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Xiaoyan Song

University of Windsor, song34@uwindsor.ca

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**Enhancing International Students' Participation in Online Courses through Culturally
Responsive Pedagogy: A Systematic Literature Review**

By

Xiaoyan Song

A Major Research Paper

Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies

through the Faculty of Education

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for

the Degree of Master of Education

at the University of Windsor

Windsor, Ontario, Canada

2023

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**Enhancing International Students' Participation in Online Courses through Culturally
Responsive Pedagogy: A Systematic Literature Review**

By

Xiaoyan Song

APPROVED BY:

J. Oloo

Faculty of Education

C. Smith, Advisor

Faculty of Education

December 12, 2023

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Abstract

With the increasing diversity of the K-12 student population, there has been a growing emphasis on the adoption of culturally responsive teaching practices (Lawrence, 2020). Additionally, online degree programs and courses provided by many universities in the United States and around the world offer people the chance to access higher education without leaving their homes and without considering the issues of age, time, and geography (Diaz, 2021). Also, the COVID-19 pandemic has further accelerated the prevalence of online courses (Bao 2020; Rapanta et al., 2020; Mollenkopf et al., 2020). According to Elshami et al. (2021), “satisfaction with online learning is a significant aspect of promoting successful educational processes” (p. 1). As more and more students enroll in online courses, curriculum designers and lecturers must find some way (i.e. applying culturally responsive pedagogy in online courses) to engage students to actively participate in online classes (Adams et al., 2018). However, according to Adams et al., (2018), in most of online courses, there was insufficient emphasis or alignment with culturally responsive pedagogy. This deficiency creates an environment that is suboptimal for facilitating intercultural learning. As stated by Heitner and Jennings (2016), neglecting cultural diversity in online instruction can impact the quality of online teaching and learning, leading to various challenges. The purpose of this research paper is to identify factors affecting international students’ engagement in synchronous online courses and the importance of culturally responsive pedagogy to engage international students’ participation in synchronous online courses.

Keywords: International students, synchronous online courses, culturally responsive pedagogy

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Enhancing International Students' Participation in Online Courses through Culturally Responsive Pedagogy: A Systematic Literature Review Introduction

Introduction

Colleges and universities in the United States and Canada are becoming more culturally and linguistically diverse as a result of the rise in the number of overseas students enrolled (Smith & Zhou, 2022a; Yoon & Martin, 2016). As schools become increasingly diverse, it is crucial for educators to be adequately prepared to address the needs of students families from culturally, linguistically, and economically diverse backgrounds (Awang-Hashim et al., 2019; Ballenger & Jiang, 2023; Brooks et al., 2021; Ghazarian et al., 2023; Kieran & Anderson, 2019;Lockhart & Mun, 2020; Luukkonen et al., 2023; O'Leary et al., 2020).).

The enrollment of racial and ethnic minority students in higher education institutions has increased, prompting considerations for the utilization and implementation of culturally responsive teaching in higher education classrooms (Hutchison et al., 2020).

The importance of fostering fair and equitable learning outcomes cannot be overstated in educational settings. In this context, it is crucial for faculty members to embrace a diverse array of cultural approaches to teaching and learning. The studies conducted by Ballenger and Jiang (2023) and O'Leary et al. (2020) underscore the significance of this approach. In today's interconnected and multicultural world, educational institutions serve as microcosms of the broader global landscape. Students from various cultural backgrounds come together to learn and grow, making it essential for faculty to acknowledge, respect, and incorporate diverse cultural

perspectives in their teaching methods. This not only promotes inclusivity but also enhances the overall quality of education by catering to the unique needs and experiences of each student.

Additionally, the rapid propagation of COVID-19 compelled a sudden and significant shift to remote learning within the education system (Ortiz-Rodríguez et al., 2022). At the same time, the art of engaging international students in virtual classrooms has emerged as a significant and relevant topic of discussion. However, Gemmel et al. (2015) mentioned that there is limited research conducted exploring international students' experience in online study courses. In this context, it is vital for instructors to utilize inclusive teaching strategies, specifically by incorporating active learning, in their online classes. Embracing pedagogical approaches that prioritize active and inclusive teaching principles will yield benefits for all students, with a particular focus on those who belong to marginalized or underrepresented groups (Harris et al., 2020). Culturally responsive pedagogy can help schools better educate a diverse society and connect with the larger world (Baize, 2023). The goal of incorporating culturally responsive pedagogy is to establish a supportive learning environment that promotes the academic achievement, social-emotional well-being, and holistic development of students from diverse cultural backgrounds. In a study by Kumi-Yeboah and Amponsah, (2023), the students demonstrated strong engagement with the lesson when teachers incorporated elements from their home culture, personal experiences, and lifestyles into the teaching material. However, there is a lack of training among instructors in effectively teaching international students or students from culturally and linguistically diverse background (Guler, 2022; Jabbar & Mirza, 2019; Mahalingappa et al., 2021; Paige & Goode, 2009; Tran, 2020; Yoon & Martin, 2016). Numerous educators come into the classroom with a limited understanding of cross-cultural aspects and a lack of confidence in addressing cultural diversity (Chahar & Sevigny, 2022).

To meet the needs of students and help them learn and succeed in a diverse society, educators, including teacher candidates, need to have in-depth understanding of effective ways to implement culturally-responsive pedagogy and multicultural education in general. (Halpern & Aydin, 2020; Yoon & Martin, 2016). According to Smith and Zhou (2022c), as higher education providers (HEPs) worldwide actively seek to enhance their financial resources and promote diversity, the integration of cultural responsiveness within institutional systems becomes imperative. By prioritizing this aspect, HEPs can ensure a positive and inclusive experience for international students, who are increasingly being recruited to contribute to the institution's profile. Canada can be taken as an example, since international students play a vital role in Canada's economy and academic landscape. According to the Canadian Bureau of International Education (CBIE), 807,750 international students studied in Canada at all levels of study at the end of 2022 (CBIE, 2023). “The diverse cultural backgrounds of international students require higher education providers to develop and implement culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogies to meet the needs of their internationally and culturally diverse students” (Smith & Zhou, 2022c, p. 39-40). However, there is a lack of comprehensive support for design methodology, particularly within online environments (Heitner & Jennings, 2016; Morong & DesBiens, 2016).

