JIMALEE SOWELL
United States

Community of Inquiry as a Suitable Framework for Planning and Conducting English Language Teaching Workshops

The new faculty at an unnamed university, myself included, attended a series of workshops. The purpose of these workshops was to provide new instructors with the information and skills needed to start their jobs. However, the sessions were workshops in name only. None of the sessions were actually workshops; instead, they were presentations or lectures. In one session, the presenter read information about the courses we would teach from PowerPoint slides; in another, the presenter showed us how to use the technology we would need in our work but did not provide an opportunity to practice using that technology. In the final session, the presenter read learning objectives to us from a piece of paper for over an hour. These sessions could have potentially been more engaging and the content more memorable had the sessions actually been workshops.

The above example serves as one of the many experiences I have had attending training sessions that were called workshops, but were not, in fact, workshops. The workshop is the cornerstone of training formats for English language teachers, especially in-service teachers. While lectures, presentations, and other knowledge-delivery formats can also inform teachers about teaching methods and practices, training sessions for teaching practice are often better delivered as workshops because the workshop model is centered on active learning, whereas lectures and presentations are one-way-oriented trainings.

Even though the workshop is a common format for teacher training, what constitutes a workshop and how to successfully conduct one seem to be frequently misunderstood (Brooks-Harris and Stock-Ward 1999; Hamilton 2016; Sowell 2016). Although the Community of Inquiry (henceforth, CoI) framework has not been previously used as a model for English language teaching (ELT) workshops, I argue that the CoI framework (Hall 2012; Lipman 2003) is appropriate and even beneficial because it provides workshop leaders with the organizing principles of a workshop: teaching presence, social presence, and cognitive

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presence. This triad of branches working together provides a clear framework upon which to plan and carry out workshops for English language educators.

In this article, I first discuss the benefits of providing teacher training through the workshop model. I then provide an overview of the CoI framework and explain how each branch relates to the planning and delivery of a teacher-training workshop. I conclude the article with a sample workshop plan based on the CoI framework. Through this article, readers will develop a clear understanding of the CoI framework and how to use it to design and carry out teacher-training workshops for English language teachers.

BENEFITS OF WORKSHOPS

Workshops can be conducted for any number of teaching and training purposes—from professional conferences to in-house teacher training whereby teachers in the same institution present workshops for colleagues. If you have not yet conducted a workshop, you might lead one in the future. You might be selected to conduct a workshop at a conference, or you might want to share ideas about teaching practices with fellow teachers at your institution or in your community. Even if you do not have the opportunity to lead a workshop, many of the principles for conducting effective workshops outlined in this article can also be applied to classroom teaching. Engagement and involvement of learners are key points in both workshops and classroom instruction.

The term "workshop" itself does not make a training session a workshop. Training formats that do not include active participant engagement are not workshops (Brooks-Harris and Stock-Ward 1999; Richards and Farrell 2005) even when they are labeled as such. Brooks-Harris and Stock-Ward (1999) define workshop as "a short-term learning experience that encourages active, experiential learning and uses a variety of learning activities to meet the needs of diverse learners" (6). In an ELT workshop, participants engage in new skills and activities that can later be implemented in teaching practice, and they collaborate to share ideas or troubleshoot common challenges (Sowell 2016). While an ELT teacher-training workshop typically includes input in the form of explicit instruction, it must also include active-learning components to accurately be called a workshop.

The workshop model is a favorable format for teacher training because of its potential learning impact. Instruction through active learning, compared with lecture-oriented instruction, has shown better learning outcomes (Aykan and Dursun 2022; Donohue et al. 2010; Freeman et al. 2014; Ma et al. 2023; Nurbavliyev et al. 2022; Tutal and Yazar 2023) and higher rates of learning

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retention (Aykan and Dursun 2022; Minnick et al. 2022; Tutal and Yazar 2023). Furthermore, through the workshop format, participants learn from one another, not just from the workshop leader. While the workshop can be an exemplar training mode for teacher education, many educators themselves have had little or no experience, nor training, in how to design and deliver a workshop (Steinert et al. 2008). The CoI framework, therefore, provides a comprehensive structure for planning and delivering workshops that can guide both novice and experienced workshop leaders. In the next section, I provide an overview of the CoI framework.

