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TEACHERS' FORUM

Teaching for Social Justice: Incorporating Gender-Inclusive Language in World Language Classrooms

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From the perspective of two instructors of Chinese in US postsecondary education, this article provides insights into integrating social justice education in intermediate-level world language classrooms. Guided by the multiliteracies pedagogy framework for language education (Paesani et al., 2023) and the Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition's (CARLA) "Social Justice Lesson Plan Template" (2024), we introduced new text types—including a movie trailer and dating app profiles—for a lesson on the topic of dating and scaffolded social justice content for language learning. Instructors worked with students to identify existing stereotypes of gender and sexuality. Together, we challenged the hegemonic norms represented in the textbook and created new materials for gender-inclusive language. To empower student voices, we invited them to adapt the dating stories and design a dating profile. After presenting their work in small groups, students further engaged in critical reflection by writing an individual essay on their design. This article not only demonstrates ways to utilize multimodal texts, but also illustrates strategies to engage language students critically, creatively, and collaboratively in social justice content. By sharing our theoretical framework and teaching experience, we aim to foster more pedagogical transformation that integrates social justice education into intermediate-level language learning.

INTRODUCTION

We met at a summer institute titled "Planning Social Justice Lessons: Critical Pedagogies in Action," organized by the Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition (CARLA) at the University of Minnesota. Soon after the first day of the workshop, we felt connected as we both were instructors of Chinese in US postsecondary education using the same textbook, *Integrated Chinese* (IC, 中文听说读写, 4th edition), in our classrooms. More importantly, we have shared vision and value—the belief in the necessity of integrating social justice-oriented content in world language classrooms. As language instructors, we resonated with this stance: Teachers as intellectuals have a responsibility to bring broader perspectives on critical issues to their students, rather than replicating past blindness to difference and issues of inequality (Kubota et al., 2003, p. 22). Learning a language is linked to learning about the culture. "[I]teaching language is also associated with creating a sense of belonging for students—a way to strengthen their cultural identities, pride, and knowledge of the cultural protocols" (McCarty & Lee, 2014, p. 110). While planning lessons, we centered on students' interests, resources, and needs and sought to integrate social justice content.

Positionality Statements

Charlize Wang's (she/her) Positionality Statement

I am a fifth-year PhD candidate in Multilingual Language Education at The Ohio State University. Prior to attending Ohio State, I was a visiting lecturer for all levels of Chinese classes in a private, predominantly white institution. In my first semester, I decided to adopt the IC textbooks because they provide multimodal resources, such as audio recordings of dialogues, video clips featuring conversations and cultural content, and a companion website for greater accessibility. More importantly, IC incorporates modern Chinese language use and introduces a mix of traditional and popular culture. After using the textbook for several months, I noticed its limitations. For instance, the cultural content primarily focuses on the context of Mainland China, with little to no representation of other Chinese-speaking regions. The text also portrays men as dominant and progressive, while women are often depicted as passive and reserved—reinforcing gender stereotypes and the hegemonic binary of masculinity and femininity (see more in the Lesson Planning section).

Additionally, images of romantic couples are exclusively heterosexual, rendering LGBTQ+ identities invisible. Through classroom interaction, I came to learn that some of my students identified as members of the LGBTQ+ community. This prompted me to begin creating supplemental materials that centered on students' lived experiences and identities. My intention was to ensure that students felt seen, valued, and that their identities were recognized within the learning environment. While this adjustment had a noticeable impact on student engagement and learning, it was not sufficient. One of my key limitations was a lack of training in designing language instruction that meaningfully integrates social justice and equity-oriented approaches to language use and development. To address this gap, I enrolled in CARLA's professional development program to learn how social justice can be implemented in a more integrated way in world language classrooms.

Hsiang-Lin Shih's (she/her) Positionality Statement

I am an associate professor in Asian Studies at St. Olaf College. My main field of research is literature, but since my graduate years as a teaching assistant, Chinese language teaching has been an integral part of my professional life. Back in the graduate program, language supervisors were my main support. They chose textbooks (mainly IC), planned schedules, demonstrated teaching, and assigned teaching tasks. St. Olaf College also uses the IC textbook series, and it would have been easy to carry on with what I had learned. But as soon as beginning my classes, I started wrestling with my dual identity as a literature scholar and language teacher. CARLA became my new source of support. There, I was introduced to content-based instruction (CBI) and multiliteracies pedagogy, both of which helped me reimagine the relationship between authentic texts and language learning. When I tried bringing in authentic texts, a main issue surfaced: I found a gap between the language levels of my students and those required by authentic texts, in particular when the texts are social justice related. What served as a turning point was CARLA's summer institute, *Planning Social Justice Lessons: Critical Pedagogies in Action*. It not only equipped me with a toolkit to scaffold social justice content for language learning but also gave me the opportunity to try the tools out with Charlize.