The aim of this research paper is to pinpoint the elements that influence the engagement of international students in synchronous online courses, while emphasizing the significance of culturally responsive teaching methods in promoting the active participation of international students in such courses. The three research questions guiding this systemic literature review are:

1. What challenges have international students encountered while taking online courses while studying abroad?
2. What is the current situation of instructors employing culturally responsive pedagogy?
3. How can instructors employ culturally responsive pedagogy to foster personal interaction and establish a sense of community in online courses?

Research Methodology

Literature Search and Evaluation

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

First, this review includes peer-reviewed journal articles that encompass both quantitative and qualitative research methods, as well as mixed methods. Additionally, it has included books and journal articles published mainly between 2013 and 2023. Second, the focus of the review is on examining student participation in synchronous online courses within a school setting. Third, the participants in the studies reviewed primarily consist of students ranging from K12, as well as post-secondary students. Lastly, it is important to note that the full articles included in the review are available for download in English and peer-reviewed.

Literature Identification

The literature search was initiated using key terms "culturally responsive pedagogy in online courses" and "enhancing international students' participation in online courses through culturally responsive pedagogy." During the search process, the relevance of each article was initially assessed based on the title. If the title indicated a potential connection to the use of

culturally responsive pedagogy in online courses, the complete reference information, including the author, year, and title, was recorded for further evaluation.

The databases utilized for this systematic literature review encompassed prominent resources in the field, including Omni, the Education Resource Information Center (ERIC), and Google Scholar. By incorporating multiple databases, a comprehensive and diverse range of scholarly articles and research studies were accessed, enhancing the breadth and depth of the review.

Omni was first used to search the database using the key words “culturally responsive pedagogy in online courses” and “enhancing international students' participation in online courses through culturally responsive pedagogy.” After reviewing the title from 92 (83 and 9 respectively) search records, 40 (29 and 11 respectively) peer-reviewed articles were selected for future screening. After the excluding the publication year before 2013 and the content irrelevance, 27 articles were left for the literature review.

A search conducted in ERIC using the keyword "enhancing international students' participation in online courses through culturally responsive pedagogy" yielded 151 results. After conducting an initial screening of the titles, 63 articles were identified. During this process, it was noted that while some article titles did not explicitly mention the term "culturally responsive pedagogy," the article descriptions were examined to determine their potential relevance. After deleting the repetition from the Omni database (4) and excluding the publication year before 2013 and the content irrelevance, 18 articles were left for further evaluation.

A search conducted in Google Scholar using the keyword "culturally responsive pedagogy in online courses" generated 116,000 results. After conducting an initial screening of

the titles of the first 15 pages, 135 articles were identified. After deleting the repetition from the Omni and Eric databases and excluding the publication year before 2013 and the content irrelevance, 11 articles were selected.

Screening for Inclusion

The process of screening the identified studies, it was conducted based on the predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria. Initially, the titles and abstracts were screened, followed by the assessment of the full-text articles to determine their eligibility for inclusion in the review. During the screening process, a thorough evaluation was performed on the identified studies, considering the established inclusion and exclusion criteria. The titles and abstracts were carefully reviewed to assess their relevance to the research topic and the objectives of the review.

Quality and Eligibility

This initial screening step aimed to swiftly eliminate studies that were evidently unrelated to the focus of the review. Subsequently, the remaining studies underwent a comprehensive assessment by evaluating their full-text articles. This detailed evaluation enabled a closer examination of the content, methodology, and results presented in each article. Throughout the full-text assessment, various factors were taken into careful consideration, including study design, participant characteristics, interventions or variables of interest, outcomes measured, and the significance of the findings in relation to the research question. Only studies that satisfied the inclusion criteria and provided valuable insights into the topic were selected for inclusion in the review. By adhering to this systematic screening process, the review aimed to ensure the inclusion of only the most relevant and high-quality studies, thereby maintaining the integrity and rigor of the review's findings.

Iterations

In addition to the database search, the review employed both backward and forward snowballing techniques to minimize the risk of missing relevant studies (Freer, 2023). Backward snowballing involved examining the reference lists of the studies included in the review, allowing for the identification of earlier studies that have been cited. This approach facilitated tracing the research lineage and ensuring that foundational and influential studies were not overlooked. Forward snowballing was employed to explore other studies that have cited the included studies in the review. This approach enabled the discovery of new research that built upon or extended the findings of the included studies. By utilizing forward snowballing, the review sought to identify emerging research and stay up-to-date with the latest advancements in the field.

In total, this review incorporated 63 articles into this review using backward and forward snowballing techniques.

Altogether, a comprehensive set of 119 studies were included in this research.

Data Extraction and Analysis

In this systematic literature review, the author extracted information related to two key subtopics across the selected studies:

- (1) Characteristics of Culturally Responsive/Relevant Pedagogy
- (2) The Content of Literature Review

For the qualitative research approach, insights were drawn from studies conducted by Adams et al. (2018), Baize (2023), Brooks et al. (2021), Eppard et al. (2021), Idrus (2023),

Mahalingappa et al. (2021), and Lawrence (2020). On the other hand, the mixed-methods approach was employed in the studies by Brennan et al. (2022), Chuang (2016), Guler (2022), Khoo and Huo (2022), and Vail (2018). A notable pilot study conducted by Lopez et al. (2022) specifically utilized the Inventory of Situationally and Culturally Responsive Teaching (ISCRT) to assess the culturally responsive teaching (CRT) practices of 23 in-service teachers. This evaluation was conducted both before and after they received online coursework and coaching. In addition to the qualitative research, findings were incorporated from studies that adopted a quantitative research method, including Luukkonen et al. (2023), Ballenger & Jiang (2023), and Polat et al. (2019). This mixed-methods approach allowed us to comprehensively explore the diverse facets of culturally responsive pedagogy while considering the rigorous and systematic nature of quantitative research.

Findings

International Students' Challenges during Study Abroad and Attending the Online Courses

Students may face difficulties when moving from one level of education to another and adapting to the new academic demands. (Clark et al., 2015; Graue et al., 2015). However, international students, in particular, face a range of complex obstacles as they adjust to unfamiliar cultural and socioeconomic settings, as well as novel educational methods and academic settings. Particularly, they must adapt to novel approaches to teaching and learning (Markey et al., 2019), as well as unique academic demands (Yang et al., 2019, as cited in Makey et al., 2021). The adaptation may become slower and more inefficient when international students have to attend online courses.