THE COMMUNITY OF INQUIRY (CoI) FRAMEWORK

The CoI theoretical framework is based on the concept that learning takes place among a group of learners through three interdependent components: teaching presence, social presence, and cognitive presence (Bektashi 2018; Garrison 2016). A key premise is that learning takes place in the process of cooperation, collaboration, and exploration (Hall 2012). This concept of learning in community is important in teacher-training workshops. In a workshop training session, participants are introduced to new information but also actively participate in their own learning with skill development and problem-solving enhanced by interaction.

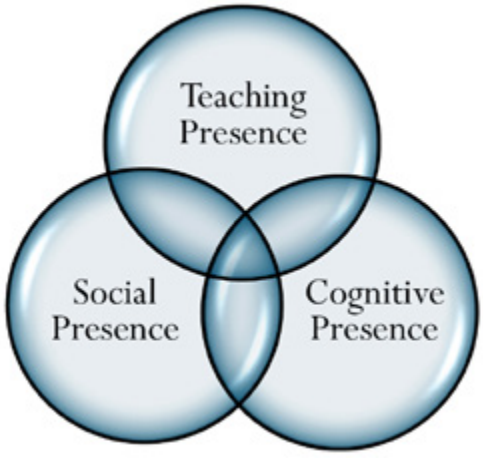

Figure 1. Model of the Community of Inquiry (CoI) framework

The three branches of the CoI framework are interdependent (see Figure 1); however, they are presented separately in the subsequent sections in order to explain how they can be applied to an ELT workshop. Through teaching presence, the workshop leader designs the learning experience, which includes planning in ways that activate social presence and cognitive presence. Through social presence, participants interact with the content of the workshop and grapple with it in pairs, in small groups, and as a whole group. Through cognitive presence, participants think critically and reflect on the content and how they can use the new input in their classrooms. In the following section, I provide an overview of each branch and explain how it can be applied to an ELT workshop.

Teaching Presence

Teaching presence refers to both planning the learning experience and facilitating it (Garrison et al. 1999). A common debate in teaching is whether the teacher should be a "sage on the stage," delivering knowledge and information to students (an instructor), or a "guide on the side," setting up and moderating activities for learners (a facilitator). The person (or persons, in some cases) conducting a workshop is both instructor and facilitator. Although the person who leads a workshop is commonly referred to as a *workshop facilitator*, I use the term *workshop leader* since this person carries out dual roles of instructor and

facilitator. In the instructor role, the leader designs the workshop. In the facilitator role, the leader sets up learning activities, guides participants as they carry out the activities, and responds to participants' needs (Garrison et al. 1999).

The workshop leader enacts teaching presence through three aspects: (1) subject matter expert, (2) designer of the learning experience, and (3) facilitator of the social environment (Anderson et al. 2001). In the following section, I provide details for each component of teaching presence.

Subject Matter Expert

The workshop leader is an expert on the content of the workshop. Participants have expectations that the workshops they attend will result in learning that they can apply in their teaching. They, therefore, expect the leader to be knowledgeable on the workshop topic.

Designer of the Learning Experience

The workshop leader is the designer of the learning experience (Anderson et al. 2001). During the planning stages, the leader prepares input-based content and active-learning activities.

The **what-why-how** model, explained below, integrates input-based instruction, collaborative-learning activities, and discussions. (Note that in this article, examples of each workshop component are provided through a workshop on collaborative writing. However, the principles can be applied to workshops on any topic.)

The "what" and the "why" of the workshop

Input-based instruction refers to the parts of a workshop that provide participants with new information, the "what" and the "why." The "what" is the concept, theory, strategy, technique, or topic the workshop is based on. (There are often variations or different interpretations of any theory or concept, so it is important that the leader provide definitions of key principles underpinning the focus of the workshop.) The "why" establishes the reason for using each theory, technique, strategy, or skill. The "why" is often presented in terms of the benefits of the workshop topic and frequently provides recent research findings. Both the "what" and the "why" are important in situating the workshop topic for participants. (Table 1 shows an example of how the "what" and the "why" might be applied in a workshop on collaborative writing.)

