


# Chapter 7

## Exploring My Positionality as a SoTL Practitioner Within the Context of ESL/EFL in a University in China

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### ABSTRACT

*This chapter explores the journey of an experienced Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) practitioner navigating the distinct landscape of Wenzhou-Kean University (WKU) in China. It examines the SoTL identity, addressing cultural intricacies, institutional dynamics, and pedagogical norms influencing teaching and learning. Challenges and strengths are explored, showcasing opportunities for innovative inquiry and the complexities of adapting SoTL to diverse environments. As the practitioner's perspective on SoTL evolves, insights into its transformative potential emerge, unveiling ways to enhance teaching effectiveness and student learning outcomes in Chinese higher education. Looking ahead, the chapter envisions WKU as a focal point for SoTL research, fostering a culture of inquiry, collaboration, and innovation to elevate teaching and learning excellence in China's higher education landscape. This exploration provides valuable insights into the intersection of SoTL practice and the Chinese educational milieu, offering inspiration and guidance for their scholarly endeavors.*

### INTRODUCTION:

In higher education, the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) stands as a beacon of innovation and inquiry, illuminating the path toward transformative educational practices. As educators, we are not merely disseminators of knowledge but stewards of learning, entrusted with the profound responsibility of shaping the minds and futures of our students (Felten & Geerstena, 2023; Hu & Lei, 2018). SoTL, at its core, embodies a commitment to scholarly inquiry into teaching and learning processes to enhance pedagogical effectiveness, promote student engagement, and foster meaningful learning experiences (Jiang et al., 2023; Booth & Hultgren, 2017). In this book chapter, I offer introspection and exploration,

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exploring my position as a SoTL practitioner in English as a Second (Foreign) Language (ESL/EFL) and Academic Writing /Composition instruction in higher education at Wenzhou Kean University (WKU) in China. By illuminating the complexities of my professional background, academic position, years of teaching experience, disciplinary expertise, and cultural context, I seek to unravel the threads of my SoTL journey and unveil the underlying motivations, inspirations, and aspirations that propel me forward on this path of scholarly inquiry and educational transformation. Through introspective reflection and critical examination, I aim to elucidate the essence of my identity as a SoTL ESL/EFL practitioner and articulate the profound impact of SoTL on my pedagogical philosophy, practices, and perspectives.

### **My Identity as an English as a Second Language SoTL Practitioner:**

With over 25 years of teaching experience, I have honed my pedagogical approach to embrace innovation, adaptability, and student-centeredness. Engaging in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) within a setting like Wenzhou-Kean University (WKU) is particularly exciting. WKU is a Sino-American institution that offers an American-style curriculum in an English-medium instruction (EMI) setting. The university prides itself on fostering a diverse and inclusive learning environment that encourages cross-cultural exchange and collaboration. Its unique Sino-American context provides ESL/EFL educators like me with a rich cross-cultural collaboration and exchange opportunity. SoTL allows educators to explore the intersection of Western and Chinese educational philosophies in China, blending insights from both traditions to create innovative and culturally responsive teaching practices.

Moreover, the diverse student population at WKU, characterized by its multiculturalism and diversity in English language proficiency, further shapes my SoTL mindset. Acknowledging and embracing my students' diverse backgrounds, experiences, and learning styles inspired me to adopt a student-centered approach to ESL/EFL SoTL that prioritizes inclusivity, equity, and accessibility. This commitment to equity and inclusion informs my research questions, methodologies, and teaching strategies, ensuring that my SoTL efforts reflect my students' unique needs and experiences. Furthermore, the innovative and forward-thinking nature of WKU, a futuristic higher education institution, encourages me to explore cutting-edge technologies, instructional methods, and educational practices in my SoTL endeavors. This context challenges me to push the boundaries of traditional teaching and learning paradigms, experiment with new approaches, and continuously strive for excellence in my teaching practice.

Furthermore, as an English Medium Instruction (EMI) university in China, WKU offers a bilingual learning environment where English proficiency is essential for academic success. Considering the English language and linguistic challenges of our students, the majority of whom are ESL/EFL learners, there is a constant need for ways to support students effectively. Through SoTL, I can investigate effective pedagogical strategies for teaching English as a second/foreign language within a multicultural context, leveraging students' English Language proficiency diversity as a strength rather than a barrier. Moreover, since WKU attracts students from diverse Chinese cultural backgrounds, it creates a dynamic and multicultural learning community conducive to SoTL practice.

As a SoTL practitioner, I advocate for transformative education, driven by a passion for empowering students and fostering meaningful learning experiences. Also, my identity as an ESL/EFL SoTL practitioner at WKU is rooted in a deep-seated belief in the power of education to inspire growth and change. Teaching is a profession and a calling to ignite curiosity, cultivate critical thinking, and instill a lifelong love for learning in my students. Practicing SoTL also enables me to refine my instructional approaches

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