The popularity of online education is rising among students with varying ages and diverse backgrounds, including international learners. Nevertheless, there are certain shortcomings in online instruction, encompassing difficulties encountered by those new to online learning. The mainly challenges and problems faced by international students are a lack of a sense of community, technological issues, and difficulty comprehending educational goals (Song et al., 2004), the influence of different workloads, and the efficacy of education for English as second language (ESL) students, insufficient communication, particularly during lectures, assignment instructions, and feedback. (Guler, 2022; Smith & Zhou, 2020b).

One of the obstacles limiting the efficiency of teaching and learning procedures is a lack of contact in online classes (Baber, 2021). Also, the difficulties include online learning platforms, course delivery methods, assessment alignment, and the distinction between online learning pedagogy and subject-specific pedagogy (Adams et al., 2018). Additional obstacles encompass delays in time and a range of technological challenges, including audio, video, or internet connection loss, as well as intrusive noise during synchronous course meetings(Sherwood et al., 2021).

According to Guler (2022), students who come from culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) backgrounds often encounter academic challenges and may require specific accommodations to achieve success. The most common challenges were related to language barriers (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011; Guler, 2022; Khoo & Huo, 2022) and lack of support in teaching CLD students. For example, despite the lecturer employing their best efforts to clarify the concept, students may still find it challenging to grasp the real meaning behind it (Turner, 2006). Even if some students meet the entrance IELTS score requirement and they have no problem with communication, they may also encounter other academic problems, such as not

knowing how to cite, how to use the formal essay format, how to use the online supporting study system, etc. From my own experience, I am continuously working on my language challenges and improving gradually. I worked hard for my IELTS exams and received a high score to fulfill the university's requirement for admission to the Master of Education program. I am familiar with the English writing style in my home country, but I need to improve my writing style in the Canadian context.

These challenges encompass a range of issues, including a diminished sense of community, inconsistent grading, inadequately prepared instructors and teaching assistants for the online learning environment, a lack of personalized instruction, reduced effort from certain group members in online courses, and internet connectivity problems (Smith & Zhou, 2022b).

Definition of Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

According to Ladson-Billings (1995), culturally responsive pedagogy refers to an educational approach that values and acknowledges the rich diversity of students' cultural backgrounds, identities, and experiences. It emphasizes the integration of students' cultural contexts and perspectives into the teaching and learning process, fostering inclusivity and engagement. In brief, culturally responsive pedagogy refers to an educational approach that acknowledges the significance of integrating students' cultural backgrounds into every facet of the learning process. According to Gay (2002), culturally responsive teaching refers to “using the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students as conduits for teaching them more effectively” (p. 106). Culturally responsive pedagogy empowers students socially, intellectually, politically, and emotionally” (Pappamihiel & Moreno, 2011, p. 333).

A fundamental principle of culturally responsive teaching revolves around providing equitable opportunities for academic achievement to students hailing from various cultural backgrounds (Heitner & Jennings, 2016; Polat et al., 2019). Culturally responsive pedagogy (CRP) is a framework rooted in social justice that is designed to foster academic success, cultural proficiency, and critical awareness among all students (Allen et al., 2017). As emphasized by Johnson (2011), “academic success refers to teachers having high expectations for students, with learning not at the expense of losing cultural identity... Cultural competence is achieved through teachers helping students develop a positive ethnic and cultural identity... Critical consciousness is an ability that enables students to recognize, understand, and critique societal issues and inequalities. (p. 172).”

Academics describe linguistically and culturally responsive content teachers as those who (1) demonstrate proficiency in providing content instruction through innovative, flexible, and appropriate content communication and teaching approaches (Richards, 2013), and (2) deeply respect the varied backgrounds of their students (Moll, 2015).

Culturally responsive teaching is a pedagogical approach that involves creating dynamic learning environments and implementing classroom strategies that enable students from diverse backgrounds and minoritized groups to achieve academic success (Baize, 2023; Chuang, 2016). It utilizes students' cultural attributes, experiences, and viewpoints as a means of enhancing their learning experience (Gay 2002,; Ladson-Billings, 1995). By involving learners in the process of designing and teaching the online classroom, culturally responsive pedagogy empowers students to develop their unique approaches to learning within the digital environment.

Academic success is not solely defined by standardized test scores (Ladson-Billings, 2021). To further put culturally responsive pedagogy into practice, we need to elucidate its core

principles, which encompass academic achievement, cultural competency, and critical awareness (Ladson-Billings, 2021; Underwood & Mensah, 2018).

Jabbar and Mirza (2019) propose that culturally responsive pedagogy in higher education is underpinned by five essential principles: cultural awareness, resource utilization, ethical responsibility, cultural connection, and curriculum development. They argue that a strong higher education environment should enable the harnessing of cultural diversity and promote interaction among different cultures. Moreover, it should strengthen ethical and professional accountability while empowering students to excel through the effective use of resources and thoughtfully designed curricula.

Best Practices of Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

Cultural responsiveness is not a simple or inherent quality for either teachers or learners; it demands deliberate and meticulously chosen pedagogical strategies (Woodard et al., 2017). Teachers should promote students' understanding and awareness of their own culture and the cultures that oppress them. The key points include (1) getting to know your students, (2) building relationships with students, and (3) affirming students' cultural identities (Young, 2010).

Online Discussion Board

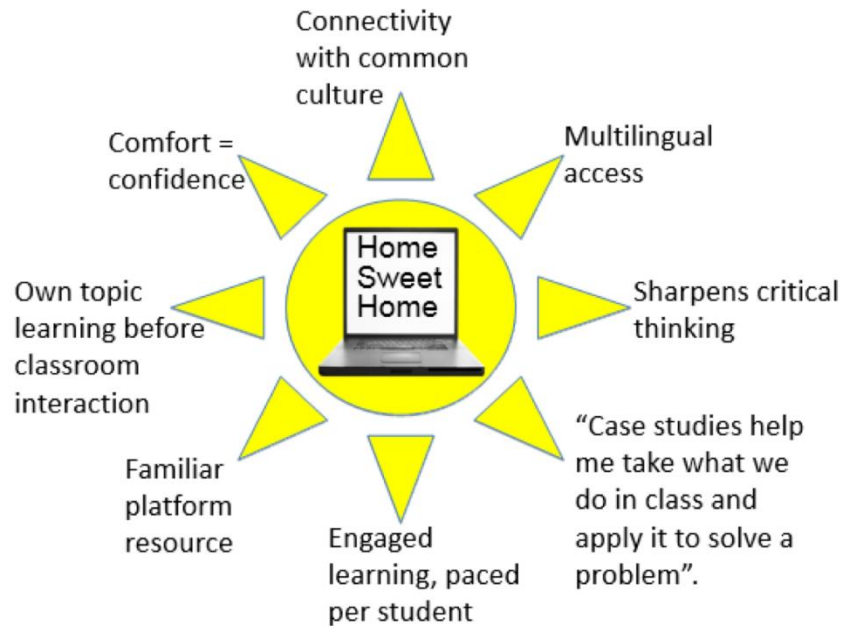
One of the best practices in validating students' pre-existing knowledge with relevant activities. For example, instructors can conduct a preliminary course assessment about students' experiences in online learning and preference technology and software tools. Also, students can introduce themselves and communicate with each other on the discussion board (Braunstein et al., 2021; Woodley et al., 2017). As an illustration, as described by Vail (2018), students viewed the video, shared their thoughts, and engaged in discussions by responding to each other's comments