Social Justice Education & World Language Education

While Social Justice Education (SJE) has been explored for decades (e.g., Dover, 2013; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017), its application within World Language Education (WLE)

has gained particular momentum only in the past two decades (Osborn, 2006). In recent years, WLE has demonstrated significant progress in integrating SJE into lesson design and instruction (Davidson et al., 2023; Goodspeed et al., 2023; Paesani et al., 2024). There is an expanding body of scholarship that aims to (re)conceptualize and (re)imagine social justice in world language classrooms. Through the lens of SJE, researchers have examined the dynamics of language teaching and learning (McCarty & Lee, 2014), applied a multiliteracies pedagogical framework (Paesani et al., 2023), and explored language teachers' agency and identities (Kong, 2022; Paesani et al., 2024; Wassell et al., 2019). From building how-to guidelines to demonstrating classroom practices, these studies underscore the transformative potential of SJE in WLE.

Despite the increasing attention to SJE, empirical studies that investigate how it is enacted in WLE classrooms—particularly within US postsecondary education—remain scarce (Wassell et al., 2019). This gap persists even as social justice has become a recurring theme at national language education conferences such as the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL), where educators and researchers continue to engage in critical dialogues around equity, diversity, and inclusion (DEI) in language teaching. While these discussions have developed a critical awareness of SJE and recognized its importance, few studies show how to move SJE from theory to practice and from practice to theory. Up to now, far too little attention has been paid to SJE in the field of Chinese as a Foreign Language (CFL) education (Kong, 2022). Just like many other teachers, we did not have much support in doing SJE for WLE. Professional development workshops on DEI often present theory but offer limited scaffolding and instructional support. We echo what Osborn (2016) emphasizes, we need the “broader-stroke understanding of how these goals can be interdependently constructed in a curriculum” (p. 569). A mindset of “I am not ready” held us back, especially when SJE requires advanced-level functions, contents, and text types. We were unsure about how to locate, select, and use SJE materials appropriate for lower-level proficiency language learners. It was a challenge not only for us but also for many world language teachers.

To fill this critical gap, we showcase how we conceptualized SJE and recursively moved between theory and practice through lesson planning and implementation. This article serves as a roadmap that walks readers through the thinking and working process. It begins with our positionality statements presented earlier, and the following section outlines the theoretical underpinnings.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This project is grounded in the principles of SJE, which envisions education as a powerful vehicle for DEI and systemic social change transformation (Hackman, 2005). Social justice is defined as “a philosophy, an approach, actions that embody treating all people with fairness, respect, dignity, and generosity” (Nieto, 2010, p. 46). Therefore, SJE moves beyond mission statements. It is a practical and action-oriented theory that aspires to “full and equal participation of all groups in a society that is mutually shaped to meet their needs” (Bell, 1997, p. 3) and that is “democratic and participatory, inclusive and affirming of human agency and human capacities for working collaboratively to create change” (p. 4). In other words, SJE necessitates agency in the pursuit of collective social transformation, which cultivates mutual recognition rather than division. Both instructors and students are accountable for sustaining linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism (Paris & Alim, 2017).

As both of us are from Taiwan, where same-sex marriage has been legal since 2019—a first in Asia—we see an opportunity to explore sexual and gender identities with our students. We understand that colonialism has been an important topic within SJE, but we choose to shift our focus from the issue of colonialism to the necessity of gender-inclusive language. Inspired by L. J. Randolph's criticism about the lack of representation of Latinx LGBTQ+ members in Spanish textbooks (2023),

we are dedicated to the work of closing the disturbing distance that constitutes the figure of gendered and sexual otherness.

Historically, such a disturbing distance has been reproduced, resulting in oppression at institutional, cultural, and individual levels (Hackman, 2005, pp. 103–104). In response, Hackman proposes five essential components that guide us in operationalizing SJE:

- **Content mastery:** an acquisition of facts that go beyond mainstream media or educational materials; an understanding of the historical context of given information; and a grasp of contents that connect to daily lives as well as larger issues in society (pp. 104–105).
- **Critical thinking and analysis of oppression:** the process by which we consider perspective, positionality, power, and possibilities with respect to content (p. 106).
- **Action and social change:** literacy development, intergroup dialogue, problem posing, street action, etc., that help move students from cynicism and despair to hope and possibility (p. 106).
- **Personal reflection:** reflective opportunities for dominant group members to examine the impact of their privilege, and for subordinate group members to examine how internalized oppression has impacted their lives and communities (p. 107).
- **An awareness of multicultural group dynamics:** an understanding of the ways that social identities impact dialogue in the classroom; and an understanding of ways to facilitate effective cross-cultural communication (p. 108).

