extra assistance. This includes engaging local Chinese educators, providing age-appropriate teaching materials, and connecting current and past Chinese educators. This emphasizes that creating networks and opportunities for informal interactions with experienced teachers can greatly enhance the effectiveness of formal professional development programs (Hobbs & Porsch, 2022).

When Chinese teachers face “disorienting dilemmas” (Mezirow, 1997, 2003), which is the shock of confronting a new educational setting, they are compelled to adapt to their new professional environment. For instance, one teacher reflected on their cultural insensitivity when a category of liquor was mentioned, while explaining a Chinese character during class. Later, this teacher learned that discussing alcohol-related topics is discouraged in American educational settings. These missteps stemmed from their home-teaching environment in China, where cultural norms differed from those in the United States. Such dilemmas serve as critical turning points for teachers to reflect, adapt, and develop culturally responsive practices in their host classrooms. Transformative learning is also a dynamic process that enables transnational, Chinese-language teachers to adapt and grow professionally within new educational contexts. After encountering professional challenges, some teachers seek support from their colleagues, demonstrating a willingness to visit other teachers' classes, ask American colleagues for guidance on giving constructive feedback to students and parents, and relearn strategies for creating an active learning climate. Through these efforts, Chinese teachers continuously transform their new learning experiences into improved teaching practices. These self-directed learning activities resonate with Mezirow's transformative learning theory, which posits that experience and knowledge acquisition by transformative learning contribute to self-development. Transformative learning theory further emphasizes the importance of creating supportive learning opportunities, which require supervisors or program directors to cultivate communities that enable teachers to become transformative learners. Within such communities, teachers can collaboratively address their specific challenges and benefit from shared experiences. For instance, these educators expressed a preference for stronger connections with their predecessors, highlighting the need for structured mentorship programs to bridge gaps in their professional and cultural understanding. Without such supportive communities, these instructors may struggle to adapt and build their professional growth effectively. The transformative learning theory offers an approach to understanding how transnational Chinese-language teachers meet professional challenges in their host educational contexts, as well as what supports and efforts they need to adapt to new school contexts. The realm



of self-initiated learning reveals that transnational Chinese-language teachers noticed the importance of relearning from new practices to navigate their instructional difficulties, despite the inherent fluctuations of the self-directed learning process.

While this study provides valuable insights into the experiences of transnational-Chinese teachers, there are some limitations to consider when interpreting the findings. First, this study primarily analyzed the perspectives of female transnational-Chinese teachers, which was inevitable. The demographics of CI teachers largely mirror those of language teachers in China, who are predominantly female, making the recruitment of more female teachers for CI an unavoidable pattern. The absence of male teachers' perspectives may limit the ability to provide a comprehensive view of transnational teachers' experiences. Second, due to logistical constraints, interviews with teachers who had returned to China were conducted online, rather than in person. This reliance on online interviews may affect the depth and validity of the data, when compared to in-person interviews. Despite these limitations, the study offers a crucial starting point for further research, and contributes significantly to the understanding of the unique challenges and experiences faced by transnational teachers.

## **Implications**

Derived from the above findings, several implications emerge for organizations and programs supporting transnational Chinese-language teachers and their teaching activities. First, pre-service training programs may shift their focus from predominantly theoretical, workshop-based seminars to more practical learning experiences (Popova et al., 2022). Activities, such as simulations of classroom management strategies and student-centred teaching approaches, can better prepare teachers for the realities of teaching in American K-12 schools. Additionally, developing specific training sessions that equip teachers with tools to handle sensitive cultural issues would help to mitigate potential misunderstandings in the classroom (Alicamen & Becamon, 2022; Modesto, 2020). Second, access to appropriate teaching resources in the host country is equally important (Hobbs & Porsch, 2022). When teaching materials are tailored to the age and developmental needs of students, they further support teachers in adapting their instructional practices effectively. Third, the creation of informal professional networks is critical (Polin, 2023). The program director can play a proactive role in establishing platforms for transnational teachers to connect with local educators and past-program participants. These networks provide opportunities for problem-solving, knowledge sharing, and emotional support. Finally, encouraging teachers to engage in self-directed learning is also essential. Attending academic conferences, visiting other classrooms, and reflecting on their instructional practices can foster transnational teachers' continuous professional growth. By embedding these practices into a broader framework of professional development, transnational teachers can better navigate the challenges of teaching in cross-cultural settings, while advancing their instructional effectiveness.