The "how" of the workshop

The "how" provides participants with ways they can implement the theory, strategy, technique, or skill mentioned in the "what" in addition to opportunities to problem-solve and solidify learning through discussion. The "how" is the part of the training that is missing in sessions that are called

The What	The Why
Definition of collaborative writing: Collaborative writing is the co-creation of a text or a writing task by two or more writers. In a collaborative-writing task, all participants mutually engage in the process, and all participants share equal responsibility for their work (Storch 2013).	• Collaborative writing has resulted in more-accurate language gains (vocabulary and grammar) and improved ways of expressing ideas (Storch 2013; Storch and Aldosari 2010) over individual activities (Moonma and Kaweera 2021; Nassaji and Tian 2010; Reinders 2009). • Collaborative writing has demonstrated positive effects on teamwork, communication, and problem-solving skills (Coffin 2020).

Table 1. The "what" and the "why" of a workshop on collaborative writing

In a workshop, it is not enough to present a concept, theory, or practice. Participants must be given opportunities to learn how to apply the new input.

workshops—but are not actually workshops. While the presenters in the example at the beginning of the article provided the "what" and the "why" in their presentations, they neglected to implement the "how" that would have made their training sessions workshops. The result was that I obtained a surface understanding of the classes I would teach and the technology I would need to teach these classes; however, I gained little practical understanding of how to apply this knowledge.

In a workshop, it is not enough to present a concept, theory, or practice. Participants must be given opportunities to learn how to apply the new input. In the following section, I provide information on collaborative activities and discussions, which are common workshop components utilized in the "how." (Table 2 provides an example of the "how" for a workshop on collaborative writing.)

1. **Collaborative activities.** Through collaborative activities, participants work in pairs or groups to develop understanding and practice activities they can conduct in the classroom (Barkley et al. 2014). In the collaborative-writing workshop, for instance, the leader carries out collaborative-writing activities with participants in the same way they would conduct the activities with a group of learners. When the workshop leader conducts classroom activities with participants rather than just describe them, participants are much more likely to understand how to carry out the activities and to remember them once they return to their classrooms.

   Returning to the example from the beginning of the article, the presenters could have followed an explanation of the "what" and the "why" of the learning management system by asking participants to carry out the functions taught in the training (e.g., create a learning module and set up the assignment folder). The presenters could also have asked the participants to work in pairs or small groups to help one another. The presenters could have then circulated and assisted participants as needed.

2. **Discussions.** Discussions give participants the opportunity to share ideas and experiences and problem-solve

The How
1. Provide guidelines for successful collaborative activities.
2. Carry out collaborative-writing activities with participants.
3. Address challenges with collaborative-writing activities. Suggest solutions.
4. Give participants the opportunity to talk about ways they can implement collaborative-writing activities in their classes.
(Note that points 3 and 4 can be carried out at various times in the workshop, and they do not have to follow a sequential order.)

Table 2. The "how" of a workshop on collaborative writing

in pairs and groups. They can take place at different points in a workshop for different purposes:

1. At the beginning, discussion can provide an entryway for participants to tap into existing experiences and knowledge related to the workshop topic.

2. Following input and/or an activity, discussion can help participants consider how they would apply the given content in their own context and discuss potential challenges and solutions.

3. At the end, discussion can help participants consolidate learning from the entire workshop and consider next steps.

Facilitator of the Social Environment

As the facilitator of the social environment, the leader balances input-based instruction with collaborative activities and discussion, uses a variety of interaction patterns, and manages pair and group work.

Balance Input with Collaborative Tasks and Discussion Segments

In the planning stages, the leader balances input-based instruction segments with collaborative activities and discussions. (Table 3 shows an example of how instruction could be balanced with input, collaboration, and discussion.) Providing too much input-based content at once can make it difficult for participants to absorb the content (Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation 2017), and attention can wane when input-based segments last too long (Farley et al. 2013; Risko et al. 2012). As a general rule, an input-based segment should not last longer than 20 minutes (Barkley and Major 2022). Switching among input-based instruction, collaborative activities, and discussion keeps participants actively engaged (e.g., Barkley and Major 2018, 2022; Lang 2021). There is no specific rule for how long a collaborative activity or discussion might last, but it should not continue beyond the point of usefulness. Some collaborative or discussion-based activities, such as a warm-up, might take five to 15 minutes, whereas an interactive activity where attendees practice a new skill or brainstorm solutions to an existing problem could take 30 to 45 minutes.

