

CAPTONE PORTFOLIO

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Capstone EFL Portfolio

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## ABSTRACT

The portfolio here I present is my theoretical and practical understanding for teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL). There are four parts in my portfolio: my teaching philosophy, introduction for the artifacts, artifacts I chose to support my comprehensions for teaching English Language Learners (ELLs) and implications for the profession. In my teaching philosophy, I will display my professional knowledge in terms of students and communities; curriculum and program; and theoretical professionalism. In my introduction section for artifacts, I will briefly talk about artifacts I selected for each domain from four aspects: learner, context, curriculum and assessment. I will present my artifacts as appendix for you to review. Lastly, I will talk about some implications and questions derived from my reflections upon some disadvantaged instructions and assessment practices for ELLs along with a discussion of differences between China and the United States with regard to the educational theories as well as applications.

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## Teaching Philosophy

“Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire.”

--William Butler Yeats

### INTRODUCTION

I have heard two metaphors for teaching: one of them views students as empty vessels to be filled and the other one regards students as candles to be lit. While each one may make sense to different people, neither of the two satisfies perfectly my philosophy of teaching. I see teaching as an enjoyable as well as challenging task that aims at leading students to the final destination that they want which I define as making teaching self-relevant to students. In my point of view, good teaching is never simple since it involves making many decisions in what and how to teach. Apart from the resources, curriculum and assessment, students probably have become the most remarkable issue teachers have to deal with. Today, the school population has become more and more diversified with the increasing number of immigrant students. Not only teachers, but also school administrators and local parents have the urgent need to adjust their original viewpoints about what a school should be like. Apart from students' diversity, curriculum and programs are also becoming more demanding because of the common core standards. Changes are required everywhere and schools must also change. Two big questions of how to change

and what to change stand out in the path to search for better educational future for our children. In order to answer these two questions, I need to refer to professional theories because only being equipped by solid theoretical understanding, can I fully address the problems we are facing. For the following paragraphs, I will divide my philosophy into three sections that include students and their communities; curriculum and program design; and theoretical understandings. In each part, I also incorporate some very important factors that I have learned during my two years' professional study to better illustrate the importance of addressing English language learners' differences.

## **STUDENTS AND COMMUNITIES**

Knowing students before teaching them is my mantras for education. The population of students is becoming more and more diversified. Students come into the classroom with their own cultures and the influences of this diversity can been witnessed in their learning styles, communication styles and language acquisition (Nieto, 2011). We call the special and distinct knowledge English language learners bring to the classroom *funds of knowledge* (Moll, 1992). Learners' identities play an important role in school daily life and thus language teachers should take the responsibility to create a welcoming language learning environment in which students' *funds of knowledge* can be valued. (Murray & Christian, 2011). Parent involvement is another helpful approach to facilitate

English language learners to build self-identification (Delgado-Gaitan, 1991).

Teachers can let ELL parents participate in their daily teaching occasionally so that ELLs can feel their cultures are valued.

According to Leif Jensen's (2001) report on the diversity of immigrants and their children, it is critical for educators to realize the high heterogeneity of today's immigrants in the United States (Jensen, 2001). However, students from various communities have different communication modes. So, teachers who do not share their students' backgrounds and who are unaware of speech community differences in interacting through language may not be able to provide appropriate help. One way for teachers to know their students lies in the communities because students' performance is deeply rooted in community practice. By confirming the connection between classroom behavior and the communities, teachers could handle different situations more easily. For example, teachers need to know terms like voluntary and involuntary minorities. Voluntary minorities usually refer to those who actively seek ways to leave their own countries; however involuntary minorities are people who are forced to leave their countries because of war or political prosecution (Obgu, 1998).

Knowing those concepts can help teachers reflect deeper upon the applications of various teaching methods. Pedagogically speaking, I especially agree with constructivism (Nieto, 2011). This notion maintains that students' background knowledge can be enormously significant in their learning and that

interpretations of new information are influenced by their prior knowledge and experiences. Probably the most effective way for teachers is to enable students to analyze critically the role that English is playing in their future lives by probing into their own various backgrounds instead of demeaning students' own cultures and values (Murray & Christian, 2011). Here, I also want to highlight the constructivism theory. It has huge implications for my teaching philosophy because it addressed the contact with students' existing knowledge that had been developed by experiences. ELL background knowledge also matters when considering assessment issues. Many failures related to assessing problems resulted from teachers' lack of knowledge for students' home culture. When assessing ELL students, teachers should also be aware of students' funds of knowledge because their background knowledge plays an important role in students' performance (Herrera, 2007). In order to address students' various backgrounds so that they may not feel marginalized in the class, teachers can apply many approaches such as learner profile. Learner profile is a kind of pre-assessment method through which teachers are able to collect information about students' bio-psycho-social situation, prior education and language educational experiences (Herrera, 2007). In order to provide more reliable assessment products, schools as well as teachers need to take students' background into consideration. For instance, Herrera recommends teachers know their students from different aspects such as whether they are physically

or mentally healthy? What their families' social economic status look like? Did they have prior academic records which teachers can take a look at? Those questions act as guidelines for teachers to do pre-instructional assessment (Herrera, 2007).

## **CURRICULUM AND PROGRAM**

It seems that there is a widely accepted notion that if the students could have more time available for learning, they would attain higher proficiency levels. This notion was also demonstrated by a research conducted by the American psychologist J. B. Carroll four decades ago (Serrano, R., & Muñoz, C., 2007). In fact, I have doubts about this saying even though it did provide some insights about program design to better serve English language learners. Although the debate about what kind of program should be provided for ELLs is still going on, the core of the problem seems not shift very much. Whether to incorporate English Language Learners' first literacy or languages is always the concern of the program designers. Based upon the spectrum, two forms of programs occurred-the strong form and the weak form (Baker, 2011). I think students' native languages should never be disregarded. Theoretically speaking, there are several features of effective programs for English language learners which include high expectations, integrated development of language and subject matter, L1 concept development, qualified staff and supportive school environment (Samway, 2007). All these features shed a light on how school

system could best serve ELLs considering the program choice. To make it more specified, what we need to do in order to facilitate ELL students' learning involves motivation building, positive attitudes toward students' backgrounds, integration of language and subjects, L1 scaffolding, teachers' professional training and cooperation between staffs in school. So, it is so wrong for schools and teachers to disregard English Language learners' own literacy and languages.

As for the curriculum, it mainly deals with what should be learned under what kinds of conditions it is to be learned (Nieto, 2011). Hopefully, the curriculum may suit every student's background situation. However, considering the fact that it may be unrealistic to satisfy these requirements due to the ever-changing students' populations. Nevertheless, some basics of curriculum development should still be notified. For example, the home culture, prior experiences which can be related to the further academic study and second language acquisition, interactional activities instead of dull grammatical instruction without appropriate context (Garcia, 2005). Personally speaking, I especially support the notion of learning best take place in a holistic sense with the parts making a unified whole in a meaningful way (Baker, 2011). So instead of counting on teacher's role to function as a transmitter of incoherent knowledge, it is better for students to learn language and content using a holistic approach. For instance, "grammar and vocabulary should not

be taught in isolation but in a context of authentic holistic learning” (Baker, 2011, p. 246). Content-based second language instruction together with the constructivist theory provide us an ideal framework to guide our way to explore the best suitable curriculum mode for ELLs.

There should be another focus that teachers need to pay attention to when talking about curriculum: integration. Not only the integration of four skills, but also the integration of language and content objectives that I have mentioned above. Despite continued reference to separate language skills (e.g., speaking, listening, reading, and writing) within the teaching profession, more and more foreign language educators emphasize an integrated curriculum. In other words, most teachers recognize that the four language skills support each other and are found together in real life language use. Although challenges were raised by teachers, integration is still worthy of our time and energy. As for the two objectives, I want to address the SIOP model which stands for Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (Echevarria, J., M.E. Vogt, et al. 2000). In this SIOP model, it presents a coherent field-tested model of sheltered instruction that specifies the features of a high quality sheltered lesson that teaches content material to English learners. In essence, it combines language and content objectives so that ELL students can learn languages through working on different subjects.

## **THEORETICAL PROFESSIONALISM**

The very first theory I want to highlight in this part is the stage of language development. It is known widely that while ELLs move through these same stages, they do so at varying speeds (Thomas & Collier, 1997) and in different patterns. According to Tinajero and Schifini (1997), many ELLs have growth “spurts and lags” as a natural part of language acquisition. “It is the teacher’s role to note these spurts and lags through continual assessment and provide appropriate instruction to simulate further growth” (Brantely, 2007, p46). Linguistically speaking, teachers should also be aware of the principles of second language acquisition when teaching English to ELLs. (Justice, 2004). Only through knowing these principles, can teachers be able to make specific plans for students as how to reach the four competences which include grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse and strategic competences (Brantely, 2007). The content area knowledge also influences a lot. For example, for a language art teacher, he/she should know very well the linguistic knowledge such as second language acquisition theories as well as the target language in terms of different genres, language history, etc. Sociocultural theories, which Vygotsky had developed decades ago, have huge impact on nowadays teaching. The definitions he had addressed like students’ ZPD (Zone of Proximal Development) and scaffolding are still influential on today’s practical teaching and theoretical research. Vygotsky also established the explicit and profound connection between speech and the development of mental concepts and

cognitive awareness, and that the inner speech is developed from external speech via a gradual process of internalization (Johnson, 2004). Scaffolding is a very essential factor when teachers give feedback. In order to lead students to become independent learners finally, the feedback teachers give are of vital importance. In terms of the specific teaching methods and approaches, communicative language teaching (CLT) plays an important role in defining what strategies are effective (Brandl, 2011). Guided by CLT, all the teaching should be framed under certain themes to make interaction authentic and meaningful. Eight methodological principles were mentioned by Brandl at the very beginning which include the following: use tasks as an organizational principle; promote learning by doing; input needs to be meaningful and comprehensible; promote cooperative and collaborative learning; focus on form; provide error corrective feedback and recognize and respect affective factors of learning (Brandl, 2011). A practical application of CLT would be the translation activity proposed by Jimenez and Teague (Jiménez, Smith, & Teague, 2009). Through collecting the authentic language materials in students' communities, teachers can guide students to analyze the dynamics of languages as well as value the importance of their own cultures (Jimenez & Teague, 2009).

Teachers should also get to know some general knowledge about teaching which may cover how to manage a classroom, how to talk with students about their work and so on. Besides, students and teachers' beliefs

toward themselves and education also matter. Like Arthur Combs put it, the most important factor that could result in a person's educational success or failure has to do with what he believes about himself. So, the beliefs that teachers hold would definitely influence their perceptions and judgment that could be demonstrated by teachers' behaviors within classrooms, and thus improving teacher candidates' professional training and practice matters to a large extent. (Pajares, 1992).

Last, for beginning teachers, knowing how to cooperate with other personnel within school also deserves attention because teaching requires corporation and assistances from different people. In Marchesani's (2007) article about the guide to teaching, different suggestions were given to those beginning teachers who may be confused as to where to seek help. The author mainly discussed four aspects which teachers need to pay attention to (Marchesani, 2007, p. 235): collegiality and help from instructional and support faculty, professional support staff as well as non-instructional support staff.

## **CONCLUSION**

Teaching is by no means simple and straightforward because teaching itself involves countless decisions you need to make and many conflicts you need to settle everyday. Good teaching not only benefits schools and teachers, but also students and their communities. After all, students are whom we serve. It is the responsibility of schools to provide our students the best program to

enable them to compete in their future lives. When planning of program and curriculum design, the needs of ELL students should always take the lead. For example, teaching language as well as content so that ELL students won't feel deprived of the chances to catch up with their majority peers. It is especially important for us to know our students and view their differences as precious resources that we can explore instead of deficits we want to eliminate. For teachers, the most important thing to keep in mind is to equip ourselves with professional theories and make our teaching more research-based. We can make schools more attractive by engaging families (Allen, 2007) and valuing students' funds of knowledge (Moll, 1992). Programs and curriculum should be selected carefully because students' achievements are directly related to these choices. Designing qualified programs for both mainstream and ELL students requires joint efforts from many different aspects. For instance, policy makers need to take students' native languages into consideration if they want to help ELLs reach success; the national leaders should put more emphasis on how to best serve ELLs both theoretically and practically since they are indispensable parts of the whole national development. Theories act as the foundation of teaching because what theories teachers believe often decide how they will teach students. In addition, well-trained teachers equipped with appropriate theories will partially determine the success of students. It is very important for teachers to know very well about the subject he/she will teach as well as some

general knowledge about teaching. In addition, teachers need to get access to different theories before they finally develop their own philosophy of teaching and apply that to their future students.

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## INTRODUCTION

### **Domain 1**

### **PLANNING**

#### Artifact A

Three genre lesson plans

In this part, I will use the three genre lesson plans I have created for the course I took in 2012 spring semester which is entitled as *Reading and Learning with Print and New Media* to illustrate how I am going to make plans to promote learning, meet learners' goals and modify plans to assure learners engagement and achievement. The three genre lesson plans are three lesson plans that address three different genre teaching. During the lesson planning, I also want to address the importance of incorporating web 2.0 tools based upon the Common Core Standards requirements.

### **LEARNER**

It is known to all that lesson planning is critical to both students and teachers' success. For maximum learning to occur, planning must produce lessons that enable students to make connections between their own knowledge and experiences, with the new information being taught. For my three genre lesson plans, I chose to teach a poem, a bilingual children literature and an opera because I think for English language learners, it is very essential to combine

interest with objective standards. Due to the fact that classics and even some contemporary novels may pose great challenges for ELLs because they have very limited background knowledge. So, I want to make it more enjoyable for ELLs to get access to the information. For instance, the opera was designed based upon Victor Hugo's famous novel *Notre Dame de Paris*. Instead of letting students read lengthy introduction on Internet like Wikipedia, I think opera would be a better choice for ELLs to get necessary introduction information for this novel. For the bilingual novel written by a famous Spanish writer, I was able to address those ELLs who brought their funds of knowledge to the classroom. Through working on the novel, even mainstream students who have had similar experiences with their parents may echo with the book. Student remains at the very central position in my lesson planning since it is known widely that once the teacher lost students, they lost everything. By providing inspiring lessons, I can make students' learning more pleasant and effective.

## **CONTEXT**

In terms of learning context, in order to maximize my students' comprehensible input derived from my instruction, I incorporate different genres such as poetry, novel and music into my genre lesson kit together with carefully designed introductory activities. Poetry and fiction are two very important genres that both my majority students and ELLs need to grasp. In addition, music is also an indispensable factor in daily teaching and I can use

songs to enrich my classroom atmosphere as well as arousing students' interests toward their extracurricular activities. In order to make my students' learning more contextualized, I designed introductory activities to arouse their prior knowledge in my genre lesson plans. Since English language learners' background knowledge should always be taken into consideration, I will take full advantage of using culturally relevant materials to enable them connect their personal background with academically required content.

## **CURRICULUM**

The three genre lesson plans also address the curriculum demands. Not only my students knew what a fiction is, but also they learned how to use rhetoric to enhance their writing. Since rhetoric skills which include similes, figurative words and metaphors are required and district curriculum also highlights these writing skills as necessary skills for students, one main area for my lesson planning is to help students realize the merits of using rhetoric writing skills. In addition, my students learned many new vocabularies that they may use in their future journal writing. For the poetry lesson, students learned to interpret meanings underlying the poem using their own experiences. For example, the *K-W-L* chart could lead students to broaden their visions outside of the classroom and link their prior knowledge. In conclusion, I designed the three genre lesson plans according to objective standards and the curriculum. Apart from the common knowledge that students have to grasp, extra information

was also reached in my three genre lesson plans. For example, the famous opera designed based upon Victor Hugo's novel *Notre Dame de Paris* could enable students learn and understand appreciate the power of music when trying to understand people's inner world. The novel I introduced called *celebration of imagination* aims at enabling my students know that their imagination is so precious that they should explore further in order to find something shiny.

## **ASSESSMENT**

Planning also renders me guidance as where to assess my students. Assessment is a big issue because students' output is critical for my later-on reflection. In my poetry lesson plan, I required students to jog down something they found interesting or confusing. In the novel lesson, students were asked to provide their own feedback using web 2.0 tools. Plus, they need to keep a reading blog and share with each other their understandings of the novel by answering some open-ended questions. By doing so, I can assess students' comprehension as well as problems. The assessment results help me better instruct students by addressing their interests and eliminating unnecessary misunderstandings.

Reading blog is helpful in keeping track of students' reading progress and I can get brief information about which one is lagging behind. In sum, assessment is extraordinary important because it helps me understand my students' learning progress as well as reflecting my further instruction.

## **Domain 2**

### **INSTRUCTING**

Artifact B

Observation report in a local elementary school

In this part, I will highlight my observation report for the course entitled by *Analysis of Teaching* that I took in fall semester, 2012. What I did for the observation include: firstly, I interviewed the teacher before the class with questions I designed according to our class demo; secondly, I observed the whole class and took notes; thirdly, I interviewed the teacher again after the class and lastly I interviewed a student chosen by the teacher. The whole project is very inspiring in a sense that it not only provides me a chance to see how a teacher actually addressed so many issues within a class, but also it allows to test the student about the effectiveness of the class. In essence, instruction, which is defined as interaction with and among students; information provided in the form of demonstrations; and focused attention and practice of specific learning strategies, still remain as a crucial element necessary for the academic success for English language learners.

### **LEARNER**

The school I observed is one of the best metro public schools in Nashville and student demographics does not diversify too much. Basically, the majority students come from middle-class families and the number of African-

American, Hispanic and Asia-Pacific area students is not very high. The class I was assigned is a third grade class with 4 or 5 ELLs and one special aid student. In terms of addressing learners, the teacher used differentiated instruction for ELL students. Differentiated instruction is a strategy designed specifically for Ells or students who are under-achieved. For English language learners, they not only need to understand the content, but also they have to function under English, the medium of instruction (MOI). Differentiated instruction provides an opportunity for both the teacher and students to work collaboratively to achieve the goal. She also encouraged students to think aloud when questions were raised. Thinking aloud is a recommended strategy that can be used across different subjects. By doing thinking aloud, the teacher was able to understand students' problems so that she can provide more targeted instructions to avoid further mistakes.

## **CONTEXT**

As we all know that a good learning environment plays really important role in students' performance. The teacher did a good job in facilitating her students' learning by providing a resourceful classroom. There are classroom library where students can read books; computer centers where students have access to multimedia; art station where lots of school supplies were provided to enrich classroom activities; word wall where key letters and vocabularies were displayed. The teacher also encouraged her students to use available tools to

solve math problems. Other recourses like calendars, schedules and classroom behavior code, which were used to create respectful classroom interaction, are all accessible within the classroom. In terms of learning context, the teacher chose some real world problems as her introductory activities to make students' learning more contextualized. She also initiated many pair work among students, motivating them to work together to solve math problems.

## **CURRICULUM**

During my first visit to the school, I observed a math class that lasted for one hour. The topic was about the relationship between addition and subtraction. This topic is derived from the common core standards which aims at training students' abilities to think backward. The math class is under a big curricular unit of addition and subtraction. The teacher planned to spend one week working on this special topic even though students seem to be aware of the difference between addition and subtraction. The curriculum ranges from relatively easy tasks to comparatively hard ones. Such as at first, students were required to figure out the possible relationships between three numbers within triangle shapes; or they were asked to fill out the missing number within a equation. Basically the teacher paced her lessons along with students' performances and she also made modifications to the curriculum if she found that the majority students were still struggling with the new concepts. For example, after my first observation, she decided to give another week working

on the topic in that her students still need to be given more time practicing according to her observation during the class.

## **ASSESSMENT**

There were many assessments going on within and after the class. For instance, during independent working session, the teacher walked around the classroom and checked students' answers; the teacher also randomly displayed several working sheets students have worked on the previous day and let the whole class point out where the problems were. Through working on the assessing part, students could enhance their understandings while the teacher could keep track of students' performances as well as make adjustment to the original plan and instructions. On some weekdays, there also had formal online assessment for teachers get more specified data. Apart from what I have observed in the classroom, the after-class student interview also made me realize the importance of assessment. Since I was not allowed to give feedback to students according to my course requirements, I can probe deeply into students' comprehension to see their understandings of certain concepts. Sometimes, what I thought was not what was happening exactly. Assessment renders me a way to pinpoint more accurately on students' problems.