Future research could consider other areas that can support transnational teachers professionally. One key focus is the role of program leaders in creating strong professional-support systems. Understanding how leadership styles and decisions shape teachers' ability to adapt to new cultural and pedagogical environments could provide valuable insights. Another critical area is cultural-sensitivity training. Teachers often face challenges navigating sensitive topics, and there is a need to explore how training can be both standardized and tailored to address the unique dynamics of different host countries. Finally, transformative-learning practices merit deeper exploration, particularly with how structured professional development, and informal, self-directed learning can work together to foster meaningful growth and adaptation for teachers in

these complex, cross-cultural settings.

### Declarations

#### *Conflict of interest*

The author(s) declare no competing interests.

#### *Source of funding*

The study was self-funded.

### Acknowledgments

The authors acknowledge the support of their respective institutions and the constructive feedback from peer reviewers.

### Author Bios

**Dr. Yu Wu** is a research assistant professor at the Center for Research in Educational Policy within the College of Education at The University of Memphis. With extensive experience, she specializes in designing both qualitative and quantitative research studies. Dr. Wu's research explores how teachers' professional learning experiences may be influenced by various social contexts and school leadership practices, as well as how teachers build their professionalism as they grow.

**Dr. Huan Gao** is an assistant professor in the Department of Instruction and Curriculum Leadership at The University of Memphis. Her scholarly work focuses on the intersections of literacies, multilingualism, transnationalism, and educational diversity. Dr. Huan offers a valuable insider's perspective as a previous Chinese teacher, enriching the research with her first-hand experiences.

### References

- Alicamen, D. B. L., & Becamon, A. M. K. M. (2022). Overseas teaching: The voice of Filipino early childhood education teachers in Singapore. *Pertanika Journal of Social Sciences & Humanities*, 30(4). <https://doi.org/10.47836/pjssh.30.4.02>
- Avalos, B. (2011). Teacher professional development in teaching and teacher education over ten years. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 27(1), 10-20. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2010.08.007>
- Blair, A. (2016). Academic uses of language (re) defined: A case of emergent bilinguals engaging in languages and literacies in and outside of school. *Linguistics and Education*, 35(35), 109–119. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.linged.2016.07.003>
- Chinese International Education Foundation. (2023). List of Model Confucius Institutes [示范孔子学院名单]. <https://www.cief.org.cn/>
- Confucius Institute. (2023). <https://ci.cn/> Retrieved July 17, 2023.
- Cranton, P. (2006). *Understanding and promoting transformative learning: A guide for educators of adults*. Jossey-Bass.

- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2016). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*. Sage.
- Gable, R. K., & Wolf, M. B. (2012). *Instrument development in the affective domain: Measuring attitudes and values in corporate and school settings* (Vol. 36). Springer Science & Business Media.
- Gil, J. (2008). The promotion of Chinese language learning and China's soft power. *Asian Social Science*, 4(10), 116–122. <https://doi.org/10.5539/ass.v4n10p116>
- Gül, H., & Gökçe, A. T. (2020). Challenges and advantages of working abroad: Turkish and Turkish culture teachers' perspective. *Psycho-Educational Research Reviews*, 9(1), 33-47. <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1909-1822>
- Halicioglu, M. L. (2015). Challenges facing teachers new to working in schools overseas. *Journal of Research in International Education*, 14(3), 242-257. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1475240915611508>
- Henderson, M., Barnett, R., & Barrett, H. (2018). New developments in transnational education and the challenges for higher education professional staff. In D. Law & M. Hoey (Eds.), *Perspectives on the internationalization of higher education* (pp. 73-81). Routledge.
- Hobbs, L., & Porsch, R. (Eds.). (2022). *Out-of-field teaching across teaching disciplines and contexts*. Springer.
- Jiang, A. S., & Wu, Y. H., (2012). An exploration of the teaching competence of volunteer Chinese teachers in Thailand. *Chinese Teaching and Research*, (1), 60–66.
- Jin, J., Mercer, S., Babic, S., & Mairitsch, A. (2021). 'You just appreciate every little kindness': Chinese language teachers' wellbeing in the UK. *System*, 96, 102400. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2020.102400>
- King, K. P. (2004). Both sides now: Examining transformative learning and professional development of educators. *Innovative Higher Education*, 29(2), 155-174. <https://doi.org/10.1023/B:IHIE.0000048796.60390.5f>
- Lai, C., Li, Z., & Gong, Y. (2016). Teacher agency and professional learning in cross-cultural teaching contexts: Accounts of Chinese teachers from international schools in Hong Kong. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 54, 12-21. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2015.11.007>
- Merriam, S.B., & Tisdell, E.J. (2016). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation* (4th ed.). John Wiley & Sons.
- Mezirow, J. (1991). *Transformative dimensions of adult learning*. Jossey-Bass.
- Mezirow, J. (1997). Transformative learning: Theory to practice. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, 74, 5-12. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ace.7401>
- Mezirow, J. (2003). Transformative learning as discourse. *Journal of Transformative Education*, 1(1), 58-63. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1541344603252172>
- Modesto, O. P. (2020). A phenomenological study of Filipino immigrant teachers in South Texas. *The Qualitative Report*, 25(8), 3149-3162. <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2020.4225>
- National Association of Scholars. (2023, June 22). *How many Confucius Institutes are in the United States?* National Association of Scholars. [https://www.nas.org/blogs/article/how\\_many\\_confucius\\_institutes\\_are\\_in\\_the\\_united\\_states](https://www.nas.org/blogs/article/how_many_confucius_institutes_are_in_the_united_states)
- Nawaz, T. (2018). Internationalization strategy, faculty response and academic preparedness for transnational teaching: The significance of pre-departure training. *Education+ Training*, 60(9), 1084–1096. <https://doi.org/10.1108/ET-09-2017-0141>
- Ospina, N. S., & Medina, S. L. (2020). Living and teaching internationally: Teachers talk about