Managing Pair Work and Group Work

In a workshop, participant–participant interaction is frequently carried out through pair and group work. The following are guidelines for managing pair and group work in a workshop:

1. Make sure participants know who they are working with.

Type of Instruction	Segment Type
Warm-up	Discussion
The "what" and the "why"	Input
Guidelines on collaborative writing	Input
Collaborative-writing activities	Input and collaboration
Debrief on collaborative-writing activities	Discussion
Challenges and solutions	Discussion
Reflection on ways to implement collaborative-writing activities	Discussion and collaboration

Table 3. Sample showing how input segments can be balanced with collaborative activities and discussion

2. Give clear instructions for interactive activities. (Providing both written and spoken support can be helpful.)

3. Give a time limit when starting an activity.

4. Monitor interactive activities and provide guidance as needed.

5. Provide closure at the end of each activity and discussion. A closure concludes an activity and transitions to the next one (Barkley et al. 2014). In a closing activity, participants might share conclusions reached, main takeaways of the discussion, next steps, or remaining questions.

Social Presence

Social presence is underscored by the idea that workshop participants can learn more together than they might on their own. There is evidence that social presence strongly impacts learner achievement and satisfaction (Zhan and Mei 2013). In a workshop, social presence is developed by facilitating relationships among participants, establishing guidelines for participation, ensuring that all participants are involved, and giving participants space to share ideas and find their own solutions.

Facilitate Relationships

Creating an environment where participants can communicate openly starts at the beginning of the workshop. Group cohesion begins only after social relationships are established (Garrison 2007). It is beneficial to begin the workshop with an icebreaker that allows participants the opportunity to get to know each other. Icebreakers that provide a lot of interaction with each participant talking to a number of other participants are preferable to icebreakers that provide interaction with a limited number of participants. In groups where participants already know each other, icebreaker activities can provide participants opportunities to learn more about each other. For ideas on icebreakers/mingles, see "Extended Icebreaker" (Barrett 2019), "Mingles in the Foreign Language Classroom" (Borzova 2014), and "Mix It Up! Mingle Away!" (Buechel 2022).

Establish Guidelines for Participation

Participants are most likely to benefit from collaboration in a workshop when the leader establishes a secure environment where participants understand the guidelines and boundaries for communication (Garrison 2016; Nelson et al. 2020). For example, in my workshops, following the icebreaker, I tell participants that I want them to consider the content of the workshop (the input), which might be new to them, as well as the ideas of other participants, with an open mind. I let participants know that it is fine for them to disagree with me and with one another, but that they should do so respectfully. I also tell participants that the workshop is focused on exploring and sharing ideas and teaching strategies; the focus is not on debate.

Ensure That All Participants Are Involved

Organize activities in ways that allow for more-equitable participation. One way to achieve this is to have different interactional patterns (pair work, small-group work, whole-group work) throughout the workshop and have participants work in a variety of pairs and groups. Additionally, for some discussion activities, each group member can be allotted a certain amount of time to talk. For instance, a discussion might start with each member speaking for one minute about a certain issue, such as their experiences with collaborative writing. Participants can also be given certain questions to ask and certain questions to answer. For example, with pair conversations, Participant A can ask questions 1–3, with Participant B answering, and then Participant B asks questions 4–6, and Participant A responds. Another way to involve all participants is to assign roles in groups (secretary, leader, timekeeper, reporter, etc.) and circulate these roles throughout various activities. You can also assign group members different parts of an activity. For instance, Participants A, B, and C

ELT workshops based on the CoI framework can be planned and conducted in various ways. The guiding principle of a CoI workshop is that it integrates the branches of teaching presence, social presence, and cognitive presence.

all read different sections of a text and then collaborate to respond to questions based on the whole text.

Give Trainees Space to Share Ideas and Find Their Own Solutions

Workshop leaders are often outsiders in the sense that they do not currently work in the same contexts as the participants, and they may have never worked in the same or similar contexts. It is, therefore, important that leaders give participants space to share ideas regarding the content of the workshop. In the collaboration phases of a workshop, participants work together to practice the new techniques and strategies. Through discussions, they explore ways to apply the new skills in their context.

Cognitive Presence

Cognitive presence refers to critical thinking and reflection in a CoI (Garrison 2007). Critical thinking and reflection involve questioning, problem-solving, exploring, and analyzing content (Garrison 2016) rather than merely accepting and assimilating given information. Below are suggestions for ways to enact cognitive presence through critical thinking and reflection in a workshop.