## **Domain 3**

### **ASSESSING**

Artifacts C: TOEFL Assessment Presentation

Artifact D: Analysis project for Assessment course (Part I, II, III)

In this section, my main goal is to demonstrate different kinds of assessing tools and then make my own point as how to best serve Ells. I will use an assessment project I did for a course entitled with *Language Assessment of English Language Learners* and a widely used test called TOEFL that I also presented to my classmates. The analysis project renders me, on one hand, a channel to probe into the significance of assessment in daily teaching. On the other hand, it also makes me realize the huge impact that standardized assessment results have on this student. On the other hand, it gives me an opportunity to probe into states requirements for Ells, the influence of the No Child Left Behind policy on Ells and my own reflections as how to better serve Ells. It is known widely that assessment plays an important role in assisting teachers to get feedback about students' learning. For Ells, both formal and informal language assessments should be taken into consideration.

Theoretically speaking, language assessments should take students background into consideration when determining their English language proficiency. Issues like whether testing items are culturally unbiased or valid/reliable are especially crucial because teachers tend to rely heavily on scores to help them assess

students. Through presenting the two artifacts below, I will analyze some very important issues with regard to assessment in terms of their implications for learner, curriculum and environment.

### ***TOEFL***

#### **LEARNER**

For a test that was designed specifically for Ells, TOEFL test does cover the four basic skills that international students have to acquire in order to normally function under the English speaking countries like the United States. The materials are authentic and four skills are covered. It is widely known that there are some significant differences regarding education beliefs between eastern and western countries. There are different groups of learners which TOEFL serve for and the majority TOEFL test takers are those who want to further their academic study abroad. For instance, the number of Chinese students who are taking TOEFL is increasing to a large extent every year. Among the four skills addressed by TOEFL, speaking and writing would probably be the two most challenging parts for Chinese students. TOEFL is a really demanding standardized test for Ells both academically and psychologically.

#### **CONTEXT**

In terms of testing environment, I think TOEFL still needs to be modified so that students may not feel so much pressure under the testing circumstances. The testing environment for TOEFL is very stressful which may impose

negative effects on test takers. What's more, the internet-based TOEFL poses another big challenge for students who have limited access to multimedia classroom. Speaking of the testing items in TOEFL, I think TOEFL is very communication-oriented which means that it is not a de-contextualized assessment. Instead, TOEFL makes it possible for test takers to draw on contextualized clues instead of focusing exclusively on the lexical level.

## CURRICULUM

The speaking part is a really big challenge for the majority Chinese students because we barely had enough chances to practice speaking considering the realities of English education in China. Writing is also a big issue for Chinese students because the majority practice for English writing in China is to rely exclusively on frigid format editing. TOEFL test does provide an opportunity for Chinese schools to value speaking and authentic writing more than they used to do. The traditional English teaching curriculum in China emphasizes more on reading and listening while skipping the training for speaking and authentic writing. In addition, TOEFL also makes it possible for those Ells who are professionals in specific content areas like science and engineer to pay more attention to their English language proficiency. In terms of possible negative effects that TOEFL may have on curriculum design, there is a possibility that students may be asked to enhance one skill while neglecting the

integration of four skills. While in reality, speaking, listening, reading and writing should all go together instead of being torn apart.

### *Analysis Project (Part I, II, III)*

## **LEARNER**

The second material I will use is my classroom assessment project for the assessment course which I conducted in a local public school. I chose a Spanish-speaking girl who took a standardized assessment called Tennessee English Language Proficiency Placement Assessment (TELPA) before she was enrolled. I also used some observation protocols to test her English language proficiency. TELPA mainly tests her abilities in speaking, writing, reading and listening. Based upon scores she got, she was identified as an intermediate level English language learner who need to get Ell service on a daily basis according to Tennessee English level guidance. Apart from TELPA, the girl also takes DIBELS which aims at testing her early literacy skills. Both TELPA and DIBELS failed to take her background knowledge into consideration. So, overly dependent on standardized assessment will not yield too much useful information. That's the reason why I need observation protocols as my informal assessment tools. Through working on both the standardized assessment as well as observation protocols, I got more useful information regarding the girl's background, such as home environment that have influence

on her learning; her first language proficiency; her basic interaction competency as well as her academic English proficiency.

## **CONTEXT**

Speaking of context, the first concept that comes to my mind is the testing environment. It is widely known that the testing environment may have huge influence on the testing validity. The local English Language Department provides a very quiet and comfortable testing room for Ells who have just arrived in the United States. The test administrators are mainly retired teachers from local public schools and they know how to make appropriate prompts if test takers got stuck. Besides, on the TELPA administration manual, there are specific requirements for administrators to prepare the testing room, avoid test takers to see their report cards or other things that need to be paid attention to. With regard to contextualization for assessing domain, it is mainly talking about the authenticity of assessment. I do not think TELPA or DIBELS could be viewed as authentic. In order to be authentic for Ells, assessments have to take Ells' background knowledge into consideration. Overly dependent on scores won't be very helpful.

## **CURRICULUM**

TELPA also derives some implications for curriculum design. In TELPA test for grade K-2, the testing items covered by TELPA are corresponding with the language art area that public schools would teach according to the district's

requirements. As far as I know, for this girl, she has to learn skills such as listen to daily conversation, write names/dates, name animals, connect dots, read sight words and etc. Accordingly, TELPA is able to predict, to some extent, her abilities to merge into the local public school system both socially and academically. The curriculum aims at improving her abilities in reading new words, writing upper and lower case letters, recognize sight words and listening to instructions and daily conversations. In fact, her TELPA scores indeed reflect accurately her recent progress in English language proficiency. However, TELPA failed to provide many substantial rationales for curriculum design in terms of Ells' funds of knowledge they brought into classrooms. Thus, when considering curriculum, it is indispensable for educators to tap more into Ells' background knowledge instead of only focusing on standardized test scores.

## **ASSESSMENT**

Assessments imply standards that states and districts expect their students to reach. It is obviously that there are some high stake standardized assessments acting as “ghettos” where student will get stuck forever. For the girl, her TELPA scores help the teacher get a sketchy picture regarding her English proficiency before she started to receive formal English education here. TELPA does not become a “ghetto” where she got stuck in the recent program. Since her situation is somehow different from other Ells in the classroom, her teacher used other informal tests to monitor her progress over the period.

However, TELPA failed to give extra information in terms of her first language or learning abilities. Due to the fact that apart from the content area knowledge the girl needs to learn, she also has to tackle with English. The validity and reliability of assessments like TELPA loom large considering the dilemma of whether it's the problem of language or the intelligence that should be accounted for her failure to make significant progress.

## **Domain 4**

### **IDENTITY & CONTEXT**

Artifact E: Practicum Synthesis for Foundations of the Education of English Language Learners

In this domain, I will use my practicum synthesis I designed for one course called *Foundations of the Education of English Language Learners* in 2011 fall semester. In this synthesis project, what I did include putting all the field trips to local schools and community college together and analyzing the legal issues for Ell education. For example, in one of the field trips, I went to some local communities where there were large amount of immigrants. I photographed the advertisements, visited local supermarket and talked to vendors. The other one is to observe a community college where the majority students are immigrants. I observed their English class, talked to the teacher and interviewed one student several times about his home culture. Besides the

community college, I also went to a local public high school to observe an ESL class for Ells.

## **LEARNER**

The project helped me understand the connection between students' self-identity and their home/community culture. Context contributes to students' identity formation and therefore influencing learning. By conducting the project, I deeply realized the reason why I need to address students' funds of knowledge and how to best use their background knowledge to serve for educational goals. There are many resources I can take advantage of when teaching Ells. For example, through collecting bilingual advertisements and local newspapers for immigrants in those communities, I can address Ells' funds of knowledge. Learning would be meaningless if not being positioned within certain context. By emphasizing Ells' identities and communities, I will be able to increase the comprehension input for Ells. For example, I can teach in a way that conveys more understandable speech pattern that is related to the Ells' background knowledge.

## **CONTEXT**

What I have learned from the project in terms of social context is to create a positive learning environment where Ells can find themselves being valued. We took a visit to the nearby community and there were lots of community bilingual literacy that I can use to explore students' background knowledge.

The classrooms I saw both in Nashville community college and a high school also reminds me of the globalization trend all over the world. Students from different places will feel the distance between themselves and those mainstream students is no longer unbridgeable under a welcoming classroom environment. Apart from social context, I think the contextualization of instruction could also be included within the classroom. If I were the teacher, I will invite English language learners' parents to come and introduce their special festivals for mainstream students. I would also use the materials I collected from students' communities to plan my daily lessons. A theme-based unit, which covers different subjects, could also be applied in ESL sheltered class using Ells' funds of knowledge. Through addressing identity and context, teachers could address the target language as well as enhance Ells' comprehensible input for content areas.

## **CURRICULUM**

Curriculum is a big issue for English language learners. On one hand, they need to overcome the language barrier; on the other hand, they also need to catch up with the content area learning. Theoretically, models like SIOP disagree with the dichotomy of content and language learning, while in reality, it is challenging for Ells to reconcile language and content learning simultaneously. During my visit to the local high school, Ells who lack of enough English proficiency have to receive services before they could enter into integrated

classrooms. Same situations happened in the Nashville community college where most of the immigrants were still struggling with the basic language problems. In order to learn subjects like math, science and social studies, ESL courses are rudimentary for English language learners. Although it is necessary to follow the general curriculum within the district, schools are all trying to modify their curriculum design in order to best serve Ells. Putting students into integrated classrooms without preparing them well enough with necessary English proficiency would only exacerbate the situations. Curriculum should always take language issue into consideration when Ells are involved. Nevertheless, ESL course should also abandon the traditional doings like using “watering down” materials and practicing drills all day long. Instead, ESL courses should put preparing Ells well enough both academically and linguistically as their top priority.

## **ASSESSMENT**

Before students getting enrolled into Nashville community college, they need to take a test for the college to get informed of their entry level in terms of English proficiency. This can be seen as a pre-assessment as well as data collection. Teachers could take good advantage of those pre-assessment results before they actually start lesson planning. Students were also required to take exit exams before they move out of ESL courses. There is a possibility that reclassification assessments may have negative effects for Ells because once

they cannot reach the standards, they cannot move forward. Thus, the purpose of reclassification/exit assessments should be modified such as how to better serve Ells based upon their performances in assessments. Test makers should work collaboratively with curriculum designers. Assessments could be more valid and reliable for Ells by making curriculum more accessible. Last but not the least, Ells' native languages should also be included into entry assessments so that they could be identified more accurately.

## **Domain 5**

### **LEARNING**

Artifact F: Linguistic data and theoretical analysis paper

Artifact G: Observation reports

In this domain, I choose to use two artifacts. One of them came from my final paper for the course entitled with *Linguistics/Second Language Acquisition in the classroom* which I took in 2011 fall semester. The other one is a group of my observation reports for the course *Foreign Language Learning and Teaching* that I took in 2012 fall semester. To specify my learning outcome, my goal would be enabling my students to achieve four competencies that include grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse and strategic competence. In my linguistic paper, I mainly introduced second language acquisition theories together with sample analysis of a Somali man I worked with. However, to learn a second language

does not only mean being able to conduct daily conversations, but also include using the language under academic settings. What English language learners are largely struggling with is the use English under their academic fields. From the observation reports in English language center and in a local elementary school, I maintain that Ells should be trained to be intrinsically motivated to use the target language both under social and academic settings

### *Linguistic Analysis Paper*

#### **LEARNER**

What I did for my linguistic paper include collecting data from my Somali friend in Nashville community college and then used linguistic theories to analyze the Somali man's second language acquisition status. I divided my data collection part into several sections. Basically, I mentioned aspects like phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics and pragmatics. Through working on his data, I generalized some repetitive and typical problems existed in his speech. For instance, in the phonology part, /r/ is repeatedly pronounced as r<trl>, /z/ is repeatedly pronounced as/s/. By analyzing those data, I can tell more clearly where I should focus the instruction on. The data also indicated some positive points, such as he was aware of the use of article and idioms. The study of linguistics helps me build a solid foundation of second language acquisition. The linguistic theories are of vital importance to better serve Ells' second language acquisition with research-based methods. It is widely proved

that language acquisition is, to some degree, similar both in first and second language and students' first language competency can be used to predict their second language learning. So, instead of neglecting his native language, I could improve his second language acquisition through exploring further in his first language. By addressing the differences between his first language and English, I can design more self-relevant and culturally responsive activities to lower his affective filter.

## **CONTEXT**

Speaking of social context, it is important for me to know the Somali guy's language and schooling history. He came to the United States because of the civil war in Somalia. He took English class regularly in the community college and he also worked as a cashier in a local supermarket, which renders him some opportunities chitchatting with native speakers. He speaks Somali more often than English which means he was lack of frequent contact with native speakers. Enough exposure to English matters a lot in terms of second language acquisition. In terms of learning context, his oral English could be better taught through the combination of his everyday life and the coursework. By doing this, not only the teacher could address the Somali guy's funds of knowledge, but also the academic tasks will be covered. Learning should be situated within contextualized circumstances where students could get access to the academic content via taking full advantage of their own background knowledge.

## **CURRICULUM**

The curriculum in Nashville Community College puts more emphasis on grammar and vocabulary teaching. In the class where the Somali man stays, the teacher usually focuses on the exercise in the textbook apart from instruction of basic grammar. There were also chances when students could practice with each other using English. According to my observation, the curriculum in Nashville Community College still tends to split the four skills apart instead integrating them. Generally speaking, the curriculum available in the community college is still largely grammar-based. In addition, since all students are English language learners, there were very limited peer scaffolding going on within the classroom. The curriculum design of the community college puts much more emphasis on grammatical and vocabulary drills instead of interaction oriented. While I do not deny the importance of grammar and glossary, it is also necessary for students to get access to some authentic use of the target language under contextualized circumstances.

## **ASESSMENT**

Apart from the entry-level assessment the Somali man had to take, he also needs to take exit test in order to transfer to another level or program. These are the two major standardized assessments in this community college. During my observation, the teacher conducted some informal assessment within the classroom. For example, the teacher checked students' answers to the questions

in the textbook and raised questions for them to answer. In my perspective, the teacher could also use writing journals, portfolios of their home language survey, or individual observation protocol to measure their progress over a period of time. By doing so, the teacher could be able to keep track of students' English learning out of classrooms as well as do better lesson planning by focusing on some common problems.

### *Observation Reports*

#### **LEARNER**

The three observation reports I conducted address different groups of students. Two of them were targeted at the adult English language learners and the other one was in a Chinese class of a local elementary school. Adult and younger second language learners have many differences in terms of second language acquisition because of their brain systems. In English language center, the way teacher taught English to adult learners is mainly communicative oriented. Students could get access to different multimedia tools to express their opinions, different sentence structures as how to make their statements, and large amount of peer interaction. However, the Chinese class in that elementary school is very different. For one thing, the teacher tries very hard to draw younger learners' interest to make his class mainly game-centered. For another, there are many reading and speaking tasks going on in ELC classes while in the Chinese class, students were only required to do simple recital tasks.

## **CONTEXT**

I observed a Chinese class in a metro public school and what impressed me the most is the learning atmosphere the teacher created for his students. The teacher used many culturally responsive materials to make his classroom special and novelty for students. His classroom is very exotic with decorations such as Chinese maps, pictures to show Chinese culture and Chinese character word walls. Students could practice with each other in Chinese during pair group working time. The teacher also made students' learning contextualized through putting lessons under a festival unit. If I were the teacher, I would also design activities such as a research project, which students need to collect information in pairs and then write something about the differences between Eastern and Western festivals in terms of food, traditions and etc. ELC classes for adult learners also addressed the importance of context. For instance, students were asked to do a lot of group work as to discuss, negotiate and collaborate with each other. Teachers always connect students' out-of-school experiences with academic teaching. The main objective for academic speaking or writing course is working on the strategies. Teachers introduced many useful tools such as online resources and word lists to enable students better polish their academic speaking or writing performances.

## **CURRICULUM**

The curriculum design can be reflected from the available programs. The adult English classes provided by the English Language Center are optional for university staffs and their spouses. The programs mainly cover four skills training. For example, there are classes specifically designed for academic speaking and writing. Extra writing workshops are also available in English Language Center. Adult language learners could get access to different programs based upon their own needs. However, the curriculum in public schools for foreign languages varies to a large extent. The majority public schools put Chinese under the category of related arts that students need to take on a daily basis. Other schools may choose not to open Chinese classes because of their students' demographics. Spanish, for instance, is much more different than Chinese. It is a required subject by almost every school because population of Hispanics is boosting.

## **ASSESSMENT**

The assessment for learning is a tricky issue. There are different kinds of assessing methods regarding students' second language learning. For example, some tests focus on students' aptitude while others may concern more with students' achievements. According to my observation of adult classes in ELC, the teacher focused more on what students have learned from his lessons rather than their achievements. No standardized assessments are required for adult learners before they finished their recent programs. Instead, teachers use

assignments to monitor students' progress. For example, students will do presentations about different topics; teachers also raise questions for students to answer during the class. All those informal assessments put emphasis on students' learning. As far as I know, assessments for the foreign language program in public schools vary based upon the districts' requirements. For the Chinese program in the elementary school, schools prefer students' learning than relying on standardized assessment scores.

## **Domain 6**

### **CONTENT**

Artifact H: lesson plan of second language literacy

In this domain, I would use the lesson plan I created for the course entitled with *Teaching Second Language Literacy* which I took in 2012 Spring semester. In this lesson plan, I introduced a novel called *Becoming Naomi Leon* written by a Hispanic writer to my students. The reason I chose this book is that there are a lot of background knowledge involved in the novel and it would echo with some Hispanic students' life experiences. The dialogue writing style could help students learn the narration genre and there are also very helpful vocabularies students could use to conduct their daily conversation. I also chose some activities in terms of comprehension and language. I think that authentic materials are very crucial for students to learn a second language. If

given chances to do this lesson plan again, I would definitely add on useful reading strategies such as thinking aloud to help my Ell students become good readers.

## **LEARNER**

With the increasing number of immigrant students, it is becoming more and more urgent for teachers to be aware of their diverse backgrounds, which is also known as funds of knowledge. As I have mentioned above, students' self-identities are closely related to their performance in school. Whether their culture is valued has huge influence on their views toward school and life. The novel provides a good channel through which Ells could listen to their inside voices. The novel was written in a dialogue style, so it can be read within small groups. What's more, through working on the book, students can incorporate their own experiences. For example, students could link their personal experiences when learning the girl's life. They could write journals on topics such as how to encourage the girl based upon their prior knowledge. The novel makes it possible for learners to explore their own life experiences compared with the little girl. A lot of reading strategies would be introduced to learners if I get a chance to revise the lesson again. For example, before they start reading, I will do brainstorm to make students feel comfortable to discuss their own experiences.

## **CONTEXT**

By teaching this novel, I will be able to create a learning context under which the minority students can have chances to let their voices be heard within my classroom. Ells could talk about their own lives with mainstream students because language learning is most likely to occur when learners are trying to use the language for genuine communicative purposes. I also planed to let students demonstrate their understandings on this novel through different approaches. For example, they can choose to do dramas or research projects about the author. I can even invite parents to come to my classroom and share their special occasions. Through collaborating with each other to play the drama, not only I can make my classroom environment more welcoming, but also students could understand deeply the content of the book. What's more, I will use pictures, visual aids and multimedia to make the classroom more topic-related. For instance, students could design their own word walls using web 2.0 tools; or they can collect their favorite lines in the novel. I will also incorporate interdisciplinary teaching for this novel together with the language instruction.

## **CURRICULUM**

English Language Art (ELA) is one of the required subjects when students enter into kindergarten. What's more, compared with other subjects like science or math, language art seems to pose more challenging tasks for Ells because they have to know the target language before they can understand the content. However, if given another chance to redo this lesson plan, I would definitely

use SIOP lesson plan where I could address language and the content simultaneously. I plan to teach this novel as a big unit under which subjects like social studies and language art will all be involved. For instance, in the novel, there are geography issues going on and some traditional Spanish festivals are also included. I would divide my curriculum into different sections for each subject. To specify, a theme-based curriculum can better cover the skills students need to grasp for different subjects and at the same time deepen their comprehension. My curriculum for this novel teaching aims at teaching content and language simultaneously under a meaningful task. For instance, I introduced the novel briefly during first period so that students can get a sense of what is this story about. Next, what I talked about was the geography content. Students need to get familiar with Naomi's path to find her father and the knowledge of geography is indispensable. After this, I taught the genre of this novel and made students feel comfortable with the writing styles and finally could use the genre to write their own journals. Gradually, after teaching key vocabularies and grammar, I moved to the deeper level such as the ideas behind the novel and students' own interpretation for the novel. It is theoretically attainable to learn different subjects under a same curricular unit.