CARLA’s Social Justice initiative team, led by Kate Paesani, Lauren Goodspeed, Mandy Menke, and Helena Ruf, has been working to integrate SJE in WLE. Encompassing theory, design, and practice, they take not only Hackman’s SJE components as the core but also an instructional approach called multiliteracies pedagogy (Cope & Kalantzis, 2015; New London Group, 1996). As the New London Group observes, “literacy pedagogy has traditionally meant teaching and learning to read and write in page-bound, official, standard forms of the national language” (pp. 60–61). Multiliteracies pedagogy, by contrast, “attempt[s] to broaden this understanding of literacy and literacy teaching and learning to include negotiating a multiplicity of discourses” (p. 61). Given that multiliteracies pedagogy seeks to “prepare students for full and equitable participation in personal, academic, and workplace life, and to negotiate continuously evolving societies” (Paesani et al., 2023, pp. 4–5), it aligns with SJE principles and paves the way to critical engagement with target language texts across various genres and modalities.

Above all, the four knowledge processes of multiliteracies pedagogy—experiencing, conceptualizing, analyzing, and applying—constitute an essential part of the lesson planning templates created by CARLA’s Social Justice initiative team. The four types of meaning-making activities enable teachers to create learning activities that engage with texts of various modalities and genres. Below are the “mantras” that Paesani and Menke (2023) provide for the four knowledge processes (p. 10, Table 1.2):

- **Experiencing:** exploring familiar and new ideas
- **Conceptualizing:** connecting language and meaning through texts
- **Analyzing:** questioning the complexity of culture, language, and ideas
- **Applying:** creating texts and showcasing new knowledge

In addition to a “Social Justice Lesson Plan Template” (CARLA, 2024), the “User’s Guide” (CARLA, 2024) includes the four knowledge processes and the above-mentioned SJE components in

seven lesson planning stages, with suggested learning activities for each stage. Take Stage 1 for example:

Stage 1: Preparing to Interact with Texts

Suggested Knowledge Processes: Experiencing, conceptualizing, analyzing

Suggested SJE Components: Content mastery, personal reflection, multicultural group dynamics

Suggested Learning Activities:

- Access background knowledge and prior experiences
- Build new background knowledge
- Make predictions about a text
- Provide linguistic support
 - For language forms (grammar, vocabulary, conventions) in the text
 - To communicate about textual themes (e.g., key expressions and language forms for carrying out communicative functions)

We learned these principles and activities through the summer institute. This professional development program profoundly impacted our SJE conceptualization and provided us with a step-by-step guide to designing our own social justice-oriented lessons. The next section presents a lesson that we planned to incorporate gender-inclusive language.

LESSON PLANNING

Anya and Randolph (2019) highlight the importance of representation in language education—“it goes beyond merely ticking demographic boxes on student and teacher diversity” (p. 24). Our starting point also was to interrogate the issue of underrepresentation in the IC textbook: what is represented and what is underrepresented in the course content. We acknowledge that social justice encompasses race, colonialism, and many other topics such as gender and sexuality. As mentioned earlier, language teachers have found that members of the LGBTQ+ community are minoritized in the educational setting (Randolph, 2023). This issue is also clear in the IC textbook, especially in the lesson on dating (约会). Having taught the lesson several times, we are aware of the fact that the two dialogues and the images in the lesson exclusively depict heterosexual relationships. The LGBTQ+ community, by contrast, is entirely absent from the textual and visual representations.

The lesson text also reflects existing stereotypes of gender roles. In both dialogues, it is men who assume an active role. For example, it is Wang Peng (he/him) who invites Li You (she/her) to a movie, and it is Mr. Fei (he/him) who gives a phone call to Li You (she/her). Why does she not take the initiative? Why must she wait to respond to his first move? Moreover, men are expected to impress women with their talents and efforts, whereas women are expected *not* to express themselves explicitly. Specifically, Wang Peng impresses Li You by helping her practice Chinese and by getting movie tickets that are said to be hard to get; Li You is excited, but she can only express her excitement indirectly by saying she has been looking forward to the movie and by asking if there are other people going with them. Why must a date follow such norms? Why can't they plan a date together? In the other dialogue, when Li You wants to decline Mr. Fei's invitation, why must she make excuses or even pretend that

her phone dies? Why can't she simply say no? In addition, people today use communication apps and dating apps. Why must a conversation like Mr. Fei and Li You's occur via a phone call?

As Anya and Randolph (2019) argue, “[w]ithout intervention, the pattern will continue” (p. 24). Teaching gender-inclusive language creates an opportunity to develop their critical consciousness and engage with broader social issues, not only for LGBTQ+ students who are historically marginalized but for *all* students. In addition to its social justice relevance, dating is one of the most popular topics for our students. In our teaching experiences, students tend to show a higher level of interest and attention to this topic. To engage them critically, creatively, and collaboratively, we embarked on our first social justice lesson planning experience.