within the online forum. Jacobi (2017) similarly discovered that online discussions create a platform where individuals who might be less confident about expressing themselves can participate comfortably. Moreover, the structured nature of mandatory discussion boards enables students to access a wide range of viewpoints rather than just a limited few. These findings from the class discussions suggest that online settings have the potential to foster a sense of community and solidarity.

According to Vail (2019), employing online case studies as a regular focal point for classroom subjects offers several advantages. As shown in the visual representation below, using online case studies provides a sense of "home" for individuals who are physically distant from their homes. Students' comfort levels increase as they engage with digital spaces, and the availability of multilingual translation makes information more accessible.

Figure 1

Familiar Digital Platform's Role in Supporting a Cohort of Mixed Nationality (Vail, 2019)



Incorporate Students' Own Experiences

Culturally responsive pedagogy has the potential to boost students' involvement in the classroom. According to Kumi-Yeboah and Amponsah (2023), their qualitative research revealed that culturally responsive teaching facilitated students in acquiring a deeper understanding. This occurred because educators were able to incorporate additional elements, such as students' cultures, traditions, beliefs, and personal experiences, into the curriculum, rather than exclusively adhering to the formal or structural syllabus. Also, drawing from my personal experience as an illustration, one of my graduate professors would commence each class by playing music representative of the home countries of international students. Furthermore, this professor would engage in pre-class communication with students, provide ongoing encouragement to international students during the lectures, and establish weekly office hours to offer additional support to all students. Also, drawing from my personal English Language Improvement Program (ELIP) online learning experience, our professor initiated the course by breaking the ice

during the first class through a series of general questions. This approach served a dual purpose: firstly, it helped us become acquainted with the online learning tools, and secondly, by posing questions such as, "What are your favorite movies?" (accompanied by images), and having us place our names next to the pictures, it fostered connections among the students.

Student-initiated Discussions

As per Markey et al. (2021), educators should consider strategies to create an environment where students are comfortable and confident when expressing their thoughts verbally. Regarding the effectiveness of online education, student-initiated discussions have been shown to have a greater impact when contrasted with discussions initiated by instructors (Zulfikar et al., 2019).

At the same time, teachers should also employ strategies to ensure that a few students do not monopolize the discussion. According to Banks and Banks (2010), they define equity pedagogy as a crucial cornerstone that bolsters the framework of multicultural education. The core principle underpinning culturally responsive pedagogy is the belief that students' performance and engagement will be enhanced when teaching incorporates their unique cultural backgrounds and language proficiencies, as referenced in Chuang (2016). One way to achieve this is by promoting turn-taking, which enables everyone in the group to contribute and engage with each other's viewpoints. Also, according to Markey et al. (2021), teachers should provide students with opportunities to discuss and share their fears and anxieties related to cross-cultural learning. By taking turns speaking and listening, students can participate in a more interactive and inclusive discussion. As Baker et al. (2022) noted, the engaged pedagogy forms of teaching are kinder, more culturally responsive and more inclusive than traditional approaches.

Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

Dell et al. (2015) as well as Kieran and Anderson (2019) highlight an approach to inclusive teaching for international students, which involves the utilization of Universal Design for Learning (UDL). UDL is a pedagogical strategy aimed at optimizing learning for every student. UDL recommends offering various means to access course materials, providing multiple options for expressing learning, and placing a strong emphasis on engaging learners to enhance student motivation. For example, the teacher provides multiple ways to present the information by using traditional lectures, visual aids like slides and diagrams, interactive simulations, and accessible digital resources. This accommodates students who learn best through different modalities. According to Kieran and Anderson (2019), the UDL blueprint's inherent structure encourages teachers to adopt a flexible mindset when considering learner characteristics and consider the potential challenges students might face in accessing instruction, materials, assessments, and engagement.

Situationally and Culturally Responsive Teaching (ISCRT)

An effective way to gauge the implementation of culturally responsive teaching in educational practice involves using the Inventory of Situationally and Culturally Responsive Teaching (ISCRT). This assessment tool consists of twenty-two distinct culturally responsive teaching indicators, arranged along a spectrum that spans from not being observed to being fully integrated within the teaching approach. This method is mentioned in the work of Herrera and Kavimandan, 2019.

Furthermore, when COVID-19 eliminated the opportunities for students to informally chat with us in campus hallways and buildings, culturally responsive pedagogy educators must

proactively increase access to the virtual learning environment and personally invite students for individual check-ins throughout the semester (Smith, 2020). In addition, randomly calling on students to answer questions during online courses is a pedagogical strategy that serves several important purposes. It not only helps maintain students' attention but also actively engages them in the learning process. Here are the reasons, on the one hand, when students know that they could be called upon at any moment, they are more likely to pay attention to the course material. This active engagement can lead to a deeper understanding of the content. On the other hand, random selection ensures that all students have an equal chance to participate, regardless of their comfort level with volunteering. It prevents the same few students from dominating the discussion.

Multiliteracies

Multiliteracies is an approach to teaching and learning that recognizes the diversity of modes of communication and the need to develop multiple literacies, including visual, digital, and critical literacies, in addition to traditional print literacy. In 1996, The New London Group introduced the concept of 'multiliteracies' to highlight the vast differences in communication patterns and contexts, and the significance of multiple modes of meaning-making. The prefix 'multi' in 'multiliteracies' refers to both the diverse contexts and the various modes of communication, including images, sound, gestures, and animations (Cope & Kalantzis, 2015). Instead of just focusing on teaching grammar and vocabulary in isolation, teachers can use technology, such as digital games and online resources, to engage students and provide additional language practice. For example, teachers can use authentic materials, such as news articles or videos, to introduce new vocabulary and grammar structures in context. Also, teachers can give students video-recorded assignments and ask them to critique other counterparts' videos

instead of writing to practice oral English and critical thinking ability. Teaching videos stand out as the predominant instructional resources employed by educators to observe and learn from exemplary teaching models (Brunvand, 2010; Dhonau & McAlpine, 2002).