## **ASSESSMENT**

My assessments for the novel not only include language, but also focus on content. I designed some activities together with some after-class assignments

to test students' understandings on both the language and content. For instance, in one activity, I asked students to guess the meanings of Spanish words according to the context clues. In addition, I let my students to check their comprehensions about the novel before and after reading the book to see the differences. In order to avoid students being word callers instead of active readers, reading blogs are good tools to keep track of students' comprehension. Open-ended questions, like "what if you were Naomi", provides a chance for students to express their own stances about this novel. According to their responses, I can tell students' levels of understandings and make adjustment to my lesson planning. Content assessment sometimes deserves more attention because language assessment is always very explicit when teaching Ells. If I could revise the lesson plan for the assessment section, I will add some strategy assessment. For example, in order to test their grasp of reading strategies, I would let students read some excerpts from the book to test their comprehension as well as language proficiency.

## **Domain 7**

### **COMMITMENT & PROFESSIONALISM**

Artifact I: Summary paper for Analysis of Teaching

Artifact J: Parabola Presentation

For this domain, I will use my final paper for the course *Analysis of Teaching* which I took in 2012fall semester. In my summary paper, I talked about what I have learned from my professor, the teacher I observed, the students I interviewed and my classmates. These people represent many angles from which I can probe into what it means to be good teaching. Teaching involves so many decision-makings that you need to make both within and out of the classroom. From the physical classroom arrangement to the dynamics in the class, the teacher is in charge of the minutia. Apart from that, teacher's professional knowledge as well as personality also impact students' learning a lot. A well-prepared lesson plan with carefully designed activities, together with plausible curricular scope will enhance, to a large extent, the possibility of ending up with a successful class.

## **LEARNER**

First of all, in my presentation about a mathematic topic-parabola in *Analysis of Teaching*, I figured out that what I assume perhaps was not what was really happening. When I designed the lesson, I assumed that my "students" would definitely get it. However, I failed to realize my anticipated outcome based upon my assessment results. Apparently, students were lost. When I think back about my lesson planning, I found some mistakes I have made. For one thing, I made assumptions instead of collecting enough information about my students. While it is super important to know my students before teaching them. For

another, I did not activate their prior knowledge well enough. Consequently, they all found the topic really hard to get access to. If I could use more examples to arouse their prior knowledge, they probably would not have felt so struggling.

## **CONTEXT**

Through the presentation of my parabola class, I got to know that learning without context is destined to fail. For Ells, it is especially important to design appropriate introductory activities either to help them connect with the prior knowledge or enable them to see the link between their background knowledge and the new concept. Strategies should be made explicit for Ells for subjects like math. In my summary paper, I also mentioned that student and learning centered classroom should be addressed. Teaching math should also go together with academic language instruction. Thinking aloud could act as an effective way to enable teachers address both language and content objectives. In terms of social context, a resourceful classroom where students could be well equipped with available materials to do research, abundant books to broaden their visions and enough culturally responsive texts to connect their out-of-school experiences.

## **CURRICULUM**

The district curriculum acts as a guideline for me to know what to teach/include. In my viewpoint, curriculum may be another way to explain

standards and standards can be shown from the curriculum design. In my summary paper, I realize the need to equip myself with professional knowledge such as language acquisition theories so that I can design a curriculum that suits Ells better. For the parabola presentation, I failed to provide enough substantial curricular assistance for students to better connect the new concepts. In my classroom with heterogeneously mixed students, it is my responsibility to introduce grade-appropriate contents that support district's standards. At the same time avoid simplifying my work by using "watering down" texts for Ells. Although hard as it seems to be, English language learners would definitely learn better if provided with grade-level appropriate curriculum based on content standards and learning outcomes.

## **ASSESSMENT**

As educators, developing my professionalism on assessment will help me decide what and how to better assess students. Assessments should be reliable and valid. The theories are supportive when designing assessments and explain the test results. From the teacher I have observed, she used assessment to help her design lessons, modify activities and provide extra help for Ells. Apart from standardized assessments, the teacher also created many opportunities to evaluate students' progress through her observation, questions and reciprocal teaching. According to my understanding, where there is learning, there should have assessment. Assessment should always come together with lesson

planning, instruction and activities. Through working on assessing carefully, the teacher was able to pinpoint the possible misunderstandings that her students may have.

## **Domain 8**

### **LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY**

#### **1. PRIOR TO COLLEGE**

I have been learning English for more than ten years. When I was in middle school, I was firstly introduced to English and the new language posed me a big challenge because I cannot pronounce glossaries listed on the back of my textbook. It took me probably a month to finally start picking up this completely different language compared with my mother tongue. During the three years' study in middle school, the most common practice for me to learn English were taking countless standardized exams and huge amount of reading. I had to do many exams that aimed at testing my vocabulary and grammar. The teacher did not teach writing until the second year. I was taught that there are three sections in writing: opening, body part and ending. The teacher listed sentences structures for each section and I was even asked to remember those structures for good. As for the vocabulary and grammar instruction I received, they were largely drills instead of being communication oriented. Same situations happened in my high school years. The biggest difference probably is

the even larger amount of tests I need to take. English classes were glutted with countless dictation for words/sentences, translation using grammatical structures, cloze test for key vocabularies, reading comprehensions, listening skills, and de-contextualized writing. Through learning English in this way for six years, I have got certain numbers of vocabulary for communication; and necessary/unnecessary grammars I need in order to conduct conversation with native speakers. Unfortunately, I failed to get enough training in terms of speaking. I passed China's college entrance examination in 2007 with 145 out of 150 full points on my English test. The passing line for English test is 90 out of 150. I still need to dedicate my success to my English teachers although their instructions were somehow problematic.

## **2. POSITIVE ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNER**

After I started my undergraduate life, problems occurred. In China, English education is only mandatory for the first two college years and the mainstream attitude toward English study is very causal because most of students won't take English as serious as before. Except for students who have chosen *English* as their major, other students will largely stop learning English any more. I was a law student back then which means that there are would probably only 7%-8% students in my major would choose to continue learning English actively. Under such kind of circumstance, the only way for me to get enough training on English is my personal interest in English. Whatsoever, we

still have to pass a standardized test called the China English Test (CET) designed for college students. Only listening, reading and writing are required. The speaking part is optional. There are two levels for CET tests and one is called CET-4 and the other one is called CET-6; and CET-4 and CET-6 share a same optional spoken test. The passing line for both CET-4 and CET-6 is 450 out of 750 full points. I got 630 in my CET-4 and 627 for my CET-6. My spoken part was rated as A and the highest level for spoken test is A+. During my spare time, I took part in extra-curricular activities such as English debating test, English speech contest, making friends with native speakers, watch English movies and read lots of authentic texts such as English classics. The other impetus for me to learn English is that I had to take TOEFL and GRE tests by the end of my graduation. Thus, I dedicated much of my time in reciting new words, practicing speaking using software, imitating native speakers through movies and TV series. My part time working experiences in a Language training company also brought me precious opportunities to talk with teachers who are native speakers.

## **REFLECTION**

After I analyzed in depth the artifacts I have collected, some problems occurred after further reflection. Indeed, all these lesson plans, observation reports, assessment analysis project, second language literacy collection and linguistic project help pave my way to be better prepared for my future teaching. The underlying theoretical beliefs echo with my teaching philosophy as well. Being an educator implies much more than just giving students what you know about the subject, in fact, the art of how to plan, instruct, scaffold and assess require strategies, common sense and research-based methods.

## **PLANNING**

Based upon my observation in some local public schools, the majority teachers keep very short notes on their lesson plans. I was wondering the actual application of lesson plans in realistic teaching. Another problem with my lesson planning is that since I have little formal teaching experiences, the objectives for both content and language areas may be somehow unrealistic. In my perspective, lesson plans should be built upon state and district standards together with students' background knowledge. With the common core state standards, lesson planning would be more stressful since Ells are required to attain at the same academic level as mainstream students do. So, what I will do would include enough data collection about student demographics, school policies and state mandatory assessment requirements. By working on the

information gathering, I can get a clearer sense of what and how to design my lesson plans in order to address those standards. Another important aspect about lesson planning is to always prepare a plan B, which means to be open to possible modifications during teaching. Since every student is different, not to mention English language learners. They come to my classroom with different backgrounds and I cannot assume that all of them are at the same cognitive level. As for the supplementary materials, it is especially important to make adjustment for lesson plans by using more culturally related materials and taking advantage of their first languages. Authentic assessment also needs to be addressed in lesson plan for English language learners. The problems of assessment for Ells would be the availability of informal assessment.

## **INSTRUCTING**

In terms of instructing, there are some problems that I need to take into further consideration. First of all, after being introduced to many theories of teaching English as a foreign language, I feel that English instructions in China are somehow problematic. For instance, teachers' main job in teaching English was very test-driven. They care less about communication than grammatical drills. While it is true that grammar is important for English language learners, I cannot make instruction overly grammar based. Personally speaking, I am more in favor of the instructional methods that are communicative oriented. Instruction has a huge impact on students' comprehension input, which should

always be used to gauge the effectiveness of instructions. By making instructional methods more self-relevant and meaningful, students will definitely feel more motivated to learn. However, a problem of instruction for English language learners is that teachers always teach through the language instead of at the language. Teachers always take it for granted that language will not be a problem while in fact, English language learners do need extra help with the medium of instruction.

## **ASSESSMENT**

Assessment is too important to be neglected in teaching. For English language learners, before they enter into the school, they need to be assessed on English language proficiency; after they start school, they have to go through different kinds of language screening test and content test; finally before they could wrap up their study for a certain level, they also need to attend exit or transit tests. So, throughout the whole process, there are so many tests students need to take in order to reach certain criteria before they can further their study. The problems about assessment I have been thinking about are mainly about the testing reliability and validity. For tests that have culturally biased testing items, the results cannot be reliable nor could it be valid. For those tests that are mixing intelligence and language proficiency, the authenticity of results also suffer a lot. English is by no means trivial for ELLs and in order to be able to normally function under English-speaking countries,

English is not something that Ells could choose not to learn. Nevertheless, I was always wondering the social justice these standardized or norm reference tests have brought to ELLs. They sometimes make the standard blurring as whether it is the content or the language that matters more in terms of candidates' qualifications. For instance, although TOEFL has incorporated many subject areas materials into its testing items, the focus seems not shift from the language. So, tests like TOEFL are trying to validate an assumption that those who knows English better win the game. It may be somehow unfair for those ELLs who are very professional in their research fields while having limited English proficiency. So, I tentatively think that assessment should never be used as a tool to make social structure hierarchical. Instead, assessment should always play a role in helping teachers to get information about how to better serve ELLs.

Another issue with assessment is the common core state standards. It is widely know that the Common Core standards are gaining its weight to a larger extent nowadays. The common core state standards make me realize the big challenge that is facing English language learners. How to better prepare Ells for their future lives poses as an extremely hard question for me. Not only do they need to catch up with the mainstream students in terms of language, but also they need to develop skills that are required by the common core state standards in order to finally succeed in the competitive world. Compared with

the situations in the Untied States, Chinese education administers also listed some standards for our students to reach which include knowledge, behavior and relationship. However, I still cannot see very much progress in terms of our educational system while those standards were issued in 2006. The English instruction practices in China are still largely depends on the overly grammar-based under de-contextualized circumstances. How and what to change remains as two significant questions for all educators throughout the world.

## **IDENTITY & CONTEXT**

Being an English Language Learner myself, I have experienced the situation of being put under the circumstances where I share a classroom and teacher with native speakers. Language looms large when I was put on the spot. For instance, I still feel very clumsy with my spoken English when I was trying to make myself understandable by others. My personal experiences always lead me to ponder upon the situations that many other younger ELLs in the States are going through. Identity, in my point of view, is probably the most important thing for ELLs. Being labeled as a non-native speaker or English language learner could bring some unexpected treatments. The term English Language Learner, per se, means well because it helps educators realize that those students may need extra help. However, without knowing what ELLs think about themselves, I cannot say that I am helping them by making them special or different from others.

As for the context, I totally agree that English could be learned better under communicative oriented context. The problem of teaching/learning context in China's classrooms happens to be short of meaningful and authentic communication. So, in order to make our students more competitive in their future lives, making English learning more contextualized together with meaningful activities remains as the top priority for our education system.

## **LEARNING**

Learning implies many processes. For an ELL, learning probably include understanding the language, comprehending the content, adjusting the relationship with partners, negotiating with teachers and managing assignments. Instead of only focusing on the content area like mainstream students, ELLs always need to tackle with many other issues simultaneously. Learning is by no means simple for ELLs under English speaking environment. Due to the limited time and energy the teacher may have in a class, ELLs have to deal with some situations all by themselves. Accordingly, teachers should be fully aware of the possible difficulties that ELLs may confront with. In my perspective, educators could make English language learners' tasks easier by establishing a friendly classroom, building interaction code for students, appropriate L1 usage, peer assisted programs and extra time allocation for ELLs. Through working on those scaffolding awareness, teachers could make it possible for

English language learners to learn better as well as establishing healthy relationship with others.

Learning cannot occur without comprehensive input, so apart from necessary scaffoldings, meaningful tasks are also of vital importance for ELLs. By addressing meaningful learning, I want to highlight the theme-based instruction because this method emphasizes integrating learning among different subject areas. Making learning more interdisciplinary is one element of contextualization. For instance, an animal unit can cover language art (name of animals), mathematics (how to calculate legs of chickens), science (hibernation) and social studies (animals that were famous in history). By connecting concepts among different subjects, I can make content areas combined with language objectives.

## **CONTENT**

The content domain is usually discussed separately from the language domain. In fact, I fully support the integration of content and language objectives just like the SIOP model recommends. Content objectives seem to be more obvious when talking about subjects like math, science and social studies. However, content objectives cannot be reached without enough language supporting for ELLs. Since ELLs not only need to deal with content areas, but also language use, it is significant for teachers to teach language through content learning. Instead of isolating language as area where ELLs

need to work on separately, an integration view would be more beneficial. Content and language should go hand in hand. ELLs benefit more if they were taught in an integrated way. Content area knowledge is the main focus for teachers, but language problems cannot be skipped. The assumption that English is the medium of instruction and all students would definitely know how to use it under academic settings is destined to fail. Systematic instruction of how to use academic language is of equal importance for content teaching.

## **COMMITMENT & PROFESSIONALISM**

When talking about commitment and professionalism, the biggest problem would still lie in how to reconcile between the theories I have learned and the realities outside of school. During my two years' professional study, I was introduced to many educational theories and I also observed many classrooms under public school system. It is hard for Ells to get self-identity recognized in an English speaking country. Being a professional graduate student majoring in education, things could become somehow complicated. Firstly, I don't share a same cultural background with native speakers and this poses big problems for me because I am not familiar with cultural capitals. For instance, when native speakers were talking about their favorite book characters or other topics that directly related to their culture, I was totally marginalized. On other hand, the language problem still stands out once I was put on the spot. Although I have learned English for more than ten years, native like

spoken abilities is still a life long goal. Being able to speak a language does not necessarily mean that one can teach it well. Teaching is a life long journey. It is never too late to learn things, not to mention a language. Being non-native speaker myself, on one hand, enables me understand other English language learners who share the same conditions with me back then. On the other hand, the commitment to teaching and the professional training I got from Peabody will certainly lend me a hand in my further exploration of high quality education.

## **APPENDIX:**

### **Artifact A**

### **THREE GENRE LESSON PLAN**

Lesson plan 1 (Poem)

Lesson title: Poetry Appreciation

Designed for students in grades 9-12, high school

#### **1) Objectives & Goals**

- ❖ Encourage students to create their own poetry by offering different skills
- ❖ Raise students' awareness of the power of poetic language as well as concepts related to the poems
- ❖ Develop students' abilities to apply active reading strategies for comprehension of poetry, especially the understanding of the main topic in the poem
- ❖ Motivate students to think about the significance of this particular genre and recite this poem

#### **2) Background and rationale**

I use this lesson plan to introduce the basic knowledge about this particular genre-poetry and my ultimate goal is to enable students to read poems as well as write their own poems using these strategies.

Learning to read poetry is an on-going process that requires regular and frequent uses of strategies. Learning to write poetry demands flexible usage of the concepts of poems and repetitive exercise of writing. So through this class, I would like my students to grasp the necessary “tools” which they have to use whenever they are reading or writing poetries.

#### **3) Assessment Evidences**

- ❖ Students will write their own poetry using some of the strategies taught in the class
- ❖ Students will understand definitions of concepts related to the poem
- ❖ Students will know how to use “think aloud”, “K-W-L” and “clinks-and-clunks” when reading another poem
- ❖ Students will write good summary about this poem with precise main idea beneath this poem
- ❖ Students will recite the poem and understand the significance of poetry in expressing personal feelings

#### **4) Detailed Learning Plan**

- ❖ Before reading: activate prior knowledge

➤ Poetry think aloud activity:

- Watch the video of this poem and let students pay attention to the tone, pitch and stops.  
[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cm\\_JECzLv-U](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cm_JECzLv-U)
- Imagine the sights, sounds, smells, tastes and sense within the poem
- Note the words or phrases the poet chose and ask oneself why the poet chose them

- Talk about the meaning and identify a theme or “big idea”
- K-W-L
  - Use K-W-L to identify what students understand about poetry
  - Have students brainstormed what they know about poetry; record on “K” column on chart
  - Have students identify questions or topics about poetry and record in the “W” column
  - Save the chart for later updates
- Explicit instructions
  - i) Concepts related to poetry
  - Teacher lists some basic concepts related to poem on the board
    - Manifestation modes
      - ◆ Figurative language
      - ◆ Symbolism
      - ◆ Metaphor
    - Some main categories of poetry
      - ◆ War poems
      - ◆ Nature poems
      - ◆ Happy poems
      - ◆ Love poems
      - ◆ Religious poems
      - ◆ Free poems
  - Define each one of the concepts one by one with examples
  - Ask students to write down those concepts together with definitions on their own notebooks
  - ii) Author’s background information
- ❖ During reading: monitoring, understanding, and connecting
  - Word walls
    - Ask students to jot down any words or phrases from the poem which are appealing, puzzling, unique, or powerful
    - Ask students to explain to the class the appeal their word entries had
    - Ask students define the words they choose and make connections to other poems which contains same words
  - Clicks-and-clunks
    - Divide students into four groups and each group should contain at least one ELL student
    - Ask students to write down what they made meaning of the poem (clicks)
    - Ask students to write down what they were confused or frustrated (clucks)
    - Let students to fix the clunks through discussion and sharing their own thinking.
  - Connect text-to-self, text-to-text, text-to-world
    - Text-to-self
      - Analyze the audiences and purpose of the poem
      - Discuss the main idea beneath the poem
      - Whether the poem was using rhythm, figurative language or symbolic language
    - Text-to-text
      - Ask students to reflect upon the text which conveys similar meaning compared with this poem

- Encourage students to think about text which was characterized by the similar genre
  - Introduce students to other poems written by the poets who lived in the same time as Emily Dickinson
- Text-to-world
  - Ask students to think about some other approaches to express the same theme of this poem
  - Ask students to reflect upon the advantages/disadvantages of using other genre to convey the same topic
- Paraphrase & summarize
  - Paraphrase
    - Ask students to jot down the meaning of this poem in their own words
    - Let students to rotate to the group next to their original one
    - Share and discuss their paraphrases
  - Summarize
    - Assign each group with one poster
    - Ask each group to discuss and jot down the strategies the poet used in this poem on the poster
    - Ask each group to write down the main point, appealing & confusing languages on the poster
    - Arrange their posters and stick them on the classroom walls
    - Ask each student update their K-W-L charts
- ❖ After reading: reflecting and responding
  - Reflecting
    - Ask students to keep their own poetry blogs with *web 2.0 tools* *cart* about this poem, they could post their favorite poems, poets or create their own work.
    - Ask students to read some other poems written by Emily Dickinson. The following link could serve as a guide for students to explore Emily Dickinson: <http://www.poemhunter.com/emily-dickinson/>
    - Ask students to reflect upon some common strategies which Emily used in her poems
  - Responding
    - Ask students to reread the poem and perform this poem using their own approaches
    - Encourage students to use the strategies taught during the class to analyze other poems chosen by themselves
    - Motivate students to write one poem by themselves using symbolic/figurative languages (rhythm/rhythm-less)
    - Share and discuss their personal selected poems next class using different tools such as PPT and web 2.0 tools.

## 5) Text for class

*Nature -- the Gentlest Mother is,  
By Emily Dickinson*

Nature -- the Gentlest Mother is,  
Impatient of no Child --  
The feeblest -- or the waywardest --  
Her Admonition mild --

In Forest -- and the Hill --  
By Traveller -- be heard --  
Restraining Rampant Squirrel --  
Or too impetuous Bird --

How fair Her Conversation --  
A Summer Afternoon --  
Her Household -- Her Assembly --  
And when the Sun go down --

Her Voice among the Aisles  
Incite the timid prayer  
Of the minutest Cricket --  
The most unworthy Flower --

When all the Children sleep --  
She turns as long away  
As will suffice to light Her lamps --  
Then bending from the Sky --

With infinite Affection --  
And infiniter Care --  
Her Golden finger on Her lip --  
Wills Silence -- Everywhere --

**PS: Web 2.0 tools cart :Prezi/ scoopit/edublogs/storybird/glogster**  
This web 2.0 tools cart can be applied to all the three genres lesson plans.