Ways to Incorporate Critical Thinking in a Workshop

1. **Questioning.** a. *Leader-led questions*: Asking participants open-ended questions gives them a chance to build on prior knowledge, talk about how they might apply what they have learned, and discuss solutions to shared problems. Participants can discuss questions in pairs or small groups and share ideas with the whole group. b. *Participant-led questions*: Participants can come up with and discuss their own questions related to workshop content. Participant-led questions can be particularly effective as a final activity at the end of the workshop. Following a group discussion, unresolved participant-led questions can be directed toward the leader.

2. **Analyzing Teaching Scenarios.** Analyzing teaching scenarios can be a way to help participants think through common classroom teaching challenges and brainstorm strategies to effectively deal with them. These scenarios could involve teaching dilemmas, challenges, or decision-making situations. Provide participants with small pieces of paper or notecards. Have participants write scenarios (related to the workshop topic and their teaching contexts) that they would like to have analyzed. Ask each participant to write one scenario per piece of paper. Participants should describe the issue and end with the question(s) they would like answered. You can provide a model for describing a scenario, as in Figure 2. (Alternatively, if time is limited, you can supply participants with scenarios.)

There are a number of ways to distribute the scenarios: 1. Have each participant in a group write a scenario. Collect the scenarios from each group and give them to another group. For example, Group A's scenarios go to Group B,

Group B's scenarios go to Group C, and Group C's scenarios go to Group A. 2. Ask participants to share their scenarios within their own groups—for instance, Group A's scenarios are used in Group A. 3. Gather all scenarios and randomly redistribute them to groups.

Scenario

> I asked my students to write paragraphs collaboratively in small groups. Some of them did a great job. They worked well together and created better final written products than they do when they write individually. However, other students did not work well in their groups. They complained that they were not able to write about the topics they wanted to write about, and they did not feel that the writing they produced in their group belonged to them. For some of these groups, the final written products were not as good as the products the students created individually. What should I do? Is there a way I can guide the struggling groups toward more-effective group work?

Figure 2. Sample scenario

After scenarios are distributed to groups, ask participants to analyze them. Questions such as the following can guide the analysis:

1. What are the challenges presented in the scenario?
2. How can the challenges be addressed?
3. What are different perspectives or viewpoints that can be considered?
4. Can locating more resources be helpful? If so, what resources could be used, and where are they located?

Following the analysis discussion, bring groups back together for a whole-group discussion. Each group shares their analysis of one of the scenarios they discussed.

3. **Reflecting.** Reflection is part of the critical-thinking process that refers specifically to analyzing and evaluating what has been introduced or experienced. To prompt reflection in a workshop, consider asking questions such as the following:

1. How can I put into practice what I have learned in the workshop?
2. Do I need to make any adaptations to apply this strategy/technique/skill in my own teaching? If so, what are they?
3. What challenges might I face in using this strategy/technique/skill?
4. How will I deal with those challenges?
5. What other resources (e.g., websites, books, other teachers, support personnel at my school) can I consult to learn more?

Reflection activities might come at any point in the workshop; nonetheless, key moments for reflection are transition points from one topic or activity to another and at the end of the workshop. At transition points, the leader can help participants reflect following new input. At the end of the workshop, the leader can ask participants to carry out a more extensive reflection, prompting them to solidify their experiences and thoughts from the entire workshop. For an end-of-workshop reflection, it is a good idea to have participants write down their reflections because writing can prompt participants to probe more deeply than spoken reflection (Bassot 2015; Bolton and Delderfield 2018). Furthermore, participants can review their written reflections once they return to their classrooms.

The CoI framework is suitable for creating and conducting ELT workshops because it provides an organizational structure that reminds workshop leaders that the workshop is a training platform premised on active learning through thinking and learning in community.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Table 4 is an example of a 120-minute workshop plan based on the CoI framework. In this plan, teaching presence is enacted through the design of the learning experience, subject-matter expertise, input-based instruction, and facilitation of the learning environment, which is carried out through different interaction patterns (pair work, small-group work, whole-group work, and discussions). Social presence is carried out through creating a welcoming environment with an icebreaker, providing guidelines for participation, and providing space for participants to share ideas and consider how the content of the workshop can be applied to their own teaching contexts. Cognitive presence is enacted through discussions that ask participants to think critically about how they might apply what they have learned from the workshop.

Note that this plan is a sample rather than a template. ELT workshops based on the CoI framework can be planned and conducted in various ways. The guiding principle of a CoI workshop is that it integrates the branches of teaching presence, social presence, and cognitive presence.