Multimodalities

“Multimodality” acknowledges that individuals create and convey meaning in various ways. This implies that different modes such as spoken language, gestures, gaze, and visual texts, among others, are frequently employed (Querol-Julián, 2023).

In accordance with Lim's (2022) study, the exposure of students to a variety of multimodal texts across spoken, printed, and digital contexts can lead to their enhanced abilities to interpret, appreciate, evaluate, and create diverse forms of textual content. This finding suggests that the utilization of multimodal texts can significantly impact the development of students' literacy skills and may prove to be a valuable tool for educators in promoting their students' holistic growth. Also, students' satisfaction with the learning experience will be increased if teachers use modalities teaching methods (Miyazoe, 2010).

Multimodality communication is a blend of various modes of representation and expression within text designs (Castro-Garcés, 2021; Rowsell & Collier, 2017). These modes include visual, print, gestural, dramatic, and oral elements that work together to convey meaning (Castro-Garcés (2021; Rowsell & Collier, 2017). This approach to understanding communication highlights the importance of considering all the different ways in which meaning can be created and conveyed, beyond just language alone. For example, using dancing, music, and “manipulative strategies” (Herrell and Jordan, 2016, p. 58). Each modality employs different sensory systems and ways of perceiving and processing information. Teachers can use it according to the course content and students' age. Overall, it is evident that incorporating

English learners' backgrounds and identities is a critical component of effective teaching. By recognizing and valuing their diverse experiences, teachers can create a learning environment that is supportive, inclusive, and beneficial for all students. This approach can also help to set English learners up for success not only just in the classroom but also in their future endeavours beyond the classroom.

Other Best Practices

An effective illustration involves educators offering students choices, such as working individually or collaboratively (Dell et al., 2015; Kumi-Yeboah & Amponsah, 2023). The use of digital tools provides students with additional options to enhance their learning experiences. Regardless of the chosen instructional activities or assignment options, it is essential for educators to maintain transparency in their approach to teaching. This transparency includes clearly defining the task, explaining its purpose or educational significance, and outlining the assessment criteria for each assignment or learning activity (Dell et al., 2015).

Flipped classrooms are considered a best practice in Culturally Responsive Pedagogy. According to a study conducted by Bashir and Hamid (2022), approximately 90% of students had a positive view of the flipped classroom approach. Students reported a deeper understanding of the subject matter, increased class participation, and achieved higher engagement levels compared to traditional lectures.

Another effective method is Creative and Body-Based Learning (CBL), as suggested by research from Rigney et al. (2020). CBL aims to stimulate creativity, active participation, experimentation, and collaborative learning. For example, the poster dialogue method involves students silently moving around the room and responding to prompts on posters, allowing them

to express what they know and share their curiosities. Interactive games can be used to reinforce comprehension, enhance fluency, and improve recall.

In addition, educational institutions have implemented various student-centered strategies to promote success. These strategies include summer bridge programs, revised advising approaches, cohort-based retention initiatives, co-curricular resilience programs, learning communities, and interventions that foster a sense of social belonging (O’Leary et al., 2020).

The Importance of Using Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

Researchers have long acknowledged the effectiveness of culturally responsive pedagogy as a successful instructional approach (Khoo & Huo, 2022), for tackling the achievement gap and the overrepresentation of racially, culturally, ethnically, and linguistically diverse students in special education programs (Griner & Stewart, 2013).

Similarly, Ladson-Billings (1995, 2006) has emphasized for a considerable time that culturally responsive pedagogy is a valuable instructional framework applicable to all students and should be incorporated into every facet of teacher training (Underwood & Mensah, 2018).

The significance of culturally responsive teaching stems from the profound impact of students' cultural backgrounds on their learning experiences (Markey et al., 2021). As our higher education classrooms become increasingly diverse, it's imperative for educators to adopt inclusive teaching strategies that cater to evolving student populations, thereby ensuring the effective delivery of their courses (Idrus et al., 2023; Larke, 2013). Hence, it underscores the critical role of educators in incorporating culturally responsive teaching into their pedagogical practices (Idrus et al., 2023).

While fostering inclusive learning environments in culturally diverse settings is of paramount importance, it is also a complex endeavor that requires meticulous planning and support at both institutional and classroom levels (Markey et al., 2021). As pointed out by Guest and Hong Duyen (2016), it is essential for educators and administrators not to assume that online learners from different cultures share identical needs. Consequently, teachers should be attuned to the distinctive requirements of each student group, moving away from standardized approaches, especially when teaching international students.

Woodley et al. (2017) underscored the role of instructors in prioritizing culturally responsive pedagogy as they assume the roles of facilitators and mentors. Actively engaging students in constructing and teaching the online classroom empowers them to develop personalized learning approaches tailored to their specific needs during online studies.

Culturally responsive caring involves educators building ethical, emotional, and academic connections with ethnically diverse students based on respect, integrity, and shared resources. This bond is rooted in the belief that transcending boundaries is not only possible but vital (Gay, 2002). According to Gatwiri and Ife (2021), teaching goes beyond the simple transmission of information and abilities; it embodies a display of care and a dedication to being open and receptive.

The application of culturally responsive teaching should be considered essential and beneficial for all students' education. Evidence provided for prospective teacher candidates and graduate students suggests that diverse classroom environments can offer pathways for effective teaching and learning (Hutchison et al., 2020). Furthermore, culturally responsive teaching methods possess the ability to boost motivation, not only during the learning task at hand but

also in the application of acquired skills well beyond the course's completion (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

To practice culturally responsive teaching, educators must seamlessly integrate cultural elements into their instruction (Harmon & Deborah, 2021). This approach underscores the pivotal significance of recognizing and valuing students' cultural backgrounds within the teaching process, thereby enhancing the educational experience by embracing diversity.

Moreover, by comprehending students' cultural expectations and taking actionable steps to enhance the classroom environment at a cultural level, the cross-cultural classroom experience can be substantially enriched (Marginson, 2014,). This underscores the potential for a positive transformation when educators actively engage with the cultural dimensions of teaching, ultimately cultivating a more inclusive and supportive learning environment. These insights affirm the critical role of cultural responsiveness in education, emphasizing the need for educators to be attentive to the cultural dynamics within their classrooms. In doing so, they can create a more inclusive and effective learning space where diverse backgrounds are not just recognized but celebrated.