## Lesson plan 2 (Novel)

Lesson title: Celebration of Imagination

Designed for students in grades 4-8, middle school

### **1) Objectives & Goals:**

- ❖ Comprehend author's explorations of heart and imagination
- ❖ Understand the cultural background of this novel
- ❖ Understand the importance of determination and perseverance
- ❖ Motivate students to utilize their creativities in writing
- ❖ Review the skills of reading and writing poetry

### **2) Background and rationale:**

I created this lesson plan in order to give a brief but inspiring introduction to the novel *the dreamer* written by Pam Munoz Ryan. This novel is a perfect choice to motivate students among 4-8 grades to explore as well as reflect upon their so-called *odd* thoughts in adults' eyes. The author also inserted bits of poetry and it offers students chances to practice their skills taught in the poetry appreciation class about reading and understanding poems.

I assume that all my students have had chosen their own web 2.0 tools to motivate their learning about writing as well as reading. The purpose of this lesson is to encourage students to read the novel after class, so it's very important to make sure that students all had their own approaches to keep track of their reading. apart from their own web 2.0 tools, I also create a reading log sheet to help students arrange and monitor their reading process.

### **3) Assessment evidences:**

- ❖ Students will be able to answer ten questions correctly after they read the whole novel
- ❖ Students could express their own opinions about the significance of determination and perseverance in achieving the final goal
- ❖ Students could understand the beliefs of Netafali beneath the novel, in addition, students will be able to relate the cultural background to the novel's plots
- ❖ Students will create their own feedbacks using different genres based upon this novel. They can choose to write their book reviews in the form of poetry

### **4) Learning plan:**

#### **❖ Lead-in**

- Video watching: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rkent3K8lLo>
- Think aloud
  - Divide students into small groups and each group contains a Spanish speaker
  - Ask students to work within a group and tell other group members what they could think of after watching this video clip
  - Ask students to keep their metacognition content for later use
- Background introduction
  - Teacher gives brief introduction of this book: main character, plot and author
  - Teacher read a excerpt of the novel to offer some hints about the whole book
  - Hand out the story grammar sheets to students and ask them to predict the features of different figures in the novel

#### **❖ Excerpts reading**

- Teacher offers students some lines of different figures in the novel

- Students will read by themselves and check their original answers to their prior predictions
- Hand out copies of an important excerpt of the novel and ask students to reflect upon it and then write down their thoughts on notebooks
- ❖ **Illustration appreciation**
  - Teacher shows students some of the illustration pictures in the novel
  - Ask students to discuss about these pictures and what they can think of based upon these pictures
  - Teacher shows a picture of *chucao* bird Neftali mentioned many times in the novel and ask students to reflect upon the significance of this bird  
<http://www.arthurgrosset.com/sabirds/chucaotapaculo.html>
- ❖ **Poetry comprehension**
  - Teacher lists several poetries the author has inserted in the novel and ask students to read them by themselves
  - Comprehend one important poetry in the Forest chapter:  
*“Which is sharper? The hatchet that cuts down dreams?*  
*Or the scythe that clears a path for another?” –The Dreamer*
  - Ask students to choose one of their favorite poetry in the novel and describe their choice with drawing or writing
  - Ask students to share within the groups
- ❖ **After-class assignments**
  - Hand out the comprehension sheets to students with ten questions about the novel
  - Read the whole novel using timeline designed for students
  - Personal exploration of the details in the novel
    - Teacher offers several links which are about the details in the novel to students
      - *Events of Neruda’s life with photographs of his early years*  
[www.fundacionneruda.org/ing/biografia\\_ingles1904.htm](http://www.fundacionneruda.org/ing/biografia_ingles1904.htm)
      - *Compare Temuco today with the town where Neftali grew up*  
<http://www.geographia.com/chile/temuco01.htm>
      - *General information about native people of Chile*  
[www.beingindigenous.org](http://www.beingindigenous.org)
      - *Learn more about the Mapuche people of Chile*  
[www.mapuche-nation.org/english/mian/features/m\\_nation.htm](http://www.mapuche-nation.org/english/mian/features/m_nation.htm)

(Source: <http://www.scholastic.com/teachers/lesson-plan/dreamer-discussion-guide>)

- Students choose one topic they mostly want to do and keep down their findings using their own web 2.0 tools

## 5) Text for class:

- “The Dreamer” by Pam Muñoz Ryan, Peter Sis
- **Comprehension questions**
  - Why does Father forbid Rodolfo to sing and Neftalí to daydream? What is the effect on the entire family when Father is at home?

- What is the significance of Neftalí losing his mittens and his father's hat in the first chapter?
- Why does Rodolfo say about Father that he passes out invitations (to dinner) like overripe plums? What kind of man is José Reyes and why does he try to control his family so completely?
- Compare Neftalí's father with his uncle Orlando. How are these men alike and how are they different?
- Why is Neftalí's first trip to the forest so important to him? How does the trip affect his relationship with his father and his understanding of his own nature?
- Throughout the story, the author has inserted bits of poetry. Discuss the meaning of this question in the Forest chapter: Which is sharper? The hatchet that cuts down dreams? Or the scythe that clears a path for another? Why is that phrase inserted in this chapter?
- Who do you think is the mysterious child who leaves the toy sheep for Neftalí? Why don't they meet? Why is the sheep so important to Neftalí when he doesn't even know who gave it to him?
- What does Neftalí learn about himself during the trip to the ocean and his summer there? Discuss the poetry inserted in the Lagoon chapter: "From what are the walls of/ a sanctuary built?/ And those of a prison?" Identify the sanctuaries you have found in your own life.
- Why is the wounded swan so important to Neftalí and why is he reluctant to share it with his sister Laurita? What does it mean to them when they do take care of the swan together?
- Discuss the effect on the children of the swimming routine in the ocean. What feelings does Neftalí have toward his father at the end of the summer?

(Source: <http://www.scholastic.com/teachers/lesson-plan/dreamer-discussion-guide>)

#### ➤ Reading log for students

Days	Day one	Day two	Day three	Day four	Day five	Day six	Day seven
Read pages							
Your thoughts							

### Lesson plan 3 (Song)

Lesson title: A song from a Gipsy girl

Designed for: students in grades 9-12, high school

#### 1) Objectives & Goals

- ❖ Teach students to enjoy the opera music
- ❖ Introduce Hugo's novel *Notre dame de Paris* briefly in order to let students understand the background knowledge of this opera
- ❖ Teach students to discuss the functions of different genre in conveying ideas
- ❖ Teach students bilingual version of the lyrics so that they can translate between French and English

#### 2) Background & rationale

I designed this lesson plan in order to make students be familiar with the novel *Notre dame de Paris* as well as its opera version. Song usually could transfer dull reading material into vivid and enjoyable text that helps motivate students to probe into the idea beneath the text.

Apart from the opinion I have mentioned above, the bilingual version of the lyrics could also give a hand to broaden student' vision of language art so that they could better understand the charming behind languages. Different genres act in various ways to express the ideas of certain texts such as novels and thus it is important for teachers to give explicit instructions about analyzing the functions of different genres.

#### 3) Assessment evidences

- ❖ Students know the basic content of the novel *Notre dame de Paris* and the main figure- Esmeralda
- ❖ Students will know the different genres in conveying ideas and their merits and flaws
- ❖ Students will know the bilingual version of the lyrics and understand the meaning of this song
- ❖ Students will know some basic knowledge of opera and its functions in describing emotions

#### 4) Learning plan

- ❖ Lead -in
  - Teacher shows pictures of Notre dame Cathedral and Victor Hugo to students one by one
  - Teacher asks students to brainstorm about the two pictures
  - Teacher guides student to the topic of the novel *Notre dame de Paris*
- ❖ Novel Introduction
  - Teacher shows the cover of the novel *Notre dame de Paris*
  - Ask students whether they heard of this novel or not, if they did, what was it about
  - Teacher summarizes the opinions of students and make a brief but thorough introduction of this book
- ❖ Opera Appreciation
  - Let students see the video-song by a gipsy girl
    - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FiCutFuEIgg>

- Teacher gives some details about this famous opera which include the information of opera/opera music
- Teacher asks students to brainstorm any other operas they are familiar with or they have watched before
- Students share their information in the class
- ❖ Language Focus
  - Let students watch the video again and remind them to pay attention to the lyrics both in English and French
  - After watching the video, teacher divides students into small groups and each group should contain at least a French speaking student
  - Students share and discuss what they have kept down about the lyrics and those French speaking students could act as “teachers” in their own groups
  - Teacher hands out the copies of bilingual version of the video and asks students to reflect upon the idea beneath this song
- ❖ Genres Comparison
  - Teacher asks students to think about the effects of song in conveying the information.
    - Is it useful?
    - Why or why not?
  - Teacher motivates students to compare the differences of audio and written formats.
    - Which one do they prefer?
    - Why or why not?
- ❖ After class assignments
  - Create their own versions to describe Esmeralda’s life (drawing/song/writing) using web 2.0 tools
  - Recommend students to see the whole opera of *Notre dame de Paris*
  - Write summary about opera and the differences between audio and written versions and explain the reasons of their preference
  - Copy the new French words and check the meanings of them. In addition, French speaking students could help other students with the pronunciation of French

5) Text for class

## **Bohemienne lyrics**

### **French version**

(Esmeralda)  
Bohémienne  
Nul ne sait le pays d'où je viens  
Bohémienne  
Je suis fille de grands chemins  
Bohémienne, bohémienne  
Qui peut dire où je serai demain  
Bohémienne, bohémienne  
c'est écrit dans les lignes de ma main  
Ma mère me parlait de l'Espagne  
Comme si c'était son pays  
Et des brigands dans les montagnes  
Dans les montagnes d'Andalousie  
Dans les montagnes d'Andalousie  
Je n'ai plus ni père ni mère  
J'ai fait de Paris mon pays  
Mais quand j'imagine la mer  
Elle m'emmène loin d'ici  
Vers les montagnes d'Andalousie  
Bohémienne  
Nul ne sait le pays d'où je viens  
Bohémienne  
Je suis fille de grands chemins  
Bohémienne, bohémienne  
Qui peut dire qui j'aimerai demain  
Bohémienne, bohémienne  
C'est écrit dans les lignes de ma main  
J'ai passé toute mon enfance  
Pieds nus sur les monts de Provence  
Pour les gitans la route est longue  
La route est longue  
Je continuerai mon errance  
Au-delà des chemins de France  
Je les suivrai au bout du monde  
Au bout du monde  
Un fleuve d'Andalousie  
Coule dans mon sang  
Coule dans mes veines  
Le ciel d'Andalousie  
Vaut-il la peine  
Qu'on y revienne  
Bohémienne  
Nul ne sait le pays d'où je viens  
Bohémienne  
Je suis fille de grands chemins

Bohémienne, bohémienne  
Qui peut dire ce que sera demain  
Bohémienne, bohémienne  
C'est écrit dans les lignes de ma main  
C'est écrit dans les lignes de ma main

### **Bohemienne lyrics**

#### **English version**

Bohemienne  
No one knows where my story begins  
Bohemienne I was born on a road that bends  
Bohemienne, bohemienne  
Come tomorrow, I'll wander again  
Bohemienne, bohemienne  
Here's my fate in the lines of my hands

My mother told me tales of Spain  
I think that's where she longed to be  
Of mountain bandits she once sang  
Andalusia memory  
There in the mountains she was free

My mother, father all are gone  
And I've made Paris be my home  
I dream of oceans rolling on  
They take my heart where I must come  
Andalusia mountain home

Bohemienne  
No one knows where my story begins  
Bohemienne I was born on a road that bends  
Bohemienne, bohemienne  
Come tomorrow, I'll wander again  
Bohemienne, bohemienne  
Here's my fate in the lines of my hands

When I was a child in Provence  
Barefoot in the hills I dance once  
But the gypsy road is long  
The road's so long

Every day I see a new chance  
Maybe some road will lead from France  
I will follow till I come home  
Till I come home

Andalusia's streams

Run through my blood  
Run through my day dreams  
Andalusia's sky  
When it calls me  
I feel my heart fly

Bohemienne  
No one knows where my story begins  
Bohemienne I was born on a road that bends  
Bohemienne, bohemienne  
Come tomorrow, I'll wander again  
Bohemienne, bohemienne  
Here's my fate in the lines of my hands  
Here's my fate in the lines of my hands

## Artifact B

### OBSERVATION REPORT IN JULIA GREEN SCHOOL

#### Basic information about the observation

- Time: 09/12/2012, 8:30-9:30 am
- Location: Julia Green School
- Class: Third Grade Math
- Teacher: Ms. H

#### Part one: Pre-class interview with the teacher

1. My question in mind: what is today's topic?

Before the math class began, I had a talk with Ms. H about the class that she will have today. The topic of this class focuses on the relationship between addition and subtraction. Since her students have already learned about basic addition and subtraction knowledge during the previous week, she wants to advance the basic skills to higher level as to explore the relationship between those two.

#### **Recording transcript:**

*M: So, can you tell me what is today's math class topic?*

*H: It is relating addition and subtraction.*

*M: Relating? ...*

*H: Right, so doing hmm...fact families basically, and doing the relationship between addition and subtraction...hmm so that they can check their work.*

*M: Their work...*

*H: Yes, their last in-class work.*

*M: Ok.*

2. My question in mind: is this class within a large group or just you just choose to teach randomly? **What kind of accommodations will you make?**

According to Ms. H, this lesson is within the large unit of addition and subtraction and the topic is totally new to students. This lesson also is not a long-term one because it's about the relationship between addition and subtraction. **She will put the review part about basic addition and subtraction up in the front before they go to today's topic about the relationship between addition and subtraction.**

#### **Recording transcript:**

*M: is this class...you just started...or...you have already...*

*H: this will be new...but...hmm...for third grade...but they are very familiar with fact families when they were in second grade.*

*M: Oh, I see. So, do you have short-term plans for this lesson...or this is just a daily lesson?*

*H: Well, this lesson will just be today...*

*M: Be today?*

*H: It's not going to be a long term...it should be a quick, you know, they get it, we move on.*

*M: Ok...but it's within a large unit, right?*

*H: Yes, the unit is on addition and subtraction.*

3. My question in mind: do you have any standard for this class? If so, what is your standard? How would you assess your students?

She had her own standard about this lesson which was written on a post in the classroom. The assessment is built as a kind of classroom code “I can fluently add and subtract within 1000 using strategies, properties of operation and/or the relationship between addition and subtraction.”

As for the assessment, she will let students check their papers in class and she does not assign homework for students to do. Assessment seems to largely depend on the papers students have done and there is differentiation instruction as well as assessment in Ms. H’s classroom. **For example, Ms.H told me that the assessment would be checking students’ papers they finished last time when they practiced addition and subtraction, while she also prepared some simpler questions for those students who are less developed when they were doing the whole classroom activity.** For those students who find difficulties in catching up with others, Ms. H will assign them with different tasks and applies different standards to their situations.

#### **Recording transcript:**

*M: do you have any standard for this lesson?*

*H: yeah, let me grab it, it's right over here...*

*M: ok, thanks.*

*H: so, this is the standard...so we have already talked about our properties, we've talked about strategies and now we are doing the relationship.*

*M: Properties, strategies and relationship... well, how would you assess your students using your standards?*

H: the assessment will be, well, actually what we will do is...we gonna use those fact family, charts, and this is how we practice...so they will be given... a subtraction...like these three number, 32, 328, 204...and they write it on the triangle and they write down addition problem and that fact family and related addition problem to subtraction problem...and they will have to do some practice together, the assessment will be giving them...their papers back and having them check their work and make corrections on their work if they got it wrong.

M: so, just papers... they are kind of doing peer work? Or you will like, guiding them?

H: they will...this will be whole group work together, and after they practice and they will work individually on...correcting papers. And another important thing about this lesson is that...I have a handful of kids that are not...really to this point...and so what they will going to be working...this will probably be new about for four students...and so I have another activity for them...

M: just for these four students?

H: yes, so what usually happens is...when other students are working on their individual papers, then I will pull these four students to the table, and we will work on things that are appropriate for their level.

(Show me the practice of these four students will do during the class)

M: differentiation. I see. Back to the assessment, you do not have an in-class assessment?

H: well, the in-class assignment will be this...correcting...

M: oh, I see, I did not realize it...what about the work for them, maybe when they go back home...

H: oh, no. I do not have homework.

4. My question in mind: lesson plan? Is there any possibility to alter your lesson plan?

She does have a large portfolio of different lesson plans at different stage, however, every lesson plan is extremely general and brief which only contains several section indexes, for example, problem of the day, relate addition and subtraction, practice on relation, correcting in small groups, fast facts games. She made a change on the lesson plan about the way students will practice. So, instead of using dry board as usual, she decided to use plastic bags. In addition, due to the tornado drill they will have today, Ms. H is not very positive about finishing the fast fact games at last. **In sum, there are possibilities for Ms.H to alter her lesson plan, for example, the plastic bag thing is a temporary idea she thought of before her class began, also she was somehow sure that she will omit the last fast fact games because of the tornado drill.**

**Recording transcript:**

M: I do not know whether you do a lot of lesson plan or not before... maybe you are quite familiar with this class, so you do not need to do the lesson plan. if you had a lesson plan, what kind of situation would make you change...?

(Show me her lesson plan)

H: I don't have to do a lot of written work on lesson plans... so here is the dry board, and I make some change to them... so it's... I will put them, inside here (the plastic bag) and the kids can write the answer with markers... and then erase... I do dry boards, but I changed my mind and decided to do it.

M: so that you can reuse them.

H: yeah. And then they are done, well, I don't think we will have time for that because we are going to have a tornado drill... and they will find a partner and they will have those facts games to do, like addition facts, subtraction facts and multiple facts.

5. My question in mind: what if some students are not involved? What would you do to engage them?

She maintains that necessary practice and scaffolding are indispensable because once a student gets absent minded, it is usually because that they don't understand. Tools as well as opportunities are of the same importance with practice and scaffolding.

**Recording transcript:**

M: so, are your students familiar with the... oh, you've already told me that they know subtraction and addition before they learn them...

H: yes, they've spent a week on addition, and then we have been doing, since last week, some subtraction and that includes subtraction... with regrouping and subtraction hmm... with...

M: carrying?

H: with carrying... that... so they are familiar with that, they are comfortable with that... what I am going to do is, at the end of the lesson, I will hand back some of their papers they have done on subtraction and have them checked their work with addition.

M; So what kind of problems did you prepare for them to do during the previous class? was it Triangle stuff? (she did mention to me that her materials all come from sunshine math)

M: what would you do if some students, well, they show some kind of, like, probably I am not confident whether they can learn it or those who are totally not interested in math, what would you do to arouse their interests?

H: well, I think a lot of it is just giving them or thoughts about developmental level...so if they checked it out, it's usually because they don't understand...

M: they don't understand...

H: and so by giving them, you know, tools and scaffolding, opportunities to succeed that really prevents a lot of engagement problem...we will do the whole group...and those bigger numbers...I will give...calculators out...if people, they are struggling and I will give them calculators to help them to keep up with the class...and that is one way to coordinate and keep them...in class.

M: what if your students show the signs of misunderstandings? Or have your students ever showed signs of misunderstandings during the previous class? what did you do to clarify the confusions?

6. My question in mind: How would you mange the conversation between students?

Instant redirection and appropriate guiding were often used by Ms. H to avoid off the track conversation between students. Severe reprimand usually will not happen a lot in Ms. H's classroom.

#### **Recording transcript:**

M: how are you going to manage the conversations between students? I mean once you start the conversation in class, for example, you are going to do the new topic today, during the class, I mean, probably you will let students have discussion

About certain topic, how would you manage the conversation between students? What if they talk off the track, you know? They are talking about something that is not related to the class. How would you do?

H: usually a quick redirection...tell me about this...you know...I don't ever get on the students for that...I always just...you know...ok, turn your conversation back on math...

M: so, you are guiding them...most of the time, you are guiding them...

H: yeah.

M: What kind of materials will you use for this class?