In response to the issues of gender and sexuality representation, we decided to supplement Dialogue 1 in the textbook with a movie trailer of *Dear Ex* (誰先愛上他的). For the link, see “Resources for Chinese as a Foreign Language (CFL) Educators” in Appendix A, where we also address how we use materials in traditional Chinese characters for learners of simplified Chinese characters. We chose the *Dear Ex* trailer because, while Dialogue 1 follows a man-impresses-woman norm, the movie tells of a widow's surprising reconciliation with her deceased husband's gay lover. The movie is not immune to stereotypes of gender and sexuality, but it offers a good reference point for critical comparison as well as a creative way of deviating from the man-impresses-woman norm. Because we could not watch the entire movie given the limited class time and students' language level, a movie trailer with selected visuals and vocabulary proved helpful.

As for Dialogue 2 between Mr. Fei and Li You, we decided to replace their conversation on a phone call with sample profiles from various dating apps. Although making a phone call is still a prevalent way of communication, dating apps are more interesting to undergraduate students. They can not only find familiar vocabulary, such as hobbies and favorite food, in the sample profiles, but also analyze the profile design for cultural and social implications. Furthermore, some dating apps are tailored to the LGBTQ+ community by including non-binary gender identities. Students learn to read between the lines of a sample dating profile, identify the target users of a dating app, and incorporate gender- and sexuality-inclusive language in their own profile design.

With the above observations and our pedagogical mission in mind, we reoriented the learning objectives as follows. Part 1 refers to the textbook's Dialogue 1 supplemented by a movie trailer, and Part 2 refers to the textbook's Dialogue 2 replaced by sample profiles from various dating apps.

At the end of Part 1 of this lesson, students will be able to...

- **Compare** how two stories observed and/or deviated from dating norms;
- **Adapt** Dialogue 1 creatively and critically.

At the end of Part 2 of this lesson, students will be able to...

- **Identify** the gender language and **verbally explain** why or why not it is inclusive;
- **Design and choose** a dating profile template and **reflect** on their work in writing.

Below is an illustration of how we used the “Social Justice Lesson Plan Template” and followed the “User's Guide” (CARLA, 2024) to plan for a lesson on dating in two parts. For each

part, we took three in-class hours and assigned multiple hours of out-of-class work. Readers may adapt this lesson plan to fit their own schedules and needs.

Lesson Plan: Part 1

Part 1, Stage 1: Preparing to Interact with Texts

Knowledge Process: Experiencing & conceptualizing

SJE Component: Content mastery

Learning Activity:

- **Access background knowledge and prior experiences:** Look at the pictures for Dialogue 1 in the textbook (p. 169). Who are they? Who is she (女的她) and who is he (男的他)?
- **Build new background knowledge:** Watch this movie trailer of *Dear Ex*: “[《誰先愛上他的》 | 正式預告 \[HD\] | Netflix](#).” Who are they? Who is she, and who is he? Are we talking about gender (性別) or sexuality (性向)? If we are talking about gender, are we talking about biological gender (生理性別) or gender identity (性別認同)? Why? What vocabulary in the movie trailer supports your observation?
- **Make predictions about a text:** Since the dialogue is titled “Seeing a Movie,” and the movie is titled *Dear Ex*, guess what happened between the main characters in each story.
- **Provide linguistic support**
 - **For language forms (grammar, vocabulary, conventions) in the text (see Appendix A for how we use materials in traditional Chinese characters for learners of simplified Chinese characters):**
 - 同性戀 (Homosexual)
 - 他 (He)、妳 (Female “you”)
 - 爸 (Dad)、繼父 (Stepfather)、繼母 (Stepmother)、兒子 (Son)、媽媽 (Mother)、太太 (Wife)
 - 男的 (Male)、男人 (Man)
 - **To communicate about textual themes (e.g., key expressions and language forms for carrying out communicative functions):** Use this infographic: “生理性別性別認同大全” (Biological gender and gender identity in one infographic), from “[跨性別、生理性別、性別認同、LGBTQ+, 一張圖瞭解它們的意思與差異.](#)”

Part 1, Stage 2: Building Global Comprehension

Knowledge Process: Experiencing & conceptualizing

SJE Component: Content mastery

Learning Activity:

- **Literal, factual understanding:** Listen to Dialogue 1 and fill out the dating norm:
在同一個 (At the same) _____ + 他幫她 (He helped her) _____ + 他們 (They) _____ 很高興 (pleasantly) = 她對他的印象 (Her impression of him) _____
-> 他請她 (He treated her) _____ ; 她請他 (She treated him) _____
- **Move from the familiar to the unfamiliar:** Re-watch the movie trailer and look at stills from the movie (see “[堅持要用謝盈萱，讓劇場女神和邱澤對決](#)” and “[誰先愛上他的劇照](#)”). Fill out the following:
有同一個 (They had the same) _____ + 她幫他 (She helped him) _____ + 她 (She) _____ 很辛苦 (exhaustingly) = 她對他的印象 (Her impression of him) _____
-> 兒子請她 (Her son treated her) _____ ; 她請兒子 (She treated her son) _____

Part 1, Stage 3: Understanding Meaningful Details**Knowledge Process:** Analyzing**SJE Component:** Critical analysis**Learning Activity:**

- **Discover details about the cultural/social justice content of a text:** How and why does Dialogue 1 build dating norms? How about the movie trailer and stills? What do those norms assume about gender roles?