Curriculum Design of Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

Promoting intercultural learning in online educational environments requires a comprehensive and multi-faceted approach. This approach involves making deliberate and transparent design decisions throughout the entire educational experience. These decisions encompass critical components, including clearly defining learning outcomes, specifying activities and learning pathways, elucidating assessment methods, outlining the use of

technological tools, and providing a framework for facilitation strategies (Morong & DesBiens, 2016).

Inclusive teaching can be effectively achieved through various means, including implementing universal design for learning, developing cultural competency, applying trauma-informed practices, and skillfully managing attitudes and expectations (Harris, 2020). These strategies are instrumental in creating an environment where all learners, regardless of their cultural backgrounds, can thrive.

It's widely acknowledged that effective course design is fundamental for ensuring high-quality online courses, particularly those designed for future and current educators. This involves integrating curriculum design elements such as task alignment, assessments, and rubrics to guarantee both cultural relevance and effective teaching of cultural awareness (Adams et al., 2018).

The qualitative research study conducted by Androsova and Zhang (2023) provides essential insights into a crucial educational practice: actively involving students in the development of their courses. In an online learning environment, this becomes even more crucial. Teachers work together with students to collaboratively make decisions regarding adjustments to the pace and content of the course (Sherwood et al., 2021).

This approach not only enriches the overall learning experience but also serves as a powerful strategy to address the growing concern of cultural diversity within educational settings. It underscores the significance of including students as active partners in shaping their learning environment.

Furthermore, Shukran and Azlin's study (2022) brings to light a prevalent perception among individuals that cultural backgrounds are inadequately addressed in academic courses. These findings carry significant implications for higher education institutions and offer valuable insights for universities and higher education authorities on the design of courses, especially for institutions accommodating international students. This body of research collectively underscores the importance of taking proactive and intentional measures to promote cultural inclusivity and responsiveness within educational settings, both in online and traditional classrooms.

Technology of Using Culturally Responsive Pedagogy in Online Courses

Incorporating technology into online education is widely acknowledged as an effective teaching approach, offering a multitude of advantages to international students (Smith & Zhou, 2022d). Vail (2018) highlights that incorporating digital platforms into curriculum design to support student learning is not a new concept. However, as the composition of the student body in higher education becomes increasingly diverse, there is a growing body of research that underscores the relevance and appropriateness of implementing culturally inclusive pedagogical approaches. Within this context, educational researchers have begun to explore the intersection of educational technology and multicultural education, investigating the possibilities of leveraging technology for culturally responsive teaching and learning (e.g., Camardese & Peled, 2014; Finklestein et al., 2013).

Moreover, the integration of digital technology has the potential to foster teacher creativity in the adoption of innovative educational approaches, thereby enhancing the collaborative learning experiences of English language learners (Song & Zhao, 2022).

However, navigating the concept of cultural relevance, particularly in an online environment, presents distinct challenges. This is particularly true when faculty members lack the expertise to establish an online classroom community conducive to discussions of cultural relevance (McLoughlin, 2001). A foundational understanding of technology is indispensable for both teaching and participating in online courses. In the realm of online education, technological literacy serves as the cornerstone, enabling educators to effectively deliver content and creating an environment where learners can confidently navigate the digital landscape. This proficiency not only empowers educators to use technology as a teaching tool but also equips learners with the skills needed to engage with course materials, participate in discussions, and access resources seamlessly in the online learning environment.

Research findings on collaborative learning indicate that specific elements, such as positive interdependence, substantial interaction, individual accountability, social skills, and group self-evaluation, are essential for successful online learning (Laal, 2013). Technology plays a pivotal role in enhancing the efficiency of collaborative learning by transforming how students and educators engage in collaborative activities. Chuang (2016) outlines the utilization of technologies like Google Sites and Google Docs, offering a virtual management system that caters to both content and learner focus. These tools facilitate course management, traditionally centered on teachers, while also accommodating learner-centric requirements.

While the potential for technology to enhance teaching and learning is widely acknowledged, it's imperative to prioritize the adoption of culturally relevant pedagogy. This approach is essential to address the unique needs of students who may encounter challenges related to their cultural background, language, or technological barriers when engaging with educational technology (Eppard et al., 2021). This statement underscores the importance of

aligning the integration of technology in education with a culturally relevant pedagogical approach.

Based on the qualitative study conducted by Eppard et al. in 2021, the findings indicate unanimous agreement among all participants. They acknowledge that cultural, methodological, and pedagogical obstacles can exert a substantial influence on the utilization of educational technology in both traditional in-person and online classrooms, ultimately affecting students' learning outcomes. This emphasizes the significance of recognizing and addressing the complexities of culture, methodology, and pedagogy within technology-enhanced learning environments, aiming to ensure that all students can thrive academically. However, Smith and Ayers (2014) mentioned that "technologically mediated learning experiences may accommodate the singularities of a dominant Western culture at the expense of cultural responsiveness to the backgrounds of all participants" (p. 401).

Discussion

The convergence of rapid transformations in education, technology, and society presents a significant challenge for teacher educators. Teacher knowledge, beliefs, assumptions, and attitudes play a critical role in culturally responsive pedagogy (Polat et al., 2019).

Leonard et al (2010) mentioned, "For culturally responsive pedagogy to be effective, teachers need to thoughtfully reflect, attend to, and plan for the inherent nuances and complexities of cultural concepts in their teaching" (p. 261).

To support students from diverse cultural backgrounds in multicultural learning settings, it is imperative that teachers receive instruction and guidance on effective teaching methods (Louderback, 2016; Pearson, 2015). Therefore, schools are compelled to effectively train

teachers for online instruction, particularly in serving culturally and linguistically diverse student populations (Walker et al., 2021).

Fortunately, existing research has shown that teacher education programs have faced challenges in adequately equipping teacher candidates with the pedagogical skills required to address the demands of our progressively diverse student body (Allen et al., 2017). According to Oikarainen et al. (2018), mentors with prior experience in guiding culturally and linguistically diverse students tend to self-evaluate their mentoring capabilities more favorably compared to those lacking such experiences.