CONCLUSION

In this article, I have presented the CoI framework and demonstrated how it can be applied to ELT workshops through the interconnected branches of teaching presence, social presence, and cognitive presence. The CoI framework is suitable for creating and conducting ELT workshops because it provides an organizational structure that reminds workshop leaders that the workshop is a training platform premised on active learning through thinking and learning in community. With this framework, the leader can easily recognize that a workshop incorporates new input and provides participants with opportunities to apply and probe that input through collaborative activities and discussion. While I have presented specific ways to enact each presence, it is important to realize that each workshop leader is the designer of their own training experience. As such, leaders are encouraged to design and deliver CoI workshops based on their own contexts and situations. Using the CoI framework ensures that what the participants are taking part in is, in reality and name, a *workshop*.

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Title: Collaborative Writing in the Second Language Writing Classroom	Interaction Pattern(s)	Allotted time
Welcome/Icebreaker: 1. Icebreaker: "Find Someone Who" activity. Participants mingle to become acquainted with each other. 2. Give rules for workshop participation. 3. Provide agenda of the workshop plan.	**Whole group**	**10 minutes**
Warm-up Activity: **Discussion-based Inquiry** Participants discuss the following questions: 1. What is collaborative writing? 2. What is your experience with collaborative writing as a writer? As a teacher? 3. What are potential challenges of carrying out collaborative-writing tasks with English language learners? Following the discussion, the leader asks participants to share some of their ideas.	**Pairs** **Whole group**	**10 minutes**
The What: **Input-based Instruction** The leader provides a definition of collaborative writing: Collaborative writing is the co-creation of a text or a writing task by two or more writers. In a collaborative-writing task, all participants mutually engage in the process, and all participants share equal responsibility for their work (Storch 2013).	**Input-based instruction**	**5 minutes**
The Why: **Input-based Instruction** The leader provides research-based benefits of using collaborative writing with English language learners: • Collaborative writing has resulted in more-accurate language gains (vocabulary and grammar) and improved ways of expressing ideas (Storch 2013; Storch and Aldosari 2010) over individual activities (Moonma and Kaweera 2021; Nassaji and Tian 2010; Reinders 2009). • Collaborative writing has demonstrated positive effects on teamwork, communication, and problem-solving skills (Coffin 2020).	**Input-based instruction**	**5 minutes**
The How: **Input-based Instruction** The leader provides the following guidelines for collaborative-writing activities: • Specify the question or problem to be addressed. • Provide a time limit. • Let students know the expected outcome (i.e., the expected product, such as a completed paragraph) (Bean 2011).	**Input-based instruction**	**5 minutes**

The How: **Collaborative Activities** The leader conducts the following activities with participants: ***Meaning-focused collaborative-writing tasks*** • The question-generating strategy • The template strategy ***Form-focused collaborative-writing activities*** • Dictogloss • Writing from a sequence of pictures	**Small groups**	**40 minutes**
The How: **Analyzing Teaching Scenarios** Participants analyze teaching scenarios related to the following potential challenges: • dealing with student resistance to collaborative-writing tasks • selecting appropriate task types for collaborative writing • grading collaborative-writing tasks • handling disagreement among students working in groups • making sure work on collaborative tasks is shared equally among group members **Whole-group Discussion of Scenarios Analysis**	**Small groups** **Whole group**	**10 minutes** **5 minutes**
The How: **Freewrite Reflection** Participants freewrite in response to the following questions: 1. How can I put into practice what I have learned in the workshop? 2. Do I need to make any adaptations to apply this strategy/technique/skill in my own teaching? If so, what are they? 3. What challenges might I face in using this strategy/technique/skill? 4. How will I deal with those challenges? 5. What other resources (e.g., websites, books, other teachers, support personnel at my school) can I consult to learn more? **Discussion** Participants discuss plans for incorporating collaborative-writing tasks.	**Individual** **Pairs**	**15 minutes** **5 minutes**
Wrap-up: Questions and Answers Participants are given time to ask any remaining questions.	**Whole group**	**10 minutes**

Table 4. Sample workshop plan based on the CoI framework

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Jimalee Sowell is a PhD candidate in Composition and Applied Linguistics at Indiana University of Pennsylvania. She has served as an English Language Fellow and an English Language Specialist. Her research interests include disability studies, teaching writing, peace education, genre analysis, large class pedagogy, and teacher education.