#### **Part two: Classroom observation**

➤ Facts (what happened in the class)

Ms. H's class has 20 students in total. There are three Asians, two African-Americans, one autism boy and 14 white students. The classroom is full of different posters, tags, pictures, books and necessary stationeries. The colorful curtains make the whole room more like a welcoming play home rather than a serious classroom (according to Ms. H, it cost her about \$3000 to decorate the classroom). Tables and

chairs were arranged by rows and students have their own fixed spots, however, Ms. H allows free walking during the class and students are not chained to their desk all the time. A large screen is in front of the classroom and with the help of the projector, Ms. H is able to model her *think aloud* for students. When students saw me, they were quite accustomed with this situation and there is no obvious mood shift about the stranger.

**Tool reference:**

1. Classroom atmosphere-classroom arrangement
2. Use of technology and materials
3. Teacher model learning, provide scaffolding (Bransford, P.66)

Before the class began, students were working on their own things, for example, reading the fictions, (I noticed one girl was reading the *Dork Diary* series which are my favorite!), write their answers to the questions Ms. H posted on white board, chatting about their lives and sharpened their pencils. The atmosphere is free and relaxed. Although Ms. H has announced that they need to solve their *morning work*, it seems students were quite enjoying talking with each other about their interesting things.

\*\*\*\*\*

Finally, Ms. H stepped ahead and firstly, she reviewed the morning exercise for all students quickly and then she displayed a paper with money and clock on it.

*T: ok, the money problem! Did you guys do money in second grade?*

*S: (together) yes...*

*T: ok, a lot of problems with money yesterday.*

**Tool reference:** teacher uses prior knowledge, expertise, and talents of students (Bransford, p.68)

\*\*\*\*\*

Ms. H asked one student how much money is one quarter and she waited for 8 seconds. (sufficient waiting time) Subsequently, Ms. H demonstrated the price for a nickel and penny before she finally added up all the numbers. When lecturing about the definition of quarter in a clock, Ms. H related the conception of quarter to the money.

Tool reference: use of abstract representations, metaphors, analogies  
(Bransford,p.53)

*T: A quarter is one fourth, if you think of it as this way, it will make sense. How many quarters are in a dollar?*

*S: Four.*

*T: Four! So, when I am dividing something into quarters, I am dividing it into four parts.*

\*\*\*\*\*

*T: you can give them 42 pennies, but nobody wants 42 pennies.*

*S1: what's the least...*

*T: the least number of coins. You can draw pictures of coins...*

**Plunge the tool:** the conversation above appeared when Ms. H's students were solving the *Problem of the Day*. Ms. H encouraged her students to draw pictures if they found it difficult to solve the problem. This indicates the teacher encourages students to choose, adapt, and invent tools for problem solving.

\*\*\*\*\*

*S2: like how many coins are using?*

*T: yes, how many coins do you have to use to make 42 cents.*

*S2: You gave two quarters and then you...take back...*

*T: No.*

(While students are working on their own, Ms. H went around the classroom and provided guidance for students.)

*T: some of you may get this very easily, if you do, then it will be a great opportunity for you to try to write your explanation in words about why you did it this way.*

**Plunge the tool:** this provided evidentiary support for Ms. H's effective feedback as well as scaffolding. She responded immediately when she found students had misunderstandings about the problem. In addition, she provided differentiated scaffoldings when students were working on the problems. Also, Ms. H reiterated the question many times which shows that she put much emphasis on the clarity.

\*\*\*\*\*

When I noticed there is an African American boy sitting alone in front of the classroom computer with headset on, Ms. H told me that it was because this task is too advanced for him, so instead of letting him feel frustrated in the class with others,

she chose to pull out that particular student and gave him some other simpler work to do.

**Plunge the tool:** the differentiation strategy shows Ms. H recognizes the individual difference and adjust her strategies according to varied needs of her students. So she differentiated assignments/expectations toward different students.

\*\*\*\*\*

*S3: (walked to the teacher and gave her his math journal)*

*T: can you write about it? How did you get the answer? Try a sentence, and see if you can make a sentence.*

Tool reference: teacher asks students for evidence and encouraging specificity (Allen and Blythe, P.100-116)

Teacher gives feedback (Bransford, p.59)

\*\*\*\*\*

*T: ok, now turn and talk! Wait, who is still working? (Some students raised their hands) ok, we will hang on more minutes.*

*T: remember to use the least number of coins...you have to use a quarter in your answer.*

**Plunge the tool:** waiting time is always a issue which teachers overlook easily, however, Ms. H gave enough time for every student in order to guarantee that no one is left behind in her class. When students were doing turn and talk, Ms. H went to them and gave suggestions as necessary. There were no off the track talk between students and everyone was engaged.

\*\*\*\*\*

(Ms. H let three students to go to the front and demonstrated their *think aloud* to the whole class. She especially praised the last girl for the strategies she used.)

*S1: Ok, I did a quarter, a dime, a nickel, two pennies...I need 42 cents to buy an apple...*

*S2: well, you have your p backwards!*

*S1: ah...ah...*

*(S1 and S2 both watched Ms. H)*

*T: It's ok.*

Tool reference: teacher allows student mistakes (Bransford, P, 145)

S1 moved on explaining.

*T: That is great, I love the way he used numbers to show his work. Anyone else?*

*S3: ok, first I figured out where is the closet coin I get that is not over the amount...*

*T: wait, I love the way she started like that! Because that is really the key to this problem,*

*I have to find what is the biggest coin I can use. What is the coin that amount to the most.*

Tool reference: Bloom's Taxonomy of Questions-analysis-understand the parts of a whole classify, compare, contrast, outline, sequence, deduce.

S3 continued.

*T: very nice, I love the way you think about it. Everyone should learn to show us the way you think instead of just giving a right answer.*

Tool reference: teacher monitors and gives feedback (Bransford, p.59)

**Plunge the tool:** the demonstration section shows that Ms. H recognized individual's contribution to the group and she gave lot of encouragement. In addition, letting students to think aloud in front of the whole class indicated that she was trying to use reciprocal teaching.

\*\*\*\*\*

Ms. H passed the Baggies with paper to students and at the same time, she let the student who was pulled out go back to the whole class. Ms. H allowed this student to sit right next to her on the carpet. This plastic baggie distribution took about 6-7 minutes and the classroom was somehow noisy and messy because all students were walking and talking.

Tool reference: use of materials, technology

*T: Ok! Some of you have already figured out that we are going to do. The fact families! They should be very easy for a second grade, so we will do it a little bit harder. We will start with an easy one, write this down.*

*S1: we write on the bag.*

*T: you write on the bag, exactly.*

*T: remember that when you use these numbers, you can only use these numbers, if you get a number that is not on the triangle, it doesn't work.*

Tool reference: tasks-degree of difficulty, interest, utility, value (Bransford,

P.61)

\*\*\*\*\*

*T: when we were doing fact family, we often used smaller numbers, we can use fact family even with our big, three digits numbers.*

*T: which two of these numbers we add together?*

*S: (no response)*

*T: ok, if we do 250 and 350, are we going get 100?*

*S: No...*

*T: so, that's not right, is it? So, 250 plus what?*

*S: 100*

*T: 250 plus 100 equals 350. What's another additional problem?*

*S: (whispering)*

*T: so, 100 plus 250 equals?*

*S: 350.*

*T: what is the subtraction problem?*

*S: 350 minus 100 equals 250.*

*T: yes. Then what is the other one?*

Tool reference: teacher asks reflective questions: clarifying, probing, linking (Lee & Barenett, p. 59) and (Allen and Blythe, p.66)

\*\*\*\*\*

*T: Ok, we are going to use these fact families to check some of your work you have been doing on subtraction over the last couple of days. So I am going to choose some of your papers and we are going to check. I am not going to tell you who it is. Let's try this, this is the problem on your workbook 634-288 and he said the answer was 466.*

Tool reference: Teacher allows and explores student mistakes (Bransford, p.145)

*S1: you heard that? She said it's a he...*

*T: yeah, it's a boy. So what is the additional problem with this?*

*S2: Whose paper it this?*

*T: (ignore the question, keep working on the problem)*

Tool reference: teacher structures conversation-managing wandering conversation (Allen & Blythe p.100-116)

Ms. H modeled the problem to the whole class by checking whether adding 288 plus 466 equals 624.

(Noticing there were some students were not looking at the screen)

*T: I want everybody to be working with me, so get your board erased...there is no reason for your board to be huge mess...Now, go try 346 plus 288 and check if that is equal to 634.*

**Plunge the tool:** once Ms. H found someone was not following her, she stopped to make sure her students were focused and this shows Ms. H kept monitoring students' learning process carefully. Ms. H then took some more papers of other students who made mistakes and let students figure out the right answer using fact family. This correcting exercise lasted until the end of this class. This process fully demonstrated that Ms. H was scaffolding her students about the questions emerged in their papers. However, students always worried more about the person being put on the spot. At this point, Ms. H refused to tell the names because she wants to avoid frustration of those students.

\*\*\*\*\*

There was an accident happened in the middle of the class, one of Ms. H's students was caught wandering outside and then the student was brought back by school staff. Ms. H had to make phone calls right in the middle of the class and the whole class was a little bit out of Ms. H's control for a short period of time.

Throughout the whole class, Ms. H monitored closely whether her students were catching up with her. She switched between the whole class working and small group/individual working based upon different need of various tasks. She modeled a lot for her students before they went on doing their own problems. Patience and care for those less-developed students can be seen everywhere. Apart from all these, she encouraged her students to think aloud as much as possible which definitely would be useful for teachers to analyze the thinking process of students as well as help students build self-regulation abilities.

### **Part three: Post-class interview with the teacher**

1. My question in mind: what do you feel about this class?

Ms. H claimed that this was such a bad class and everything went wrong. This was the most worst lesson she have ever had and there were lots of stuff going on during the class.

### **Recording transcript:**

*M: nice lesson! I enjoyed it very much! So, can you tell me about your opinion about this class?*

*H: Ob, it was a disaster! Everything went wrong, students were not engaged and the class was messy and they did not understand what I was talking about.*

*M: really? But I saw most of them got the right answers about addition and subtraction.*

*H: yeah, they did understand the basic addition and subtraction, but they are just...they don't understand...especially when we talked about *the triangle fact* (yes, professor, I did mention this triangle thing ahead, but not very clearly. Please check page 10) families, you know? They just don't get it... they don't know how to find a missing number.*

*M: oh! You mean during the correction section? Yeah, I kind of noticed that.*

*H: yes, when it was smaller number, they can get the answer easily, but once it comes to the larger ones, they just get lost.*

2. My questions in mind: so did you make any modifications?

I can tell that Ms. H did not finish the lesson as the plan goes, but I cannot tell what kind of modifications she has made during the class.

#### **Recording transcript:**

*M: so, this class did not go as planned? Right?*

*H: yes, it was such a mess. Well, what I am going to do is... go back to it tomorrow and start with the fact family they have already known about... according to the common core, this class is very new to students, you know, we have to adjust our original lesson plans to fit into the common core. So, you know, it takes time. It took me so much time explaining to them the relationship between addition and subtraction, and I did not even have time to do the fast fact family activity. You know, they will find a partner to do that.*

*M: yeah, definitely, I know common core and students do need more time to digest.*

3. Have you noticed any significant situations among your students? What are the reasons?

According to my observation, Ms. H's class was a little bit going wild at certain times.

In my point of view, the phone call Ms. H made during the class and the over freely walking and talking both lead to the minor chaos happened in the class.

#### **Recording transcript:**

*M: did you noticed some moments during your class that students were a little bit uncontrolled?*

*H: definitely, I know...probably it was because of the tornado drill before the class, you know?*

*M: oh, yes, I think so, too*

*H: and, one more thing is that...probably...because of the plastic bags.*

*M: that's so true and I noticed the girl who was sitting right next to me, she was so focused on her bags, you know.*

*H: yes, that is the problem, I mean they will get mess anyway...markers can always be big trouble... why do they have to care? You know the girls, they kind of think "oh! My desk! My book! They are so dirty!" so all these made them distracted. And, also you know the boy?*

*M: hmm?*

*H: he was found wandering around the school and I had to make phone calls in the middle of the class. And even I was distracted!*

4. Have your students meet the goal of this class?

In my point of view, Ms. H's students meet the standard of understanding addition and subtraction. After all, the majority of them know how to regroup as well as carrying when they work on the numbers within 1000 because some problems Ms.H has assigned for her students were very big three-digits numbers, and most of her students can get the answers right. However, just as Ms. H said, the relationship between addition and subtraction made students feel confused because they have big problems as to figure out the missing number.

#### **Recording transcript:**

*M: well, basically, your students meet the standards about addition and subtraction, the problem lies within the relationship.*

*H: right, and I will try to go back to the easy ones again tomorrow and gradually, you know, let them understand the theory behind those tricky ones.*

*M: yes, it seems that they cannot think backwards.*

*H: definitely.*

*M: I don't know whether I define think backwards exactly as what you wanted to say...so, what is your definition of thinking backwards?*

*M: well, take your time and I think you are really an excellent teacher and you really care about your students. Thank you for your time.*

*H: thank you.*

#### **Part four: Student interview after class**

After the class, on my way back to the building with Ms. H, she pulled out Lily from art class and Ms. H left for a meeting while Lily and I had a short conversation about herself as well as the class.

1. My question in mind: do you like the lesson? How?

The answer was a little bit beyond my expectation because Lily told me that she really does not like math. I made my judgment based upon my observation about Lily: she was one of the most positive students who always walked up to the teacher and seek for feedback. So I thought instinctively Lily would be very much into math. In addition, according to Ms. H, Lily was once promised by the school to be put into a gifted class while finally she did not get into it. This made Lily feel very depressed for a long time because she expected too much from herself and once she was rejected, she felt that she was treated unfairly. This is also the reason why Ms. H chose Lily for me to interview because Ms. H wanted to let Lily feel different when compared with others. Students always are competing with each other for teacher's attention within or out of the class.

(PS: I need to explain here, professor. The way Ms.H told me Lily was a very smart student is actually trying to indicate that she actually is a normal student. She expected a lot from herself)

#### **Recording transcript:**

M: nice to meet you, *Lily!* I am so glad you can squeeze some time for me to interview you and...I really appreciate it. Please do not feel fidgeting or nervous about this interview, it's just a very small game and it's used for my personal research and no grades will be imposed on you, all right?

L: oh (smile)... ok...

M: just feel relaxed and we will have fun! Ok? Do you mind if I record our conversation? I promise you I will upload it onto YOUTUBE! (winking)

(Sorry, I did not know. I just record the voice, not videotaping and Ms.H said yes when I asked of the permission. The reason of saying the YOUTUBE thing was trying to joke with her in order to make her relaxed. I will be careful next time, thank you, Sir)

L: ok...(laugh)

M: so, tell me how do you feel about this lesson you just finished?

L: hmm...well, (smile)...I don't like math that much, I really don't like math a lot...I mean...I don't care about math...hmm...it's not something I like to do...

M: oh, I did not know that! But I saw you... from the class that you got most of the answers right...

L: yeah...

M: I mean, you can do problems right, but, you...personally speaking, you do not like math?

*L: hmm...*

*M: just a secret, I do not like math, neither (winking)...*

*L: (smile)I mean, it's so hard to get what they are saying...*

*M: hmm...*

*L: the **most hard** part is... the regrouping in subtraction...it's so hard...*

*M: so hard?*

*L: yes...*

2. My question in mind: what do you think of the significance of this lesson? Have you learned it before?

Since Ms. H told me that her students have already been familiar with addition and subtraction and they had little problems **with addition & subtraction separately**.

Based upon what Lily told me, it seems that the problem occurs when she was trying to figure out how to do them and once she got the hint, she can solve the problem easily. In addition, Lily is good at addition, but not at subtraction. This phenomenon stirred my interest because, in my point of view, subtraction is a way to think backward about addition. Lily has similar problem which was described by Ms. H.

#### **Recording transcript:**

*M: ok, got it...do you think this lesson has something to do with your experiences...or what you have learned before?*

*L: oh, yeah, I know a lot of add...and I think this is really easy...*

*M: all right...*

*L: but the subtraction...I...hmm...*

*M: oh, you found yourself have problems with subtraction?*

*L: yeah...*

*M: but, addition part is ok?*

*L: yeah!*

*M: ok... so before you learned the relationship between addition and subtraction, you've already kind of... get the point of what those two things are, right?*

*L: yes.*

*M: so just like, when you figure out how to do subtraction...is a little bit baffling you...*

*L: it's easy once I figure out how to do it...*

*M: ok...*

*L: but when...first...I don't know how to do it...It was like overwhelming...*

*M: overwhelming...*

*L: yes! I was trying to remember so many...*

*M: ok. I totally understand!*

\*\*\*\*\*

During the next session, I tested Lily about counting numbers as well as place value using different numbers. The result is interesting. She can count quite well by ones and twos both within smaller and large scale, however, problems occurred when she was asked to count by fives from big numbers like 980. On one hand, she probably misheard my question and she counted from 900; and on the other hand, disorders happened when she counted from 900 by fives which can be shown from the conversation below.

When I tested Lily about the place value which should be a very basic knowledge for a *gifted* third grader, she surprisingly disregarded all the other number clusters and only focused on the numbers that were being asked. Accordingly, she cannot get any bigger place value than thousands. While the fact is there were ten thousands, hundred thousands and millions.

#### **Recording transcript:**

*M: ok, well now, I have some specific questions about...hmm...numbers, addition or subtraction, I will ask you...just try your best to tell me how you think and I will not give my feedback about whether it's right or wrong, ok...Because as I said, it's just a little research about how you think...ok? Please do not worry about it at all.*

*L: (whisper) ok...*

*M: thank you! So, can you number from 100 for me? Start from 100 and then...*

*L: ok...100... wait...like by one's?*

*M: yeah.*

*L: ok (smile)... 100, 101, 102, 103, 104, 105, 106...*

*M: ok, stop, thank you! So, can you count from 900? By one's.*

*L: 900, 901, 902, 903, 904, 905, 906...*

*M: ok, thank you. What about count from 1000...*

*L: (smile)... 1000, 1001, 1002, 1003, 1004, 1005, 1006...*

*M: ok, thank you! Now can you count by two's for me?*

*L: 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, 14, 16, 18.*

M: ok, what about counting by two's from 900?

L: 902,904...906...908...

M: ok, what about counting by five's?

L: 5,10,15,20,25,30,35,40,45,50,55...

M: well, can you count by five's from 980?

L: (smile)...900...905...915...wait...yeah!

915,920...wait...yeah...920,925,930,940...945...950...960...wait! 955...960,965,970...

M: Ok, please stop here. Thank you! Now, I thought you have learned about place value, right?

L: yes.

M: so I got several numbers for you here, can you tell me... the first one...the place value of 4s here?

There are two 4s in here. (44)

L: hmm...tens... and ones...

M: hmm. So what about number 7 in this second one? (3, 752)

L: Eh...hundreds...

M: ok... what about five in this number? (579,427)

(The reason why I was letting her do the place value exercise is I want to figure out whether she can differentiate between digits within a number or not. If she had confusions about place value, then this would probably lead to further confusions about other basic math problems like addition & subtraction)

L: (10 seconds silence) hundreds...I am going to say?

M: hundreds?

L: yeah.

M: can you tell me how did you figure it out?

L: Eh...because I know this is...there is a comma here (point to the comma before 4)

M: hmm.

L: and...now I am not counting this whole number...you just counting this part (point to the 579 part)...so I know this is the last place that I have the hundreds (point to the 5)...it's place is right here, so that's how I...

M: so, hundreds?

L: yeah...

M: ok, what about the next one? Can you tell me the number 9 in this one?

(63,498,561)

L: the...tens...

M: tens?

L: yes!

M: well, let's look the last one, can you tell me the number 8 in this one? What place value does 8 have in this one? (8,946,754,365)

L: Eh... thousands...

M: thousands?...

L: yes.

M: ok, well, what is the number that has a place value of tens? What number stands for tens in this one?

L: (pointed to 6), this one?...

M: six?

L: yeah...

M: ok, thank you. You told me that you have learned about addition and you have little problem with it, right?

L: yeah.

M: ok, let's look at this one, not very hard. Let's imagine, I have six marshmallows and you have four, how many marshmallows do we have in total?

L: ten.

M: fine. Ok, how about, say, I buy 12 pencils and you have three more pencils than I have, how many pencils do we have in total?

L: (8 seconds silence). So, maybe 12 plus 3? Oh, like, 12 is not the number I have?...

M: so, which one do you think is correct? How many pencils do we have in total? I have 12 pencils, you have 3 more pencils than I have, how many in total, we have?

L: let me see...

M: you can write anything you want down here.

L: (whispered to herself and wrote 12 and then 15) so, we have 27...I think...in total?

M: no hurry, tell me your final answer.

L: I am gonna say...27.

M: 27?

L: 27.

M: Ok, so you plus 12 and 15?