Part 1, Stage 4: Making Form-Meaning Connections**Knowledge Process:** Conceptualizing & analyzing**SJE Component:** Critical analysis**Learning Activity:**

- **Identify and understand how a text is constructed and expresses meaning** (skipped)
- **Focus on grammar, vocabulary, genre conventions, and organizational features:**
 - 1) 得 expression: 買得到票嗎? (Are you able to get tickets?)
 - 2) 才 expression: 我費了很大的力氣才買到! (I spent much effort to get them!)
 - 3) 還 expression: 還有別人跟我們一起去嗎? (Are there other people going with us?)
 - 4) 就 expression: 就我們倆! (Just us two!)
- **Hypothesize about language use in a text:** Why does Dialogue 1 include these expressions? What do they assume about gender roles? What would the main characters in the movie say instead?

Part 1, Stage 5: Analyzing and Contextualizing Textual Meaning**Knowledge Process:** Analyzing

SJE Component: Critical analysis**Learning Activity:**

- **Evaluate and contextualize what is learned:** Draw a relationship diagram for each story; mark gender and sexuality on the diagrams.
- **Build critical reflection and analysis skills:** Are the two diagrams mutually exclusive? How is the first diagram embedded in the second?
- **Analyze global and local practices and perspectives:** How do the two diagrams match this map: “同志婚姻合法地圖：亞洲十大洋洲篇” (Legal homosexual marriage map: Asia and Australasia)? For the map, see “[🇺🇹2025 亞洲十大洋洲同志婚姻地圖出爐.](#)”

Part 1, Stage 6: Applying Knowledge**Knowledge Process:** Applying**SJE Component:** Multicultural group dynamics & action and social change**Learning Activity:**

- **Demonstrate knowledge and skills:** Chat in the target language with peers in your group:
 - 1) 一般都怎麼認識的? (How do people usually know each other?)
 - 在同一個學校嗎? (At the same school?)
 - 他常常幫她嗎? (Does he often help her?)
 - 他們玩得很高興嗎? (Did they have a pleasant time hanging out?)
 - 她對他的印象很好嗎? (Does she have a good impression of him?)
 - 2) 一般都怎麼約會? (How do people usually date?)
 - 一起去看電影嗎? (Did they go to the movie together?)
 - 買得到票嗎? (Were they able to get tickets?)
 - 要費很大的力氣才買到嗎? (Did they have to spend much effort to get tickets?)
 - 還有別人一起去嗎? (Were there other people going with them?)
 - 一起去吃飯嗎? (Did they go to dinner together?)
 - 誰請誰? (Who treated whom?)
 - 吃什麼? (What did they have?)
 - 什麼時候? (When?)
- **Use language in new and creative ways:** In your group, use what you chatted about and your creativity to adapt Dialogue 1 and visualize the adaptation on the board.
- **Apply social justice understandings:** Engage your audience by creatively deviating from the dating norm, especially from its stereotypes of gender roles.

Part 1, Stage 7: Summarizing and Reflecting**Knowledge Process:** Applying & analyzing

SJE Component: Multicultural group dynamics & critical analysis

Learning Activity:

- **Summarize what was learned:** Go over requirements for the adaptation-visualization project.
- **Personal reactions to learning experience** (skipped)
- **Self-assessment of learning experience:** Check against the requirements and try to be more engaging.
- **Peer feedback:** Walk around the board to view other groups' adaptations; mark stars on their creative deviations from the dating norms, especially the stereotypes of gender roles.

Lesson Plan: Part 2

Part 2, Stage 1: Preparing to Interact with Texts

Knowledge Process: Experiencing & conceptualizing

SJE Component: Content mastery

Learning Activity:

- **Access background knowledge and prior experiences:** Read the following two sample profiles. What kinds of information do you recognize?
 - a sample profile from the dating app Omi (see “[C/P 值最高的交友軟體!不想單身? 脫單神器 Omi 的開箱實測](#)”)
 - a sample profile from the dating app weTouch (see “[大學生 Top 1 交友軟體?weTouch 的開箱實測](#)”)
- **Build new background knowledge:** Skim this article: “[【2025 最新】LGBTQ+ 是什麼? 13 款同志交友軟體 APP 一次看](#)” (【2025 updates】 What is LGBTQ+? 13 homosexual dating apps in one place). Which dating apps do you recognize? Do you find Omi or weTouch?
- **Make predictions about a text:** Tinder is included in the article. Read sample profiles from Tinder (see “[擁抱多元, 擺脫性別框架 Tinder 挺你驕傲做自己](#)”). What kinds of information do you recognize? Why do you think Tinder is included?
- **Provide linguistic support**
 - **For language forms (grammar, vocabulary, conventions) in the text (see Appendix A for how we use materials in traditional Chinese characters for learners of simplified Chinese characters):**
 - 交友軟體 (Dating app)
 - 性別 (Gender)
 - 喜歡的食物/音樂/電影/運動 (Favorite food/music/movies/sports)
 - 性向 (Sexuality): 異性戀 (Heterosexual)、同志 (Homosexual)、酷兒 (Queer)、無性戀 (Asexual)、雙性戀 (Bisexual)
 - 給我看 (Show me): 女性 (Female)、男性 (Male)、所有人 (All)

- **To communicate about textual themes (e.g., key expressions and language forms for carrying out communicative functions):** Revisit the infographic: “生理性別性別認同大全” (Biological gender and gender identity in one infographic), from “[跨性別、生理性別、性別認同、LGBTQ+, 一張圖瞭解它們的意思與差異。](#)”

Part 2, Stage 2: Building Global Comprehension

Knowledge Process: Experiencing & conceptualizing

SJE Component: Content mastery

Learning Activity:

- **Literal, factual understanding:** Revisit Dialogue 1 while having the sample dating profiles in hand. Check the information that would be useful for the main characters in Dialogue 1.
- **Move from the familiar to the unfamiliar:** Revisit the movie trailer for the movie *Dear Ex* while having the sample dating profiles in hand. Check information that would be useful for the main characters in the movie *Dear Ex*.

Part 2, Stage 3: Understanding Meaningful Details

Knowledge Process: Analyzing

SJE Component: Critical analysis

- **Discover details about the cultural/social justice content of a text:** Why do you think certain kinds of information would be useful for the main characters in Dialogue 1? How about information useful for the movie characters? What do those dating profile designs assume about sexual orientations?

Part 2, Stage 4: Making Form-Meaning Connections

Knowledge Process: Conceptualizing & analyzing

SJE Component: Critical analysis

Learning Activity:

- **Identify and understand how a text is constructed and expresses meaning:**
 - 交友軟體名稱 (Dating app's name): Omi, weTouch, Tinder, etc.
 - 交友軟體 logo 設計 (Dating app logo design)
 - 照片 (Picture)
 - 我的性向 (My sexuality): 異性戀 (Heterosexual)、同志 (Homosexual)、酷兒 (Queer)、無性戀 (Asexual)、雙性戀 (Bisexual)
 - 給我看 (Show me): 女性 (Female)、男性 (Male)、所有人 (All)
 - 喜歡的食物/音樂/電影/運動 (Favorite food/music/movies/sports)

- 其他 (Other)
- **Focus on grammar, vocabulary, genre conventions, and organizational features** (skipped)
- **Hypothesize about language use in a text:** Who would be the users of this template? Why?

Part 2, Stage 5: Analyzing And Contextualizing Textual Meaning

Knowledge Process: Analyzing

SJE Component: Critical analysis

Learning Activity:

- **Evaluate and contextualize what is learned:** Revisit the three articles where Omi, weTouch, and Tinder are discussed. What users does each article speak to?
 - “[C/P 值最高的交友軟體!不想單身? 脫單神器 Omi 的開箱實測](#)”
 - “[大學生 Top 1 交友軟體?weTouch 的開箱實測](#)”
 - “[【2025 最新】LGBTQ+ 是什麼? 13 款同志交友軟體 APP 一次看](#)”
- **Build critical reflection and analysis skills:** Are their target audiences mutually exclusive? How could each have been more gender/sexuality-inclusive?
- **Analyze global and local practices and perspectives:** Look into the author/platform intro. Where are they from/located? How do those places match this map: “[同志婚姻合法地圖: 亞洲十大洋洲篇](#)” (Legal homosexual marriage map: Asia and Australasia)? For the map, see “[👉2025 亞洲十大洋洲同志婚姻地圖出爐.](#)”

Part 2, Stage 6: Applying Knowledge

Knowledge Process: Applying

SJE Component: Multicultural group dynamics & action and social change

Learning Activity:

- **Demonstrate knowledge and skills:** Design a dating profile template using Google Forms with peers in your group.
- **Use language in new and creative ways:** Create a name, a logo, and a set of questions for your Google Form that sounds, looks, and reads engaging to yourselves and your target audience.
- **Apply social justice understandings:** Engage yourselves and your target audience also by incorporating gender/sexuality-inclusive language in the questions and options.