Online educators who possess an understanding of culturally responsive pedagogy and can apply best practices to address the needs of diverse learners can enhance the quality of teaching and learning experiences (Heitner & Jennings, 2016; Smolcic & Arends, 2017). While there is considerable support for teacher educators to practice cultural responsiveness, there has been less emphasis on the steps and experiences involved in becoming more culturally responsive (Garbett et al., 2018). At the same time, there has been limited research concerning the cultural dimensions of online learning (Morong & DesBiens, 2016). The presence of cultural disparities between faculty members and their students can create significant challenges affecting the effectiveness and quality of online teaching and learning (Heitner & Jennings, 2016).

The current demographic mismatch between a predominantly white and female teaching workforce and a growing, diverse K-12 student population has prompted a concentrated emphasis on recruiting and retaining teachers from more diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds (Braunstein et al., 2021). Sustainable pre-service teacher education is essential to promote academic achievement among underrepresented groups through the application of culturally responsive methods (Carr-Stewart et al., 2013). In research conducted by Lucey and White

(2017), adopting a compassionate mentoring approach for the instructor of a graduate teacher education course centered on culturally responsive pedagogy played a pivotal role in cultivating a classroom community grounded in unity, fostered through collaborative efforts and mutual respect.

Furthermore, educators should remain cognizant of their individual biases to uphold elevated standards for each student and promote their culturally diverse students' cultural strengths from a perspective that highlights these strengths. When teachers lack an understanding of how their own experiences and culture shape their perceptions and attitudes, they might attempt to adopt a "colorblind" approach in the classroom or perceive cultural responsiveness as an extra and non-essential requirement for educators (Gay, 2002; Pollock et al. 2016).

Notably, it is not solely the responsibility of teachers and institutions to facilitate cultural adaptation; students themselves must also maintain a positive attitude towards immersing themselves in a new culture (Jabbar & Mirza, 2019). Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) situates learning in students' lived experiences and frames of reference to contextualize learning, set high expectations, and create equal status among all students (Gay, 2002; Herrera, 2016; Ladson-Billings, 2014). As Vail (2019) points out, the greater one's understanding of various cultures, the more capable they are in minimizing instances of miscommunication.

Conclusion

In recent decades, Canadian schools have experienced a consistent increase in the enrollment of students classified as English language learners (ELLs) (Cummins & Persad, 2014; Duff, 2007). This demographic shift underscores the importance of educators having a profound

understanding and a willingness to embrace pedagogical methods that are both linguistically and culturally responsive.

In a preliminary research study conducted by Ballenger and Jiang (2023), all participants shared a strong belief in the significance of Culturally Responsive Teaching. The implementation of culturally responsive pedagogy and instructional techniques not only fosters a sense of inclusion and belonging among students but also enriches their educational experiences.

Educators who wholeheartedly adopt culturally responsive teaching play a dual role as mentors for students. They actively engage learners in co-constructing and delivering content within the online classroom, empowering students to transition from passive recipients of knowledge to active co-creators of their learning experiences (Woodley et al., 2017).

However, most teachers lack substantial experience in teaching culturally and linguistically diverse international students. In Doran's (2021) qualitative inquiry, 70 survey participants opted out of responding to the question, while another 10 provided variations of "Not familiar with this term" or "I'm actually not sure" out of the total 149 survey takers asked to define culturally relevant pedagogy.

From the students' perspective, participating in courses that incorporate culturally responsive teaching is vital for learners from various ethnic backgrounds, including those from mainstream communities, particularly in an era marked by large-scale immigration (Barzanò et al., 2017). By giving students a role in shaping their online learning experience, they are no longer passive observers but active participants in their education. This approach not only enriches their understanding of specific subjects but also cultivates essential skills such as problem-solving and self-directed learning. Moreover, when students feel a sense of belonging

and inclusion within the learning community, they become more motivated and engaged in their studies, equipping them to tackle future challenges with adaptability.

To facilitate the acquisition of essential knowledge, skills, and attitudes for intercultural learning in online settings, we must adopt diverse teaching methods and provide clear guidance in our instructional design. This clarity should pertain to various aspects of the educational experience, including learning objectives, activities, evaluation methods, technological tools, and teaching approaches (Morong & DesBiens, 2016).

While further research into the attributes of effective K-12 online teaching is advisable, as recommended by Molnar et al. (2017), this study and others underscore the pivotal role of communication between teachers and students in the realm of online teaching. As educational leaders deliberate on how to provide equitable learning opportunities through online courses, they must recognize the indispensable role played by online instructors in shaping the educational experience (Lawrence, 2020).

In the field of education, there is a wealth of literature dedicated to enhancing online learning experiences. Nevertheless, there remains a paucity of research addressing the impact of technology on teacher training programs (Adams et al., 2018). Additionally, while brief and immediate professional learning experiences can contribute to knowledge growth, they often fall short in cultivating a genuine appreciation for cultural diversity, fostering positive attitudes, instigating behavioral changes, or equipping educators with the essential skills for effectively working with diverse student cohorts (Greco et al., 2010).

This collection of insights underscores the intricate relationship between technology, culture, and education and emphasizes the imperative of both technological proficiency and

cultural responsiveness in today's educational landscape. It highlights the need for a holistic approach that emphasizes the importance of harnessing the synergies between technology and culture to foster inclusive and highly effective learning environments. By combining technological tools with culturally sensitive teaching practices, we can better support diverse learners, encourage active engagement, and ensure that educational outcomes are both attainable and meaningful. It recognizes that learning is not just about acquiring knowledge but also about developing intercultural competence and adaptability, both of which are essential in our interconnected world (Morong, & DesBiens, 2016).

Research Gaps

There are some research gaps to address. Firstly, most studies have not addressed the role of families in engaging students in online courses. As families maintain continuous dialogues with educators, they cultivate trust and become more open to discussing topics that may not have been addressed before (Lopez et al., 2022). In distance education, the active involvement of families has demonstrated its significance in fostering student achievement (Domina et al , 2021).

Secondly, while researchers have focused extensively on the role of teachers in facilitating student engagement in online courses, future research should also delve into the mindset of international students. Understanding why some international students struggle to concentrate in online courses and exploring strategies to enhance their concentration is equally essential.

Thirdly, though the students group become more cultural diversity, instructors often lack the training needed to effectively educate international students or those from diverse cultural

and linguistic backgrounds (Guler, 2022; Jabbar and Mirza, 2019; Paige & Goode, 2009; Mahalingappa et al., 2021; Tran, 2020; Yoon & Martin, 2016). While teacher preparation programs may cover topics related to cultural responsiveness, they often fall short in adequately preparing teachers. This deficiency arises from the lack of specific examples, ongoing support, and readily available curricular resources (Bianchini & Brenner, 2010). Similarly, as Griner and Stewart, (2013) mentioned, though extensive research has touched upon these concerns, teachers and school personnel often lack explicit exemplars and effective tools for best practices in using culturally responsive practices.