L: *hmm.*

M: *you got 27.*

After these tests, then I let Lily do several more basic additions and subtractions with 2 digits numbers and she finished them quite well. Finally, before I went to the working sheets I prepared for Lily about subtraction/addition, I test a multiply problem. Same as she told me, she can do multiply by 2s, 0s and 5s and I was impressed by the way she solved 2 times 3 because she got the point of double.

**Recording transcript:**

M: *so, you do not know anything about multiply right now, I suppose.*

L: *well, I can do my 2s, and 1s and 0s...and some 5s, I cannot do all 5s.*

M: *ok, so you can do 2 times 3?*

L: *yeah, I do that one. Its...hmm...6*

M: *how did you solve that?*

L: *hmm...well, I know...2s is just like doubles...*

M: *ah...ha*

L: *Eh...and so, I know that they 3 plus 3 is 6...so, I am just having that same activity...so, instead of three there, I have two...because it's ...because it's representing three...because there is two threes...so, if you just take one of those 3 away, and you can still get 6 because it's just like the doubles...because the two's just representing three.*

M: *so... two is like doubles, and then you kind of transform 2 times 3 into like...3 plus 3, is that right? Is that how you think?*

L: *yes, that's how I do my 2s pretty much.*

M: *Ok.*

During the last part, I let Lily finished the three working sheets for me and in the first two parts, she did all the answers correct. However, when she was asked to do the *think aloud* about one of the addition problems for me, I found that her thinking process was somehow confusing and she needed my scaffolding to finish the whole process.

**Recording transcript:**

M: *Ok, now I have several interesting working sheets for you to do. First let's look at this one...about addition, can you do number 3, 7, 13, and 18 for me?*

L: *ok.*

(*Lily did all the answers right*)

M: well, can you do think aloud about this one for me?  $69+26$ .

L: well, hmm, I know that  $9$  plus  $6$  is  $15$ , but... because  $9$  is one less than  $6$ , I mean,  $10$ , so it's gonna be... I would be just one less than  $10$ , and  $9$  plus  $6$ ... and so it has to be  $16$ ... hmm...

(she got stuck and didn't know how to continue)

M: so, what is next? Once you get  $15$  from  $9$  and  $6$ , what comes next?

L: so... you have to carry and take it up here and it becomes  $7$ , and then... so, I know  $6$  plus  $2$  is  $8$ ! You get  $7$  plus  $2$  must be  $9$ ...

M: you kind of change  $8$  into  $9$ ?

L: yes!

M: so what is the final answer?

L:  $95$ .

M:  $95$ , ok.

\*\*\*\*\*

M: ok, here comes the last sheet, now I need you to figure out what is the missing number for these five problems. Can you do it?

L: (whisper) yes...

After she finished all the six missing number problems, I found one wrong answer. So I let her do the think aloud for me again about the wrong one so that I can clarify where her problem is. When Lily was doing her think aloud, I realized that she cannot think backwards effectively and her situation corresponded with what Ms. H told me during our post-class interview.

However, what interests me particularly is about why she could solve other five questions correctly while she cannot figure out the easiest one quickly. Then, after compare and contrast the six problems I have chosen for her to solve, Lily's problem seems obvious: once the missing number is the biggest one in the equation which means if the missing number is the minuend, she will be totally lost; however, if the missing number is not the biggest number, then she can get the answer correctly. One more point I want to make is that as Dr. Baum said, children do not get the meaning of *equal* thoroughly, which also means that they don't know the meaning of equation.

**Recording transcript:**

M: let's look at the last six questions. So, here you got one number missing in the equation, so you have to figure out the missing number.

L: ok..

M: can you think aloud this one for me?

L: well, I know that three plus one is four...

M: so, one minus three equals four?

L: no...

M: then what is the...hmm...what should be the number here? Which one minus three equals four?

(45 seconds silence, reflecting, she used fingers to help her)

M: what is the number that minus three equals four? You probably can try to think backwards?  
Which number minus three equals four?

L: I don't think there is one number that ...

M: you don't think there is one number fits in here? So, the missing number should be bigger than three, right?

L: hmm...

M: so..., you need to figure out...what is this big number minus three equals four.

(12 seconds silence, kept on working and then she wrote 7)

M: how did you figure that out?

L: well, then I looked back and I saw four plus three equals seven, then, so...I know this number must be seven...because...hmm... seven minus three equals four and then if it's four, I mean, seven minus four, it's three.

M: so, what if I put it this way...seven minus four...equals...?

L: three.

M: three? Right. Ok, so three plus four equals seven, right? Ok, then let's try the last one, number 17, it's very similar to the one we just solved. So, which one minus four equals nine?

(Five seconds silence)

L: (whisper) five...?

M: five? How did you get that?

L: well, that I know that five plus four equals nine. So, if it was five...minus...like...equals nine...and then it must be four...like...five minus four equals nine, and then it is five...

## **Part five: Summary**

I learned a lot from Ms.H in this observation. First of all, she is professional teacher who cares about her students whenever they need help. From the perspective of a math teacher, she is very strategic with ample experiences. For example, she can specify the problems existed among her students in a short period of time and quickly adjust her lesson plan according to the real situations. She knows exactly what she expected from her students and she was not satisfied with answers themselves which indicate she did not treat answers as the end itself. Instead, she addressed the application of mathematical vocabularies as well as thinking process. Her teaching reminds me of the “humility and courage” which Lakatos and Polya tale to be essential to doing mathematics. (Lampert, M., p59). Mathematics should never simply be rigid answers that allow very limited space for self-exploration. Instead, teachers should bear the responsibility to “change students’ ideas about what it means to know and do mathematics” (Lampet, M., p59)

In addition, I also learned some interesting things from the student I interviewed. She made me realize what I saw is not necessarily the truth I want to know. For example, based upon my observation during the class, I thought Lily would be very into math because she was so positive with her math working. Thus when I was told that she doesn’t enjoy math very much, I was a little bit surprised. Moreover, in my point of view, if she was confused about some relationship between addition and subtraction, then there must be somewhere that is going wrong and that’s the reason why I need to test place value back then. Although I am still not sure whether some of her confusions has something to do with the confusions about the prior knowledge, what I want to say is mathematics concepts are related with each other and we need to check out all the possibilities if problems emerge.

I benefited a lot from the tools Dr. Baum gave us because it provides a concrete and specific outline for me to check the dynamics within the classroom when I was doing the observation. As Dr. Baum once said, tool lists will make observation easier and more effective. Without the tool reference, it would cost me much more time trying to figure out a systematic way to judge Ms.H’s teaching. Analyzing a class requires a keen sense of what good teaching should be like outside the boundary of the specific subject as well as high level of professional proficiency toward the subject. I cannot say that I excel at both of them, however, Dr. Baum’s tool makes it possible for me to get the big idea of the common characteristics/features shared by good teachings.

## Artifact C

### TOEFL PRESENTATION

<p><b>Assessment Analysis</b></p> <p>Man Yang EDUC 2560 Dr. Lisa Pray Assessment of ELL</p>	<p><b>TOEFL</b> The Test of English as a foreign language By (Education &amp; Training Service) ETS</p>
<p><b>TOEFL</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ <b>Question 1: What is it?</b> “The TOEFL test is the most widely respected English-language test in the world, recognized by more than 8,500 colleges, universities and agencies in more than 130 countries, including Australia, Canada, the U.K. and the United States.” Test takers are all <b>non-native speakers</b>. A TOEFL score is valid for <b>two years</b> and then will no longer be officially reported</li></ul> <p>Resource: <a href="http://www.ets.org">www.ets.org</a></p>	<p><b>TOEFL-iBT</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ <b>Question 2: What is TOEFL iBT test?</b> ○ “The TOEFL iBT test measures your ability to use and understand English at the university level. And it evaluates how well you combine your listening, reading, speaking and writing skills to perform academic tasks.” ○ “There are two formats for the TOEFL® test. The format you take depends on the <b>location</b> of your test center. Most test takers take the TOEFL iBT test. Test centers that do not have Internet access offer the <b>Paper-based Test (PBT)</b>” ○ Resource: <a href="http://www.ets.org">www.ets.org</a></li></ul>
<p><b>TOEFL-iBT</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ <b>Question 3: whom dose it serve?</b><ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ 1. Students planning to study at a higher education institution</li><li>○ 2. English-language learning program admissions and exit</li><li>○ 3. Scholarship and certification candidates</li><li>○ 4. English-language learners who want to track their progress</li><li>○ 5. Students and workers applying for visas</li></ol></li></ul>	<p><b>Scoring</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ <b>iBT TOEFL</b><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ “The iBT version of the TOEFL test is scored on a scale of 0 to 120 points.</li><li>○ Each of the four sections (Reading, Listening, Speaking, and Writing) receives a scaled score from 0 to 30. The scaled scores from the four sections are added together to determine the total score.</li><li>○ Each speaking question is initially given a score of 0 to 4, and each writing question is initially given a score of 0 to 5. These scores are converted to scaled scores of 0 to 30.”</li><li>○ Score report is provided by ETS with detailed explanation.</li><li>○ From <a href="http://www.wikipedia.com">www.wikipedia.com</a></li></ul></li></ul>

## Score Acceptance

No PASS or FAIL on TOEFL.

"Most colleges use TOEFL scores as **only one** factor in their admission process. Each college or program within a college often has a minimum TOEFL score required. The minimum TOEFL iBT scores range from 61 (Bowling Green State University) to 100 (MIT/Columbia/Harvard)."

Peabody: 105?...

test taker can ask for reconsideration of the score if not satisfied. (not FREE & 3 months, Most: remain the same or even less. Occasionally: a little bit more.

[www.wikipedia.com](http://www.wikipedia.com)

## Reliability & Validity

Table 1.  
**Reliabilities and Standard Errors of Measurement**

Score	Scale	Reliability Estimate	SEM
Reading	0-30	0.85	3.35
Listening	0-30	0.85	3.20
Speaking	0-30	0.88	1.62
Writing	0-30	0.74	2.76
Total	0-120	0.94	5.64

## Take a look...

Dig into TOEFL

### Reading

1. Three long reading texts (topics vary)
  2. 11 questions per reading text
  3. Order of the question **corresponds** with the order of paragraphs within a text
  4. Student can edit/change their answers within time frame
- The topics covered by TOEFL reading test are various. For instance, science, math, physics, astrology, music, art, history, novel...
  - Multiple question types which include testing vocabulary, inference, context clues, comprehension for one paragraph, Cloze, comprehension as a whole...

## Testing Items

- I. Reading (1 hour, 30)
  - II. Listening (50 minutes, 30)
  - III. Speaking (20 minutes, 30)
  - IV. Writing (1 hour, 30)
- Note: there is very high possibility (99%) that students will get EXTRA testing section which is either reading or listening or occasionally, BOTH.

### Listening

1. Two long daily conversation
  2. Four academic lectures (5'/ L)
  3. Students need to take notes before they go to the questions
  4. No editing/ changing is allowed once you finish
- The conversation parts aim at testing students' abilities to function under daily lives. The settings include consulting, shopping, health problems...
  - Academic lectures test students' abilities to understand their academic classes under English speaking circumstances.
  - Lots of pressure about note taking. No editing/ changing

## **Speaking**

1. 6 questions in total
2. (1&2) personal statement for certain topics
3. (3&4) read short paragraphs within 45 seconds and listen to an academic lecture on the same topic. Answer the questions within 60 seconds without any assistance  
(preparation: 30 seconds)
4. (5&6) listen to a daily conversation or academic lectures and then answer questions within 60 seconds  
(preparation: 20 seconds)

- Testing not only speaking but also listening
- Topics vary, students need to do lots of note taking
- Time is limited which puts on more pressure on test takers
- No editing/changing

## **Writing**

1. Two writing tasks
2. 30 minutes for personal opinions about one topic  
(30 minutes; more than 300)
3. Read a text within 5 minutes and listen to a academic lecture on the same topic. write one article summarizing the main points made in the lecture and demonstrate in details about how the lecture disagrees with the text  
(20 minutes; 150-225)

- Testing writing and listening at the same time

- Students' abilities to summarize, persuade, prove viewpoints
- Time is limited, could edit/change

## **Analysis...**

Merits & Flaws  
TOEFL

## **Flaws**

- Extraordinary lengthy (almost 4 hrs)
- Testing environment (tester/testee)
- Possible negative test impact (McNamara)
- Psychologically demanding (note-taking)
- Sample testing software is not applicable for Mac users
- Expensive( around \$200)

## **Merits**

- Content Coverage
- Academically challenging
- Communication focused
- Authentic materials
- Integrate four skills

## **Explore TOEFL...**

Sample TOEFL testing

## Artifact D

### **ANALYSIS PROJECT FOR ASSESSMENT (PART I, II, III)**

#### **Part I**

##### **1. STUDENT/FAMILY INFORMATION**

Lola is a five-year-old girl who came from Argentina. She has two sisters and a younger brother who, according to what I have heard, have different levels learning disabilities. Before she arrived in the school where I did my practicum, she was in another private school where she firstly attended in last August. She started to attend this school on Oct, 24th, 2012 and right now she receives thirty minutes ELL instruction with a school assigned ELL teacher on a daily basis. Lola's first language is Spanish and according to her teacher, her L1 is not very strong. Lola's mother, according to the teacher, only speaks Spanish. Every time the teacher wants to convey some information about Lola to her mother, the teacher need to contact the school administrator so that she can have an interpreter to conduct a normal conversation. The teacher is really concerned about Lola's situation since her mother obviously cares very little about her study. During the school event like school supplies giveaway, Lola's mother never showed up to receive some necessary support from the school, which disappointed the teacher to a large extent. In addition, Lola's mother also holds very negative attitude toward communication with the teacher and school which can be shown by her refusal to let the teacher conduct parent interview. Lola can handle limited daily conversation with other classmates and she repeats her words often according to my observation. She could understand her teacher's instructions like where to go or what to do under social settings. However, in terms of academic setting, Lola was totally lagged behind. For instance, when I observed her using manipulative to define math concepts like more, less and equal, she was even unable to understand teacher's instruction. Lola has almost no prior knowledge of content areas like math and science. She was unable to tell the difference between colors as well as numbers during my small group teaching. In science class, her vocabularies are so little that she could only recognize words like dogs, cats and rabbits. What's worse, the information about her prior academic record is not available for the teacher and this makes it harder for the teacher to get enough information about the reasons for Lola's recent situations. Her low L1 and L2 levels were suspected largely related to her learning abilities according to her family health conditions.

According to the DIBELS record, Lola has made very limited progress in terms of reading abilities compared with other ELLs although the teacher has tried so hard to make her catch up with others. For instance, according to the results from the DIBELS test for all students, Lola is at the very bottom compared with other ELLs. Started from January, her teacher has been testing her letter sound fluency on a weekly basis and till now, her output still remains as 0. Same with her first sound fluency results. The results are very frustrating for the teacher because other students who may share similar situations with Lola have already made some progress. Right now, Lola's teacher is severely concerned about her need for special service treatment. Since the ELL office in the school has a remote possibility to allow the teacher ask for retention for Lola, it is urgent for her to get appropriate special services as early as possible. What is true about schools is that they always tend to assume that language problems can be solved naturally with the increasing grade level. However, the realistic situations would get worse if the student did not get appropriate help. In Lola's case, I have reasons to believe that she may have certain kind of learning disabilities, however the teacher cannot request special service for her until Lola was proven to be a proficient English learner.

## 2. SCHOOL/CLASSROOM SETTINGS

The class I observed is a kindergarten where there are twenty-five students in total and eight of them are identified as English Language learners. Among those eight ELLs, two of them are Chinese; three of them were from Argentina; two were from India and one was from an island below India. Personally speaking, I was very impressed by the classroom decoration and the teacher makes it visible that every student in her classroom is highly valued regardless of his/her nationality. Students were divided into small groups and those who share one table together will be assigned with a color for their table. For instance, each student has his/her own pencil box filled with necessary supplies like scissors, pencils and crayons. Students that are sitting around the same table will have same color scissors and their tables will be named after the color of that scissors. The teacher establishes some very organized classroom routines such as dismiss by tables, line up in colors and spot assigned on carpet. Students have plenty time to have chitchat with each other and the teacher also designed classroom interactive code for students. For kindergarteners, disciplines pose as a big issue because they are still learning how to interact with each other and how to follow directions. There is also a classroom library where the teacher stored many children

literatures like the cat in the hat and llama story series. Apart from English language readings, there are also some Spanish written books available in the library. Standards for each subject were posted on the walls together with calendar, word wall and other posters about letters. In sum, the physical arrangement of the classroom is very welcoming and resourceful for students.

The teacher has been teaching in metro public schools for more than nine years and she also holds a Ph. D degree education. The materials she uses are largely school required. She also takes full advantage of multimedia tools. Apart from school mandatory materials, she also uses many online working sheets. The instructions Lola's teacher applies mainly include hand-on activities, large amount of modeling, repetitive choral reading and musical enrichment methods that, in my perspectives, are very age and grade appropriate. As for the extra support for ELLs, during the station time, the teacher will pull out some students who may have similar reading levels and let them read books that match their reading levels in order to track their progress. The teacher put much more emphasis on practicing writing and reading. Students have their own math and writing journals to save their works.

## PART II

### STATE & DISTRICT REQUIREMENTS

According to federal requirements, there is an identification/placement process through which Lola will be identified and classified under Metro Nashville Public School (MNPS) system. First, for newly arrived student like Lola, the home language survey was required before she took TELPA test. Through working on her home language survey, Lola could be identified as either Non-English Language Background (NELB) student or Limited English Proficiency (LEP). After students have been classified as an English Language Learner (ELL) and if they happened to have test record to demonstrate their English Language Proficiency (ELP) in listening, speaking, reading and writing, then students could be put into the corresponding grade level in schools that their parents have right to choose. And if not, they are required to take the TELPA test. Based upon students' scores, they will be defined as Fluent English Proficient (FEP) or Limited English Proficiency (LEP) speaker. Metro Nashville Schools will provide Ell services for those students who were labeled as learners with Limited English Proficiency. Apart from TELPA, there are other standardized and norm-referenced assessments required by states or districts. English Language Development Assessment (ELDA) test takes place annually; Tennessee Comprehensive

Assessment Program (TCAP) test starts around spring in each year, along with a simplified version called ELSA that was designed for those struggling English Language Learners. Discovery Education Testing (DEA), a series of tests based on research studies that aim at preparing students for high stakes testing and predict scores on state tests is also included. However, DEA does not cover Kindergarten level since it won't start until the third or fourth grade. Among all the assessments I have talked above, TCAP/ELSA and DEA aim at testing students' academic achievement. Other standardized and norm-referenced tests were designed specifically for English language achievement. Based upon state achievement assessment like TCAP/ELSA, schools will figure out their Annual Measurable Achievement Objectives (AMAOs) in response to the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) policy.

There are three tiers for AMAOs: AMAO1 is for academic achievement; AMAO2 is for English proficiency specifically and AMAO3 is Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) for the subgroup. NCLB requires that schools that have failed to reach the anticipated outcomes will be taken over by the state. In terms of students' transition, AMAO3, which is a measurement for subgroups of T1 and T2 (first and second transitional year) students, mainly deals with the time frame for Ells to exit/transit from their current ESL program. Generally speaking, English language learners have to transit/exit from their current Ell programs within two consecutive years. For Tennessee, only ELDA test is relevant in terms of students' re-classification and teachers' suggestions, which should be treated more seriously, may probably be accepted or rejected in the committee.

#### LOLA'S CASE

For Lola's case, the 30 minutes' pull out ESL instruction on a daily basis is apparently not enough for Lola to get enough help with her content area learning although the teacher herself is also ESL certified. Besides the TELPA test before she was enrolled, the only standardized assessment that is available for her is the DIBELS. Her teacher uses DIBELS, which is a kind of norm-referenced assessment especially designed for testing students' basic early literacy skills, to measure and monitor her progress over a period of time. However, DIBELS only test student's early literacy skills without covering other domains such as writing or listening. In addition, TCAP is not mandatory for grade K-2, the responsibilities of measuring Lola's performances on math and science falls heavily on the teacher. In terms of reclassification, according to Gottlieb, documents like standard students portfolio should also used to decide student's reclassification besides standardized

assessment results (Gottlieb, 2006). However, public schools in Nashville fail to provide such kind of student portfolios. While the teacher had a plausible concern for Lola's learning ability, her intention to get Lola tested in order to transit to special education program was hindered by school's process of crossing out the possibility of Lola's limited English proficiency. In other words, Lola will not be retained because she is an English Language Learner (ELL). However, there is a high possibility that she will be retained during her first grade if she still was not able to get progress.