Part 2, Stage 7: Summarizing and reflecting

Knowledge Process: Applying & analyzing

SJE Component: Multicultural group dynamics & personal reflection

Learning Activity:

- **Summarize what was learned:** Go over requirements for the form/reflection project.
- **Self-assessment of learning experience / Personal reactions to learning experience:** As a group, verbally promote your form to your peers. Then, individually fill it out for a friend and discuss its design in writing: 你們為什麼這樣設計？你們的表單可以怎麼幫助你的朋友？(Why did your group design your form in this way? How could it help your friend?)
- **Peer feedback / Personal reactions to learning experience:** Listen to other groups' promotion of their forms. Then, individually choose one to fill out for the same friend of yours and discuss your choice in writing: 你選哪一組的表單？他們的表單跟你們的哪裡一樣？哪裡不一樣？你為什麼選這一組的表單？他們的表單可以怎麼幫助你的朋友？(Which group's form did you choose? Which parts are similar to yours? Which parts are different? Why did you choose it? How could it help your friend?)

STUDENT WORK & INSTRUCTOR REFLECTION

As part of their assignments, students filled out two profile forms: One was designed by their own group and the other by a group of their choice. But rather than filling the forms out for themselves, students did so on behalf of a friend. If they preferred, they also had the option to do so for a fictional character from a movie or anime. This approach was guided by ethical considerations and aimed at creating a safe space for students to explore and discuss issues related to gender and sexual identity. To protect student privacy, all identifiable information from student work presented in this article is removed.

We implemented this lesson plan in two sections of CHIN 231 Intermediate Chinese I in Fall 2024. To our delight, some students adapted Dialogue 1 not only by creatively and critically deviating from its dating norms but also by integrating their learning from an earlier lesson that addressed the concept of “enclave” (飞地):

他们在同一个乐队，她常常帮他学音乐。他们也常常一起打电玩，每次都打得很高兴。他对他的印象很好。他们一起去台北的飞地看了一个外国电影，就他们俩。他们有外国朋友在电影院工作，所以不用费很大的力气就买到票。看完了电影以后，他请她吃晚饭。他们吃菲律宾饭，餐厅也是朋友告诉他们的。

(They were in the same band. She often helped him study music. Moreover, they often played video games together and had a good time without exception. She had a good impression of him. They went to a foreign movie together at an enclave in Taipei, just the two of them. They had a foreign friend working at the movie theater, so they didn't have to spend much effort to get tickets. After the movie, he treated her to dinner. They had Filipino food. The restaurant was also recommended by their friend.)

We can see that the students centered their lived experiences (e.g., in the same band and playing video games) and reversed the man-helps-woman norm (e.g., she often helped him study music). Instead of having the man take the initiative, a mutual friend obtained tickets and introduced them to a restaurant. Moreover, this group of students noticed that the movie and restaurant in Dialogue 1 belonged to the man's culture: Chinese. To challenge this intersectional dominance, they

shifted the movie and restaurant into the (Filipino) culture of a friend who represents a subordinate community in Taipei.

Below are screenshots of three dating profile forms (see Figures 1, 2, and 3). For student privacy, we only show the title parts rather than the entire final products. As we can see in the screenshots, each dating app is named creatively with a matching logo image. The first group fuses their dual identities as students and lovers by naming their dating app as “读书恋爱” (To study and fall in love) with a logo of heart-shaped book pages; the second group transforms Tinder into Sinder with a logo of sinful fire; the third group’s app is titled in Chinese characters (想我想你) but subtitled in a mixture of Pinyin acronym and English (XWXN - A NEW INCLUSIVE DATING APP!), which is in fact not an uncommon phenomenon in the world of dating apps. We can tell from their creativity how well the text type of a dating app profile and the use of Google Forms engaged this generation of students:

Figure 1

读书恋爱 - 自我介绍 (*To study and fall in love - Self-introduction*)



Figure 2

SINDER 😏 找到你的完美搭配! (*SINDER 😏 Find your perfect match!*)



Figure 3

想我想你 - 自我介绍 (*Miss me, miss you - Self-introduction*)



We did not ask for student feedback specifically on this lesson. However, in the end-of-semester evaluation for CHIN 231 Intermediate Chinese (I), which is anonymous and voluntary, students showed their appreciation for the socially relevant topics and the multimodal approaches. Some of their comments read:

- I enjoyed being able to learn socially relevant topics through language learning. This included the multimedia style of learning.
- We learned about different cultural issues with each lesson and had a discussion about them.
- Diverse inclusion of many topics and groups of people.
- There was a lot of diversity in the content, which helped with learning both the language and the content.
- Putting our vocabulary and grammar structures into context with real-world examples, such as movie trailers or songs.

