

# My Revised OLI Theory

My theory of online literacy instruction (OLI) emphasizes effective, accessible design and pedagogically sound learning experiences. Having worked as an interpreter, academic advisor, and writing center professional, I have developed multiple lenses through which I consider my approach to OLI. My training as an American Sign Language/English interpreter ingrained a desire to ensure accessibility and to learn from the d/Deaf community (and later the disability community as a whole) about how to start from a foundation of accessible design rather than working backwards with inadequate retrofits. While advising students, I realized the variety of obstacles individuals can face while pursuing their degrees, which broadened my perspective on accessibility to include issues like good online and asynchronous resources to fit busy schedules, as well as a variety of technology options to match the varied levels of digital access available to students. Most recently, working in a writing center has shown me the range of possibilities for supporting writing instruction outside of the classroom. Now, whether I am in front of a physical classroom teaching students studying English as an Additional Language or providing synchronous online tutoring through the writing center, I have a clearly defined personal theory of OLI that guides my approach by emphasizing accessibility, engagement, community, and empowerment.

Accessibility is the cornerstone of my OLI theory. A learning environment built with accessibility as its foundation ensures an inclusive, barrier-free space where learning can take place equitably for all students. As the Universal Design Learning principles and scholarship from Disability Studies demonstrate, making something accessible in an online environment

means taking into account considerations of (dis)abilities, access to digital technology, and students' linguistic backgrounds, to name just a few. It is my responsibility to stay up to date with the most current research regarding accessibility, endeavoring to learn from individuals and communities who have the lived experiences rather than making assumptions about what they may want or need. My goal is to think in terms of accessible and inclusive design and to remain open to the ongoing conversations about what makes a space truly accessible. One way I have demonstrated that in this portfolio is through the accessibility guide I created for writing center peer tutors, which you can read on the "Accessible Design" tab. I have also endeavored to make all of the elements of this portfolio accessible through my color contrast and font choices, captioning of all audio content, and descriptions of images.

Along with accessibility, I value engagement and multimodal, interactive elements in my online literacy instruction. Wherever possible, I try to include multiple options for students to access and experience resources, whether that means balancing reading material with videos and podcasts or including a gamified element. Since a key component of engagement is community, this is something else I value and try to foster in my teaching. Although my work in a writing center means that I am more often supporting students one-on-one or even indirectly, such as when I am developing supplemental resources for the online writing lab, I try to think about the learning experience from a standpoint of community. That could be a small community of two peers providing each other feedback, or a larger community created by a shared space for the campus to access writing resources; no matter what it looks like, the community element is something that I want at the forefront of my instruction. As you will see demonstrated in the "Tutor Training" section of this portfolio, I foreground this approach when

training tutors on how to provide online tutoring and create community while doing so. Along with that, you will see a variety of examples of the multimodal and interactive approach I take through the design of the portfolio itself. On the “Technology Reviews” tab, you can read examples of how I assess new technologies to determine how they could help my OLI practice.

I center my approach to OLI around creating accessible learning experiences that foster engagement and community because I want students to find their learning experiences empowering. Critical Pedagogy has always been an important part of my philosophy for teaching, and as I developed my theory of OLI, Critical Digital Pedagogy expanded my understanding of how to include those tenets in online instruction. This involves thinking about what I am doing as an instructor or tutor to make the online environment empowering rather than isolating or overwhelming. For students balancing classes, work, and family commitments, I want to create a space for online tutoring that fits with the students’ schedules and reassures them that they can find support as student-writers no matter what. Rather than leaving a students to dread writing because they can never figure out certain technical aspects, I want to provide resources that they can use on their own or in partnership with a peer tutor to develop their skills. By creating thoughtfully designed learning experiences that enable students to explore and refine their understanding of writing as communication, I can encourage students to think about ways that learning to write well will impact them beyond their immediate course or tutoring session. The sooner students learn to think of writing as a process and understand that the ability to find good resources is an important part of that process, the sooner they can hone their skills with writing to communicate the ideas they want to share.