In conclusion, I do not think that Lola's needs were very well satisfied in her current school regarding the following aspects: first, no enough assessment to cover subject areas; second, potential possibility of being simply classified as a student with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) while she may need more assistance; third, not being provided with enough sheltered English instruction for other subject areas. Inappropriate assessment along with the insufficient targeted instruction will impact her learning in the near future. The Common Core State Standards may make Lola feel more disadvantaged with her limited English proficiency since she needs to deal with content area knowledge and language simultaneously. In addition, if her teacher's suspicion was turned out to be correct, then the misclassification would be very unhelpful.

#### NCLB ANALYSIS

The 1974 Lau Vs. Nicholas Supreme Court case decided that students who speak English as a second language should be provided more appropriate education. The No Child Left Behind Act holds states education agencies accountable for English language learners' academic and English achievement by requiring states to develop a set of high-stake assessments to measure students' yearly progress in language arts, mathematics and science. While I think the NCLB helps bring Ells education into conversation for schools (Echevarria, 2000), there are still negative issues in terms of the classification of students with limited English proficiency; validity of schools' yearly reporting; different states' baselines; and assessments specifically designed for English language learners (Abedi, 2002). To begin with, with regard to the classification of students with limited English proficiency, there are problems with certain criteria as how to identify a student's English language proficiency. It is widely accepted that the major two standards are (a) non-native speaker of English and (b) scoring low in standardized assessment (Abedi, 2004). For the first criterion, I mentioned above that home language survey should be used to gather necessary

information about the student's language history in order to get correctly identified. However, since parents largely chose not to tell the truth due to some sensitive issues and this compromise, to a large extent, the validity of the home language survey, not to mention those states that do not require it (Abedi, 2004). For Lola's case, she could be identified as a student with limited English proficiency, but at the same time she also may have certain learning disabilities that required to be treated differently. Secondly, because different states have different populations of English language learners, the validity for their yearly report may suffer. States that have larger amount of Ells may feel more burdened compared with those who do not. Based upon this situation, states will have different baselines that were required by NCLB and those states where Ells increase at a rapid speed have to spend more time and energy in order to reach certain level (Abedi, 2004). Thirdly, NCLB requires states to use state-defined assessments in order to keep track of their students' performances. However, some assessments may suit well for native speaker students while lack of reliability and validity with English language learners. Even though districts sometimes provide sheltered English classes in content areas for students with limited English proficiency, they may still not be able to get appropriate instructions. Not to mention, teachers could probably have inclinations to "teach to the test", thus reducing the implementation of creative lessons, project-based learning, and interdisciplinary units (Short & Boyson, 2012). It is also possible if teachers in sheltered classes choose to use "watering down" materials and not treat students grade appropriately because Ells were regarded as less developed (Herrera, 2007). The inappropriate instruction for Ells will certainly influence the classification. In conclusion, Ells' situations may be conceived overly idealistic by NCLB since students with limited English proficiency have to deal with more challenges other than content areas knowledge compared with their native speaker peers. In order to better serve English language learners, it is important to address classification, instruction and assessment all together.

### **Part III**

#### **ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY**

##### **1. TELPA**

I used TELPA to get a brief idea about Lola's English language proficiency. She took TELPA before she was firstly enrolled in a public school in Nashville in last August. TELPA is an abbreviation of Tennessee English Language Placement Assessment designed for new

immigrant students who just arrived in Tennessee and were about to enter into public school systems. According to my observation in ELD center, all the administrating process are strictly scripted which renders a way to avoid personal influences; recordings are used for listening part and the testing room is very quiet and comfortable. In terms of reliability, the recordings make it possible to avoid test administrators' possible accent problems that probably could lead to incorrect pronunciations for some testing items. What's more, the comfortable and quiet testing room also guarantees test's reliability. However, speaking of scoring process, although the manual for TELPA provides specific instructions as how to score each of the four parts, problems probably still occur. For instance, when I observed an Egypt boy being tested, the administrator was in charge of the scoring all by herself. This may cause reliability issues because as people, we cannot avoid the influence of prejudice when being put on a judger's position, not to mention that TELPA is not all about true or false, right or wrong testing items. A response may be interpreted distinctly different by different raters. So, by depending on one rater, we are under the risk of getting a fair just score. In terms of validity, since I cannot get access to any validity research report of TELPA, I will mainly talked about the face validity here. Generally speaking, TELPA measures what it is supposed to measure. Although there are minor problems with providing culturally unbiased testing items. I want to highlight Lola's case here because speaking of the predictive criterion-related validity, Lola's scores on TELPA can be reflected by her recent situations which means that TELPA predicts Lola's future performances to a large degree. I will talk about this finding in detail in the following paragraphs combining with two observation protocols I used. Lola got 18 points in the listening part (0-21pts); 8 points in the speaking part (0-8 pts); 0 point in the reading part (0-32 pts); 4 points in the writing part (0-20 pts), which made the total score of 32 points. She was identified as Non-Proficient and Metro Nashville Public School used Content Standards Instructional Placement to define her as on Intermediate level which means she has to get a minimum of one-hour ELL service everyday.

## 2. BICS/Vocabulary Knowledge Rating Scale

Lola doesn't have big problems in her listening part. The result also corresponds with her behaviors in the BICS checklist I used to test her basic interpersonal communication skill. Apart from my daily observation of her behaviors in class, I also designed several questions for me to get a clearer idea of Lola's basic interpersonal

communication skills. As described under the listening section she understands classroom routines; responds when asked to perform a nonverbal task and follow oral directions and so on. According to my observation notes I made in the class, Lola was able to handle simple listening tasks when her peers were discussing under social settings. She can also understand teacher's directions for daily routine. For example, when I asked her what is the first thing she would do every morning, she replied me with "put my folder at the table". However she was somehow confused when it comes to the academic field. For example, when I checked the meaning of inauguration, the word her teacher addressed many times, she got no clue at all. She is comfortable with groups speaking English under social settings. However she had difficulties using English under academic circumstances. When being asked about the story the teacher read several minutes ago, she could only remembered fragmented words instead of being able to retell the story using simple sentences. As for the reading, what she captures most are the pictures and due to her very limited vocabularies, she could hardly catch up with others in recognizing sight words. In terms of writing, Lola's problems are even more prominent. I will discuss her English language proficiency in depth in the following paragraphs. Lola's speaking is very strong. She is really active during the class and when I interviewed her about her family members, she can clearly state her family situation by using words like bigger, younger and older. Although being really struggled with remembering the class contents, she was able to recall some information correctly by proper prompts. For instance, when I asked her the meaning of hibernation, the word her teacher has been talking for two weeks, she cannot tell the exact meaning of it, but she can relate things like "animal need to get warm, they need to get asleep during winter" when I reminded her of the animal need sleep. She helps her peers when she thought they were wrong, and during my mini lesson, she was comfortable with answering my questions even though sometimes, she just said "sorry, I don't know". The most struggling part for her is the reading part. In the TELPA test for reading section, words like bird, mouse and bug are very basic vocabulary that students in kindergarten need to learn. Due to her lack of enough academic vocabularies, her comprehension for content areas were also largely lagged or misled. For instance, when I asked her can a frog be called as an insect, she replied me with "no, because it is green". Lola has very limited vocabulary even though she has been in school for a long time. In my Vocabulary Knowledge Rating Scale checklist (9 words in total) I gave to her, she got 0 which can be categorized as "know it well"; and she got five words as "have heard

or seen it” without correct explanations. She has no idea when her birthday is, not a clue on the months and even doesn’t know the meaning of “what day is it today?” even though their morning routine covers calendar. She cannot recall the math class content unless I made it very explicit to her and neither can she read certain amount of academic words. For instance, in my vocabulary checklist, she didn’t know words like insect, more, less and inauguration that the whole class has been working on since the beginning of this January. During the language art class, when the teacher leads the whole class to read along with PALS (Peer Assisted Learning Strategy), Lola remains silent always because she was not familiar with the sight words shown on the screen. This phenomenon can also be linked with her zero output in DIBELS test. For example, she cannot identify the word thought even though this word has shown up many times in her class; she cannot explain calendar very clearly; she had difficulty understanding the word insect although they have started the animal unit around January. The second most struggling section for Lola is the writing part. I can imagine that Lola has no difficulty connecting those dots on the page 27 in TELPA test, however when it comes to write her name, date or words, she would be totally lost. This can be proven when I asked her to sound out the sentence “I have a young brother” for me. Her teacher has spent a lot of time training them to sound out words without caring too much about the spellings. In my language art mini lesson the other day, she cannot sound out the word fish even with the help of an alphabet chart. She is not able to write letters nor is she able to write numbers correctly. Other ELL students at least can write backward numbers like 9 or 3. For Lola, however, she still needs more time practicing basic skills like how to recognize very simple numbers and words. During my math mini lesson, when I let her count my five fingers, she kept saying that there were four fingers although she counted them as five. In her journal book, she did a lot of drawing instead of writing, however, she was supposed to do labels and write very simple sentences.

### 3. My reflection

Based upon my observation and analysis of Lola’s performances, I would say that she would fit more into the intermediate minus level based upon the description of Tennessee English Proficiency Levels. Lola can understand conversation under informal settings and she is familiar with school routine because she has been immersed under this situation for a long time. However, when it comes to the academics, she cannot reach the criteria. For math class, she is still confusing about meanings of very basic concepts although

the teacher repeats many times a day, also she cannot write numbers correctly and for language art class, she has difficulty sounding words out like other students. What's worse, she only gets about thirty minutes' extra help from her ELL teacher which is obviously not sufficient and her parents apparently care very little about her study in school. Together with her teacher's suspicion of Lola's learning disabilities, her situation is becoming very complicated.

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Artifact E

Observation & interview  
Exploration & experience & investigation

Man Yang  
Practicum for Foundations of Teaching English Language Learners  
Dr. Mary Elizabeth Wilson-Patton  
December 8, 2011

## Abstract

This is my synthesis about the practicum which is related to the foundation of teaching English language learners. The whole practicum synthesis consists of four parts which include the interview with the principal or other key players in Nashville State Community College; the seminar which aims at exploring legal issues of English Language Learners (ELL) in the United States; the class observation for English learners in two assigned school and a road trip to the immigrant community served by the school.

## Part I

### Nashville Community College

Bumping my way towards Nashville State Community College on September 6th, my heart was full of excitement. Half of an hour's interview with the coordinators there was really a pleasant experience for me. Schools like NSCC offer many resources which could be used to reflect what I have learnt from the books. I have drawn a general image of NSCC after the interview and found several amazing thesis which derives from the materials I have read.

#### **What are they**

Nashville State Community College aims at helping those who need advancement with their English abilities and those who want to take general education classes in order to further their study by getting a college level education. The southeast campus was built in 2005 and from that time on it has grown drastically as the numbers of the refugees and immigrants settled in this area has enlarged to a large extent.

NSCC provide five levels of ESL courses which are similar to what most colleges have, however they are not the intensive courses type. In addition, students are totally free with their schedule arrangements and course selections. Classes are not teacher-centered, according to the coordinators. On the contrary, teachers will create many activities for students to get fully involved in classes because every student is different--each has his or her own background and thinking system. This kind of teaching philosophy is not strange to ELL teachers no matter what kind of circumstances the ELL teachers are under. Whether you teach immigrants, refugees, or international students, it is important to remember that learners are individuals, bringing with them their own particular life experiences, cultural and personal values and beliefs about the importance of learning English (Murray, 2000).

Teachers cannot assume that students are all aware of what they are learning under a totally different situation, so they need to know their students at first.

Exit exams of ESL courses don't exist in NSCC due to the legal regulations that they cannot test one group without testing all groups. So as long as students can finish the classes which are listed in the curriculum, most of them are believed by the teachers to be able to handle the basic language problems in their daily life or further their study in the college (C. Mathews, personal communications, 2011).

### **Whom do they serve**

Students in NSCC come from diverse backgrounds and have multi-cultural origins. According to the information coordinators provided us, the top three enrolled groups belong to Egypt, Iraq and Somalia. Generally, speaking, students in NSCC come from all over the world. When students are enrolled, school officials assume that they are all literate in their first language and sometimes this assumption turns out to be unrealistic.

Students are stratified by the Michigan Plus Test at the beginning; however, this is not a frigid classification and students choose classes according to their own purposes. ELL programs of NSCC are mostly integrated into the community colleges system, accordingly 80% to 90% of their students can get financial aid which comes mainly from the funding support. This is largely different from other programs whose funding origin only derives mainly from students' tuitions. Funding is very essential for community colleges like NSCC which aims at providing help to those immigrants and refugees who need to make a living here in the USA. "The availability of grant money and student financial aid restrictions can play a role in determining the structure and...ESL programs such as the one at NSCC as well as the policies that guide them "(Blumenthal,2002,p.51). Without money, schools cannot provide enough assistance for so many immigrants and refugees.

## **What staff do they need**

As for the teacher employment, NSCC prefers those who have got master degrees as well as significant teaching experiences with related populations. Many teachers they hire have the TESOL certifications, and they only have one part-time non-native English speaking (NNES) teacher due to some concerns that non-native English teacher may not achieve results that are as good as their NNES teachers. However, they can be accepted if they show native-like proficiency. Considering that students may hardly practice speaking English when they are not in the classes, employers want to assure that students can have the best model and instructors during their classes.

## **Challenges they may face**

One issue which is always the concern of the administrators who are in charge of so many students with multi-cultural backgrounds is the tensions between different ethnic groups. According to coordinators' observation, the majority of students come here for the same purpose which is to live better and own a better life for their families, so, instead of fighting against each other like most of their domestic peers do, they learn to respect each other. Even rivals like Christians and Muslims can get along with each other in the school. Occasional tensions only happen with those who have just arrived here because the new circumstances are a little bit strange to the newcomers.

Another problem which raises the coordinators' concern is the capacity of the ESL classes. The administrator said that their classes are often overloaded because of the increased demands from the new arrivals. Sometimes, applicants get their home countries' high school diplomas, nevertheless, their home diplomas are barely effective for them to study generation classes like literacy, math or science without taking ESL courses. More and more people want to enroll at NSCC and subsequently, the sizes of classes increase to a large

extent. This situation may have a negative impact on the in-class teaching efficiency in that the larger the class capacity, the less attention the teachers can give to each student (Corson, 2001). It is difficult for teachers to advance the teaching effectiveness with overloaded class size.

## **Conclusion**

NSCC is an example of community college which has many multi-backgrounds students, and because NSCC has many students from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, it has addressed the importance of English. ELLS in NSCC are equally treated without discrimination against them. Considering the fact that ELL teachers carry the responsibility to provide good models to students, NSCC is prudent with the selections of the instructors. Students' diversity is affirmed (Nieto, 2003) in NSCC as can be seen from the courses designing. Little tensions that happen between students are due mostly to the students awareness of the purposes for why they come here.

## **Part II**

### **Legal issues relating to English Language Learners**

Laws are effective methods to regulate different aspects of the whole society and these include economics, education and politics. Laws reflect the interest of the dominant groups no matter what kind of political backgrounds. Accordingly, the lawmakers' attitudes toward ELL students often decide how they will be treated by the educational system. American legal history has witnessed several ups and downs toward ELLs, and up till now, some very important issues are still under heated discussion.

Bilingual education is partly adopted by some schools and various programs which aim at assisting immigrant students to learn English were created however, the outcomes are controversial. The purpose of this article is to analyze the influences brought by different

laws, policies and regulations regarding bilingual education and then probe deeply into the real situation which those ELLs are now under.

### **Brief scan of the laws and rulings**

There are a number of state federal laws and judicial rulings which govern schools in Nashville and Tennessee with respect to English learners. For instance, *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954 ruled that “separate educational facilities are inherently unequal”(panel discussion, 2011). Then in 1964, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act prohibited discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin in programs receiving federal financial assistance. Next came the Equal Education Opportunities Act which constitutionally guaranteed equal educational opportunities and this was implemented by the Tennessee State Board of Education in its Anti-Discrimination Policies and Practices part. Then, in 1968 the Bilingual Education Act which was also known as the Title VII of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, authorized resources to support education programs for ELLs which including training teachers and parental support. Subsequently, *Lau v.Nichols* in 1974 ruled that “Teachers must modify instruction and assessment to make content area curriculum accessible to ESL students” (Tennessee State Board of Education, ESL Program Policy 3.207, P.2). Next, we came to the *Casteneda v. Pickard* in 1981, in this case, the U.S court of Appeals ruled that programs serving ELLs must be based on sound educational theory, implemented effectively with adequate resources and personnel, and must be evaluated as effective in overcoming language handicaps (hand-outs of legal seminar, 2011). Then, in 1982 *Plyler v. Doe* “prohibited school districts from denying undocumented immigrant children a free public education and rejected the denial or exclusion of educational services for immigrant children due to financial burden” (Tennessee State Board of Education, ESL Program Policy 3.207, P1). Finally, in 2002, No Child Left Behind ruled

that“...an ELL may take up to five years and a summer to receive a regular diploma and still be counted in a school’s or district’s graduation rate for accountability purposes under the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001” (Tennessee State Board of Education, ESL Program Policy 3.207, P.3).

### **Major issues**

Major issues like curriculum, teaching staff, assessments and integration are often the concern of ELL education, and these hotspots can be witnessed in several State and Federal legal cases.

Federal cases like *Brown v. Board of Education* made segregation a violation of the Equal Protection Clause of the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. Then *Castaneda v. Pickard* ruled that programs serving ELLs must be based on...with adequate resources and personnel (Peter Roos, personal communication, September 28, 2011). *NCLB (No Child Left Behind)* has a negative impact on bilingual education because it encourages instruction and assessment in English and there are less funding for teaching, teacher training, research and support services. (M.E. Wilson-Patton, personal communication, October 5, 2011).

Apart from federal rules, several states also established their own rules about the curriculum, staffing and assessments of ELL students. For example state cases like Proposition 227[California] required that all public school instruction be conducted in English and provide initial short-term placement, not normally exceeding one year, in intensive sheltered English immersion programs for children not fluent in English (Gandara et al, 2010). Arizona state policies ruled “...not only the SEI mandate but also a four-hour English block each day, to the exclusion of other subjects, and an arbitrary 2-year limit on enrollment in SEI programs” (Crawford, 1995).

In Tennessee, students who are at different levels have different curriculums which were designed for them. Elementary level students have to be tutored by endorsed ESL teachers while transitional ELL students maybe mainstreamed in regular classrooms with careful monitoring for two years and high school level shall use course code for all ESL course work, plus there are many alternatives of service delivery models which include pull-out programs and newcomer centers and so on. In addition, there is a regulation about the staffing ratios which regulates two criteria: “First, districts will provide adequate ESL faculty to implement the chosen services delivery model effectively...second, districts will adequately staff their ESL programs to meet federal compliance requirements” (Tennessee State Board of Education, ESL Program Policy 3.207, P.3).

### **Compare & Contrast**

Since *Lau* case was still applicable, there derive some other regulations which aims at helping those non-native English speakers with their study in USA. Metro Nashville Public School has also designed courses to fulfill this goal. They test new student at first to assess which level the student should be put into. Elementary classes in Metro are designed for newcomers and they will be equipped with ESL endorsed teachers together with content teachers. Metro provides self-contained classrooms for new students who come to the district for the first time, or have no English proficiency, prior schooling and native language literacy. During the time in self-contained classes, students will be taught in English but also with some of their

home language to help them learn the target language which is English and if they reach the benchmark after one year, they will be moved into ELD classes which aim at offering the content-area English (N.C. Guizani, personal communication, September 28, 2011)

This pedagogic method reminds me of both the *Laau* case in which equal treatment was called for those students who don't understand English and the newcomer center programming Garcia has mentioned in 2005. The newcomer center is designed for students with little to no English ability and limited formal education, and this programming provides 1-2 years of services before students get mainstreamed (M.E. Wilson-Patten personal communication, 2011). The model which Metro has taken looks very similar to the newcomer center programming.

### **My reflections**

It is still a long journey to reach the truly fair education. Since the beginning of twentieth century, the American justice and administration departments as well as State jurisdictions have helped advance the status of immigrant students although some backwards still can be witnessed during the time line. Judged from the discussion with the Metro Nashville Public School students Karla Vazquez and Jairo Robles (28<sup>th</sup> September, 2011), I can tell that recent situations of immigrant students are not as bad as before because many of them could graduate and get their diplomas successfully. However, as we all know, discrimination still exists in USA society. Amelia Post, the Youth Organizer of Tennessee Immigrant and Refugee Rights Coalition (TIRRC, 2011) told us that local people regard immigrant students as being different because of the immigration system. What she said leads me to ponder upon the origin of the discrimination towards the immigrant students in the USA. Sometimes the discrimination is rooted in the misunderstandings. Cultural diversity including language disparity in itself should play as a positive role in learning, while the reality turns out that this blessing has changed into curse for these immigrants.