We were initially worried about implementing SJE in our intermediate-level (ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines, 2024) Chinese classrooms, but our doubts were resolved when we decided to use sample profiles from various dating apps. These profiles are short, clearly organized, set in a familiar context of self-introduction, and include interesting details tailored to diverse groups. Likewise, the movie trailer we selected is less than two minutes long, subtitled, set in a familiar context of familial and romantic relationships, and contains fascinating twists and turns that can be compared and contrasted with a formulaic dating story. Having supplemented or replaced the textbook dialogues with these new text types, we were able to focus on the task of identifying social justice issues together with our students, particularly concerning the norms and stereotypes of gender and sexuality in the teaching materials. Moreover, student voices were empowered and their sexual identities were affirmed. Students created a dating story with peers that centered on their own experiences. They also used technology such as Google Forms to incorporate gender/sexuality-inclusive language and advocate for the LGBTQ+ community.

Pedagogical Implications and Conclusion

Teaching for social justice entails a process-oriented approach in which instructors are involved in decision-making, planning, evaluation, and reflection (Anya & Randolph, 2019). By sharing our theoretical framework and lesson plan, we hope to encourage more pedagogical transformation that integrates SJE in language learning, not only at the advanced level but also at the lower levels. We realized that materials *on* social justice may be advanced, but materials *about* and *for* social justice can be tailored for language learners at the intermediate-low to intermediate-mid levels. CARLA's "Social Justice Lesson Plan Template" and "User's Guide" (2024) provided us guidance on teaching for social justice and how to enact multiliteracies pedagogy. In return, we welcome language teachers to use our lesson plan as their toolkit to incorporate gender-inclusive language in their world language classrooms.

We acknowledge that social justice is much more than gender and sexuality. The limitations of this project include its specific focus on gender inclusivity, the representation of the materials and population, and the exclusivity of student language level. It is important to point out that, although we have a strong interest in incorporating social justice-oriented topics in CFL classrooms, most of the accessible resources focus on other world language contexts. It is our shared vision and value—the belief in the necessity of integrating social justice-oriented content in Chinese language classrooms—that motivates us to initiate this context-specific project. Furthermore, many of the

materials are from Taiwan for two reasons. First, we are familiar with the social norms reflected in those materials and have experienced them in our own lives. Second, Taiwan carries historic significance as the first in Asia to legalize same-sex marriage in 2019. These resources served as an entry point for students to engage with the topic, rather than limiting their discussions to Taiwan only. By presenting a case of gender-inclusive language incorporation, we hope to offer insights into the future of Chinese language education. In particular, we emphasize the creativity and potential of open resources and multimodal materials, such as infographics, movie trailers, dating app profiles, and translanguaging articles. With this article, we hope to inspire world language teachers to explore social justice education in their local context and beyond.

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APPENDIX A

Resources for Chinese as a Foreign Language (CFL) Educators¹

- **Chinese textbook series:** *Integrated Chinese* (IC, 中文听说读写, 4th edition). Published by Cheng & Tsui in 2018.
- **Dear Ex movie trailer:** “[《誰先愛上他的》 | 正式預告 \[HD\] | Netflix.](#)” Directed by 徐譽庭 and 許智彥 in 2018.
- **Infographic:** “生理性別性別認同大全” (Biological gender and gender identity in one infographic). From “[跨性別、生理性別、性別認同、LGBTQ+, 一張圖瞭解它們的意思與差異,](#)” by 潘柏翰 on 關鍵評論, March 30, 2021.
- **Dear Ex stills:** see “[堅持要用謝盈萱, 讓劇場女神和邱澤對決](#)” and “[誰先愛上他的 剧照.](#)”
- **Map:** “同志婚姻合法地圖：亞洲十大洋洲篇” (Legal homosexual marriage map: Asia and Australasia). From “[🏳️2025 亞洲十大洋洲同志婚姻地圖出爐,](#)” by HEDER on Instagram, April 24, 2025.
- **Sample profile from the dating app Omi:** see “[C/P 值最高的交友軟體! 不想單身? 脫單神器 Omi 的開箱實測,](#)” by 哥白尼 on Medium, May 18, 2021.
- **Sample profile from the dating app weTouch:** see “[大學生 Top 1 交友軟體? weTouch 的開箱實測,](#)” by 哥白尼 on Medium, Aug 7, 2020.
- **Article:** “[【2025 最新】LGBTQ+ 是什麼? 13 款同志交友軟體 APP 一次看](#)” (【2025 updates】 What is LGBTQ+? 13 homosexual dating apps in one place). By MYFEEL editors, January 17, 2024, updated June 3, 2025.
- **Sample profiles from Tinder:** see “[擁抱多元, 擺脫性別框架 Tinder 挺你驕傲做自己,](#)” by 品牌生活快訊 on WOMANY 女人迷, July 2, 2020.

¹ Except for the first item, supplementary materials are situated in the context of Taiwan and are therefore written in traditional Chinese characters. Most Chinese instruction in U.S. postsecondary education uses simplified characters, but we also have learners of traditional Chinese and students who plan to study abroad in Taiwan. For diverse student needs, we offered guidance about the differences and similarities between the two writing forms.