- personal experiences, benefits, and challenges. *Journal of Research in International Education*, 19(1), 38-53. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1475240920915013>
- Parise, L. M., & Spillane, J. P. (2010). Teacher learning and instructional change: How formal and on-the-job learning opportunities predict change in elementary school teachers' practice. *The Elementary School Journal*, 110(3), 323-346.
- Ping, C., Schellings, G., & Beijard, D. (2018). Teacher educators' professional learning: A literature review. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 75, 93-104. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2018.06.003>
- Pitts, M. J. (2009). Identity and the role of expectations, stress, and talk in short-term student sojourner adjustment: An application of the integrative theory of communication and cross-cultural adaptation. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 33(6), 450-462. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2009.07.002>
- Polin, L. G. (2023). Self-efficacy and professional development of Chinese language teachers in North Carolina secondary schools. *Language Teaching Research*, 1-35. <https://doi.org/10.1177/13621688221149533>
- Poole, A. (2019). International education teachers' experiences as an educational precariat in China. *Journal of Research in International Education*, 18(1), 60-76. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1475240919836489>
- Popova, A., Evans, D. K., Breeding, M. E., & Arancibia, V. (2022). Teacher professional development around the world: The gap between evidence and practice. *The World Bank Research Observer*, 37(1), 107-136. <https://doi.org/10.1093/wbro/lkab006>
- Saldaña, J. (2015). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers*. Sage.
- Sims, S., & Fletcher-Wood, H. (2021). Identifying the characteristics of effective teacher professional development: A critical review. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*, 32(1), 47-63. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09243453.2020.1772841>
- Smith, K. (2013). Overseas flying faculty teaching as a trigger for transformative professional development. *International Journal for Academic Development*, 18(2), 127-138. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1360144X.2012.655280>
- Stake, R. E. (1995). *The art of case study research*. Sage.
- Sumalinog, G. G. (2020). English language teachers in diaspora: A Heideggerian phenomenology. *International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research*, 19(11), 283-295. <https://doi.org/10.26803/ijlter.19.11.16>
- Tran, L. T., Le, T. T. T., Phan, H. L. T., & Pham, A. (2021). "Induction and off you go": Professional development for teachers in transnational education. *Oxford Review of Education*, 47(4), 529-547. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03054985.2020.1867524>
- Ye, W. & Edwards, V. (2017). Confucius Institute teachers in the UK: Motivation, challenges, and transformative learning. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 21(6), 843-857. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13613324.2017.1376636>
- Ye, W. (2017). Taking Chinese to the world: Language, culture and identity in Confucius Institute teachers. *Multilingual Matters*.
- Yin, R. K. (2017). *Case study research and applications: Design and methods*. Sage.
- Yue, Y. (2017). Teaching Chinese in K-12 schools in the United States: What are the challenges? *Foreign Language Annals*, 50(3), 601-620. <https://doi.org/10.1111/flan.12277>