In essence, there is a recognized need for teacher training that goes beyond theory, offering practical tools and ongoing mentorship to ensure teachers can effectively navigate the complexities of multicultural learning environments. Efforts to enhance the integration of culturally responsive teaching practices and professional self-reflection within teacher training programs are still ongoing (Ghazarian et al., 2023). Future research should investigate the efficacy of teaching training programs designed to facilitate the implementation of culturally responsive pedagogy by teachers.

Fourthly, According to Young (2010), despite its broad acceptance and application in educational research and practice, culturally relevant pedagogy is frequently not recognized as a conceptual framework that promotes concepts like academic achievement, cultural proficiency, and socio-political consciousness. Sometimes, it relates to the racism. Approximately 20% of International students reported experiencing racial or cultural discrimination (Morong & DesBiens, 2016). Also, teachers frequently found themselves ill-equipped to address matters of social and racial disparity primarily due to their lack of understanding of the "broader sociopolitical concerns ... affecting their students' experiences" (Ladson-Billings, 2006, p. 37).

Implications

Implication for International Students

As students, considering attendance in an English improvement program before embarking on their formal academic studies is a prudent decision. This proactive approach can yield several valuable benefits. On one hand, it provides an opportunity for students to enhance their English language proficiency, which is often crucial for success in academic courses conducted in English. A strong command of the language not only aids in understanding course materials but also enables effective communication, both spoken and written, with instructors and peers. Moreover, language proficiency is vital for academic writing and the comprehension of complex subject matter. Therefore, the acquisition of English language skills prior to formal academic study can significantly contribute to a student's academic preparedness.

In addition to language proficiency, fostering a positive attitude towards communication is equally important for students. This involves actively engaging with their classmates, who often come from diverse cultural backgrounds, as well as with their professors when they have questions or require clarification.

Maintaining a constructive and open line of communication is not only a valuable skill but also critical for academic success and an enriching study experience. Engaging in respectful and effective interactions with peers from different countries broadens one's cultural horizons, enabling the exchange of ideas and experiences. It can lead to collaborative learning, where students learn not only from course materials but also from each other's perspectives.

Furthermore, establishing a healthy professor-student conversation is pivotal. This relationship acts as a cornerstone for academic success and a positive study experience. When

students feel comfortable approaching their professors with questions or seeking guidance, it creates an environment of support and mentorship. Effective communication with instructors ensures that students receive the necessary academic assistance and helps them stay on track with their studies. A professor who is approachable and willing to engage with students can greatly enhance the overall learning process. Therefore, maintaining a positive attitude towards communication is a fundamental aspect of thriving in an academic setting.

Implication for Teachers and Academic Institutions

Factors to Create Good Online Classroom Experiences for Students

Culturally relevant pedagogy is crucial for reshaping education in the post-COVID-19 world (Ladson-Billings, 2021). Culturally responsive education needs to encompass various aspects of learning, including emotional, physical, spiritual, and cognitive dimensions (Battiste 2002; Cappon 2008). Studies show that deliberately combining a range of teaching methods, such as critical, participatory, holistic approaches, and direct instruction, is necessary for effective cross-cultural learning (Morong & DesBiens, 2016).

Online learning satisfaction is a multifaceted and intricate concept that encompasses various elements such as effective communication, active student involvement in virtual discussions, flexibility, a manageable workload, reliable technical support, instructor's pedagogical abilities, and constructive feedback (Öztürk, 2020; Wei, 2020).

According to Elshami et al (2021), students expressed the most satisfaction with communication and flexibility, while faculty members reported a high satisfaction rate of 92.9% with the enthusiasm displayed by students towards online learning. However, technical issues negatively impacted student satisfaction levels, whereas faculty members experienced challenges due to the increased workload and the time required to prepare teaching and assessment materials.

How to Promote Personal Interaction and Create a Sense of Community in Online Courses

One of the most critical factors for a successful online classroom experience is reliable technology. Students need a stable internet connection, and access to necessary software and hardware, such as a webcam, microphone, and speakers. Without reliable technology, students may face difficulties attending live classes, submitting assignments, and communicating with peers and instructors. Additionally, a good online learning experience must have a clear and concise communication between instructors and students. Instructors should provide clear instructions and expectations about the course, including assignments, assessments, and deadlines. Also, students need to have open channels of communication with their instructors and classmates to ask questions, clarify doubts, and discuss course content. What's more, students need to feel engaged and motivated to participate in synchronous online classes. Last but not the least, accessible course material is vital for students with different learning styles and disabilities. Instructors should ensure that all course materials, including lecture slides, videos, and readings, are accessible and easily accessible by students. This also includes providing closed captions for videos and transcripts for audio content.

As online learning continues to grow, instructors must find ways to create a sense of community and foster personal interactions in synchronous online courses. Creating a sense of community can improve student engagement, satisfaction, and retention. First, instructors can use icebreakers and introductions to encourage students to get to know each other and build relationships. At the start of each class, instructors can ask students to share their names, interests, and reasons for taking the course. These introductions can help students find common ground and build connections. Second, the instructor can design more collaborative group activities to provide opportunities for students to work together and develop a sense of belonging. Instructors

can use virtual breakout rooms for group discussions, case studies, or group projects. Collaborative activities foster a sense of community and can lead to more active participation and engagement. Third, instructors can provide personalized feedback on assignments or assessments to foster a sense of community and build relationships with students. Feedback can include positive reinforcement, constructive criticism, and suggestions for improvement. Personalized feedback shows that instructors care about students' learning and can lead to more engagement and motivation. Last but not least, as Woodley (2017) pointed out, by encouraging learners to actively participate in building and teaching the online classroom, teachers who prioritize culturally responsive pedagogy act as facilitators and mentors, empowering students to develop personalized approaches to learning that suit their needs during the online study. Similarly, in a simulated field experiences conducted by Ghazarian et al. (2023) showed that teacher candidates who consistently implemented culturally responsive pedagogy showed significantly improved student learning outcomes, particularly in areas related to appreciating cultural diversity and supporting self-regulation.

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Vita Auctoris

NAME: Xiaoyan Song

PLACE OF BIRTH: Chifeng, China

YEAR OF BIRTH: 1998

EDUCATION: University of Windsor, M.Ed., Windsor, ON, 2022