On the other hand, from a teacher's perspective, I prefer bilingual education rather than monolingual education. Bilingualism was looked down upon by culturally dominant groups

because language sometimes is seen as a proxy of political power. However, according to recent research, bilingualism does help students learn better. Alejandro Portes and Ruben Rumbaut concluded that “students with limited bilingualism are far more likely to leave school than those fluent in both languages” (Nieto, 2010). In addition, some submersion programs such as “sink or swim” should be modified. It is more helpful to add home language assistance and transfer into the integrated classroom type instead of segregating immigrant students from their peers. It seems to make the immigrant students really “different” in the eyes of the native speakers if they are put into other different classrooms. Personally, I recommend the Push-in Programming model. Instead of pulling out the ELL students from their native English speaker peers, push-in programming aims at integrating students together with aids coming from both ESL and content teachers (Baker ,C. 2011).

To sum up, the legal process relating to ELLs in USA is fighting its road forward although the flaws are still witnessed in the legal system. More and more schools nowadays are aware of the importance of first language instruction considering the research findings that bilingual education does help students achieve better. Regardless of the political power relations behind the surface, officials and schools should hold students opinions and figure out the best way which may include the policies support and instruction assistance to help them survive in American society.

### Part III Classroom observation

Classrooms are the place where teachers have direct contact with students, thus a reliable and trustful classroom atmosphere can enhance the efficiency of students learning, on the contrary, if some students’ culture were disregarded in classroom, then it may have negative impact upon those students. So what kind of classrooms in reality can be defined as effective? After having observed two classrooms, some factors relating with classroom

atmosphere and teaching approaches are looming large at the horizon of successful classroom.

### **What I have observed**

Before the class started, students were talking with each other in their native languages. The classroom was decorated with world, American and Europe maps which I suppose aims at creating an atmosphere in which every culture is fully recognized and respected in Nashville State Community College. There are eleven students in the class who come from different districts all over the world and they are now under the stage between the lower advanced and intermediate advanced English levels.

Devora Manier, the instructor and who has got her master degree on ESL teaching and has been ranked as one of the top teachers in NSCC, greeted all students when she came in. The class which we observed was about adverb & adjective clauses, and the textbook called “Focus on Grammar- level four”.

Since it was a relatively complicated class content, Devora firstly introduced something familiar to the students before she moved onto the topic, then she told students the definitions of adverb and adjective clauses together with illustrations of examples. Different parts of the sentences were analyzed by teacher though some mistakes were made by the students, they could understand almost the whole contents of the class. Devora described the parts of clauses in a very detailed manner using words like subordinating conjunctions and relation pronouns, and she also asked the students to copy what she written on the board. In addition, what impressed me most was that when students raised a question about where they should use a comma, Devora used a vivid metaphor—children and adults—to illustrate it which made me feel it easy to digest the essence of problem. Devora also helped

students solve the complicated points in the exercises when the topic has been completely done.

After the class, we discussed with the teacher about whether they will teach content-area things to students in ESL classes, and the answer was no. NSCC provides specific subjects courses to help students with content area knowledge, while, in ESL classes, the focus remains on the basic grammar, conversation and writing skills.

On the other hand, the literacy class observation in Glencliff High school gave me a more or less different reflection about the content area instruction. Firstly, the classroom decorations are more colorful than it is in NSCC due to the reason that students there were much younger. Lots of countries' flags, languages and names were put on the walls and students' photos and assignments were also displayed to the whole class. Secondly, during the class, literacy teachers addressed the differences between Spanish and English in some certain aspects because most of the students present in the class were Hispanic children. Lastly, when the instructor has finished lecturing, she separated the students and gave them a quiz, and she tutored them one by one instead of instructing them as a whole.

I have tutored a Spanish boy about the possessive forms and plural nouns, and I found the boy still got stuck in the Spanish pattern of spelling and pronunciation which made it very hard for him to distinguish between different words in English, and this maybe due to the reason that students in that class were mainly belong to level zero in English because these students were just arrived in USA according to what the administrator told us before we entered into the classroom.

### **Reality & Theory**

After observing the ESL as well as the content-area classes, I was reminded of some theories which I have read about pedagogic methods which were recommended by

professionals to apply in the classes when the students are multi-culturally and multi-linguistically dispersed in one class.

Teacher in GlenCliff High school choosing to tutor students one by one reminds me of privatization in which teachers avoid calling on children for public and competitive displays of what they do not know, and instead correct them individually where necessary (Corson,2001). Sometimes, tutoring students personally can derive more effective outcome than correcting them in public settings.

According to my observation, both teachers in Glencliff and NSCC had lot of eye contact with their students which is very important for teachers who want to catch the very first feedback from students; in addition, teachers were all inclined to praise students often in order to encourage them to get more improvement. Devora also shared her personal experiences with students to deepen the relationship between her and students.

Last but not the least, the decorations of the classroom which include different countries' flags and names make the classroom culturally welcoming to those children who have different cultural backgrounds. Students' identifications are vital for them to live in a total strange environment. "Culture matters. Learning cannot take place in settings where students' cultures-broadly defined to include race, ethnicity, social class, language, and other elements...are devalued and rejected" (Nieto,2000).

### **Conclusion**

After the careful audition and observation of the two classes, i have realized the importance of the physical arrangement of classroom, teacher's attitude toward students and teaching methods which teachers applied. These factors, to some degree, directly decide whether a class is successful or not.

In my perspective, creating a welcoming classroom enhance the self-achievement of both the teacher and students. although students may come from different places and they hold various culture backgrounds, they come together for one goal to learn English well, thus teachers should base their understanding upon this consensus and modify their teaching approaches to best serve this ultimate goal.

## Part IV

### Community bilingual literacy

Community literacy is one of the useful resources to better understand language minority students. Through analyzing the data collected from the communities, we can have a more comprehensible view on students with diverse cultural backgrounds. Furthermore, by the observation of the texts, I found that these texts contain rich multilingual information which teachers could reflect on their teaching methods by using these materials. Community literacy can help students learn about diversity in their communities and help English-language learners become more fully engaged in their literacy and content learning (Jiménez. R, 2009). Based upon these transitional and community literacy, teachers could design many activities to assist English language learners to learn content-area English better and at the same time confirm the students' diversity without neglecting them.

### Bilingual literacy collection

Located off the center of Nashville city, K&S supermarket is one of the biggest exchange domains for the nearby residents which include Korean, Indian and Chinese.

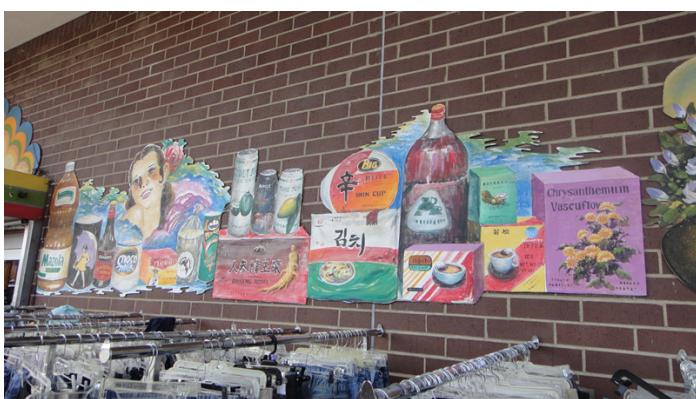


Figure 1. The posters outside the K&S Supermarket.

As we can see in Fig.1, the poster shows several languages, like Chinese, Korean and English. Considering the fact that the owners of K&S are Korean couple, some goods are Korean style. For example, Kimchi instant noodles.

After observing the whole supermarket, I discovered that the tags of merchandise were written in both English and other languages, and most of the time Chinese is paired with Korean. However, the Chinese characters used on the package of those goods are not simplified characters, on the contrary they are traditional characters.



Figure 3. Merchandise written in English, Chinese, Korean and Spanish.

Azadi International Food Market is surrounded by many Arabic shops. Once I stepped into this tiny but colorful place, I was overwhelmed by the Arabic language. After further careful observation, I found that English is used on most labels of its goods.



Figure 4. The appearance of Azadi shop and one sample of its goods written in Arabic.



Figure 5. Samples of goods' tags written in English and Arabic separately.

Outside of Azadi shop, we also saw a middle-eastern clothing shop. Through the window, I saw many Arabic traditional clothes.

The last destination we visited was a Russian grocery called Aleksey's Russian & Eastern European Market. The owner is a middle-aged Russian woman. When we walked in, she was talking on the phone in Russian.



Figure 6. The appearance of the Russian shop.

Not surprisingly, most of the food labels are written in both English and Russian. However, some traditional foodstuffs like Russian chocolates were tagged only in Russian.



Figure 7. Samples of merchandise in Russian shops.

### Why is it useful

The reasons why teachers should be familiar with the local community is multi-faceted. Firstly, compared with the traditional education metaphor of *vessel to be filled*, getting to know language minority students' home and community literacy practices will enable teachers to understand their students better in order to help them make progress which may lead to the more appropriate metaphor of *lamps to be lit* (Jiménez, 2009). Secondly, teachers can utilize these community literacy materials to build students' prior knowledge, which as Moll has defined as *funds of knowledge* (Moll, 1992).

Other activities which could be also helpful for teachers to get familiar with students' local communities include translation of materials gathered from shops, churches and salons. Translation activities could have effects on enhancing English language learners' writing under academic settings. As we can see from the pictures above, bilingual materials can be seen frequently among all the local community literacy. Bilingual skills, especially those involved in the translation, play an essential role in developing students' academic writing (Martinez, 2008). Plus, teachers should stimulate students from majority group to collect data themselves to build better understanding to the language minority students.

Everything has two sides. Some barriers should also be considered when talking about collecting community literacy. One main problem is this task needs extra time and energy. In addition, students may not be willing to communicate with people from different cultural backgrounds because they may not trust each other. Last but not the least, some parents could also be unwilling to let their children to collect data under circumstances where the content and messages of some texts maybe inappropriate for teens because of the uncertain information exposure (Jiménez, 2009).

### Reflections and conclusion

Despite the potential objections toward collecting community literacy data, the benefits still deserve our efforts to do so. Some modifications could be done in order to better integrate the language minority students' community literacy into classroom settings. According to the opinion of Jiménez, Smith and Teague (2009), by dividing students into smaller groups and asking students to bring their own samples of community texts could further develop students understanding of academic knowledge. The bilingual literacy collection activities which we have done gave us an opportunity to probe into the social life of English language learners. Through reading these bilingual materials, students can be more familiar with each other and widen their vision about different culture (Jiménez, 2009).

Apart from the bilingual data collection which is mainly related to reading, translation is another effective way to develop bilingual students' writing skill. It's not enough to only expose students to a single way of writing. If we only cultivate a single academic voice, we fail to recognize and build upon what students already know and do with language in their daily lives (Martinez, 2008). Firstly, it is very essential for teachers to validate students' translating experiences. For example, a Korean student bought a kimchi noodle in K&S, I would let he/she bring this to the class and translate the cooking method into English so that he/she could introduce that to the whole class. Secondly, teachers should try hard to advance students' translation skills and strategies. Translation may happen under different situations like audience and purposes, thus various translation models would be necessary. Like the previous example, if the Korean student wants to make a translation to the classmates, then he/she is fine to use casual words; however, if he/she is going to do a translation homework paper, then more systematic structure and formal words are needed. Thirdly, teachers need to link the translation of bilingual literacy with the academic tasks. The ultimate goal of this translation activity is to assist students become more involved into the academic settings. For example, teachers could ask language minority students to paraphrase the texts which were collected from their community. This allows students to apply their translation skill to English paraphrasing activities (Martinez, 2008).

In my perspective, community resources like bilingual literacy are important part of what Moll has defined as the *funds of knowledge*, and by incorporating these funds of knowledge into the encapsulated classroom will make learning more effectively. Teachers should never regard language minority students as inferior and disorganized, instead, teachers should actively get involved into students' lives and get innovations about how to

better instruct these students. In Moll's research, he mentioned that the *teacher-researcher collaborations* were explored and this turned out to be successful (Moll. L, 1992). By studying the household and community literacy, teachers, on one hand, could get to know students well-rounded; on the other hand, the rich resources could be used by teachers to enhance students' learning effectiveness because these *funds of knowledge* are their culture.

### Conclusion

The four practicum experiences gave me a comprehensive perspective on the foundation of teaching English Language Learner. My understanding on teaching English as a second language has deepened to a large extent after the interview with coordinators of community college, the legal seminar with the lawyer, the observation of the classroom where the students have multicultural background and the collection of the bilingual literacy.

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Artifact F

Linguistic data and theoretical analysis

(Somali guy-Jason)

Man Yang

Linguistics/Second Language Acquisition in the classroom

Professor Mary Elizabeth Wilson-Patton

December 8, 2011

## Introduction

Jason, a Somalia guy who came to USA in 1994 when he was 17 because of a domestic war, is now working as a grocery cashier in Nashville. At the same time, he is studying in NSCC as an ELL to advance his English ability. He first went to Denver when he arrived in USA with the help of his elder sister who arrived in USA ahead of him. He applied to go to a local school to get ESL training as well as the content-area English in Denver but he was refused to get enrolled due to the reason that he was new there.

Jason finished his high school when he was in Somali and he has his diploma. According to what he told me, during elementary school, Somali children were taught mainly in the Somali language, English was also taught but in very little proportion. However, when students stepped into the high school they were taught in English as well as Somali language to ensure the basic usage of English.

Jason likes speaking English. He said that in the Somali community of Nashville, nearly all the Somali people communicate with each other in English and they seldom speak their mother tongue when getting together. When asked whether it is difficult to communicate with local American people during his daily work, Jason told me that he found it very easy to understand local people here.

Jason has an expectation to bring his parents to USA one day, and he is now working hard on this goal. He loves mathematics and physics very much and in addition, he has helped other Somali people to fill in the different charts on the internet because their English was not as good as his English.

## **Part I Data analysis**

In this part, I would mainly talk about the linguistic data which I collected from Jason and the data analysis will be discussed specifically divided into four sections: phonology, morphology, syntax and semantics/pragmatics. Both the pattern errors and strength will be analyzed. I will also provide some examples to illustrate his weaknesses and strength.

### Phonology section

#### Pattern errors

Phonologically speaking, Jason did not make many mistakes, and the majority part of his speech was understandable for me except for some minor errors.

#### **/r/ is repeatedly pronounced as r<tr1>**

For example he read “grow” as /gr<tr1>ow/, “green” as /gr<tr1>in/ and “grammar” as /gr<tr1>æmə/. I think this is a common error among middle-east people.

how do you si it? is it kər<tr1>ekt? (how do you see it? is it correct?)

### **/z/ is repeatedly pronounced as /s/**

For example he read “please” as /plis/, and “ busy ” as/bisi/ which sounded a little bit weird.

### **/v/ is sometimes pronounced as /f/**

For example, he said...ay lisen tu sə tifi ɔr ay min tu sə redio (I listen to the TV or I listen to the radio).

### **th- part with /θ/ sound is often pronounced as /l/**

For example : len ay sed, plis, ay nid tu lʌn ənglis...ænd le sed ay kænt stʌdi hiə bikɔ:s le se yu ar niu hiər. (Then I said, please, I need to learn English...and they said I can't study here because they say you are new here)

### Strength

He knew how to use some high-level vocabularies, for example, *obliged*, *metabolism* and *rehearsal*. He was aware of using the connection words like *then* instead of leaving the sentence fragmented. In addition, phrases such as *thank you a million times* and *fill in the forms* are also used correctly in his writing sample.

### Morphology section

### Pattern errors

He sometimes was not aware of the plural forms, for example he said that ‘he wanted to learn thing he like’. While there should be “things” instead of

“thing” here. However, he didn’t make any mistakes in his writing sample when using plural forms. So I would say he made a partial mistake with plural form.

He mistakenly used adjectives such as “interesting” in describing the situation. For example, in his writing sample, he wrote “I’m interesting to talk with you”. While according to my understanding it should be “interested” instead of “interesting” because what he wanted to say was that talking to me is an interesting thing. If he said like that, the meaning would be a little different.

Some occasional spelling mistakes still can be seen from his writing sample such as “Sarena” and “mis”. In my perspective, the reason why he consistently spelt my name wrong is that he pronounced my name as /salina/ instead of /sərinə/.

### Strength

He knew how to use possessives as well as the 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular which could be witnessed in his writings like “that means...” and “your” and “our”.

He also knew how to use copula like “to be”, for example he said “this is the last day for Vanderbilt students to visit us”. But sometimes he made mistakes like putting two verbs together without using “to”. For example he said “I want told you” whereas it should be “I want to tell you”.

He has been aware of the usage of the past tense such as “...our teacher told us...” and “you asked me many questions”. Plus, he knew how to use adverbs such as “politely”. Last but not the least, he has aware of that the initial

letter should be capitalized, and this could be demonstrated in his writing sample where all the initiative letters were capitalized.

### Syntax section

#### Pattern errors

In the syntax part, there are some problems with conjunction and preposition. Overall speaking, except for the problem of preposition he could make himself understood by others.

He frequently deleted conjunctions where it is necessary, such as “I mis you I want...” and “I would like to come us again I never forgot you”. Originally I thought it was due to the reason that oral communication between us is like free-style talking and I assumed that he knew how to use conjunction. However in his writing sample he made same mistakes about the deletion of the conjunction.

There are some wrong usages of preposition like “we talk with each other with English” and “I have conversation to you” while the correct preposition should be “in” in front of “English” and “with” in front of “you”.

There is some minor mistake about the wrong word order. For example, he wrote a sentence to me “I know Sarena you are one in Vanderbilt students”. In my understanding, he tried to say that I am a student from Vanderbilt, but the word order in his sentence made me feel confused. I would prefer he wrote

“...you are one student in Vanderbilt” or “you are one of Vanderbilt’s students” and these two sentences will make the meaning more understandable.

## Strength

Jason knew how to use determiners and for example, he used “the” in front of the “last day”. However, he forgot to add the determiner sometimes, such as in the sentence: “you are nice person” where he forgot to add “a” in front of “nice”.

## Semantics and Pragmatics sections

### Pattern errors

Sometimes, he missed key words in one sentence which makes it very hard to understand. For example, without any context he said one sentence to me: “bring here is too difficult for me.” In fact, what he wants to describe is that it is difficult for him to bring his parents here.

He also occasionally violated Grice’s Maxims of quality and of relevance. For example, he told me he is the oldest child in his family while he also kept telling me he has an older sister. In addition, when I asked him about whether he has any relatives in China, he answered me with a sentence like “she always swim”.

Last but not the least, he intends to use some non native-like phrases such as when I asked him about when did the story he told me happen, he replied me with “two nights ago”. In addition, when he firstly told me the experience

in Denver, he said “in front of I came here” which makes his speech a little strange.

### Strength

He knows how to use English idioms which makes his speech much more native-like “if I were on your shoes” and “a little bird told me”. Apart from this, he could explain his opinion well, and he seldom replied me with only one or two words. As I have mentioned above, the majority part of his speech was not difficult to understand.

## **Part II Theoretical analysis**

After analyzing Jason’s linguistic data, I found that he is around level three of second language acquisition. This could be shown specifically in his speaking, writing and listening. He does mark for tense and the third person singular and he can express his opinion clearly; in his writing sample, he used some high-level vocabulary; speaking of listening skill, he told me that he could understand complicated speech because he often hears CNN news radio.

Among all the models of how languages are learned, I think *get it right in the end* can best serve him. Proponents of this model argue that language will be acquired naturally from pronunciation to vocabulary and grammar because they have adequate exposure to the language and a motivation to learn (Pasty, M. 2006). Since Jason told me that he loves English very much and even in the Somali community he never uses the Somali language, thus I can tell that he

has enough motivation to learn it. The theory behind this model is Vygotsky's socio-cultural views toward first language acquisition. Although Vygotsky mainly talked about L1, his research has a huge impact upon many other researchers' analysis about second language acquisition and many researchers have applied Vygotsky's theory to the field of second language acquisition. The fundamental point of the socio-cultural theory is that the individual's knowledge is socially and dialogically derived. Unlike the extreme Behaviorism, Vygotsky assumes that the ZPD (zone of proximal development) is a place where interactional mechanism is involved and it is essential for instructors to act the *scaffolding* role (Johnson, M. 2004). In addition, the role of interaction is like a trigger which can start the learner to acquire language.

The model of *get it right in the end* puts emphasis on the guidance like form instruction and corrective feedback. Not only the teachers but also the students themselves could help each other to acquire languages if guidance of the teachers were given appropriately.

According to Jason's personal situation, he shows some weakness with grammar and sometimes he needs direct correction with his spelling. Based on my observation, every word he has asked me to check has been remembered and he did not make mistake twice. Considering the fact that he spends most of his time outside the school, I think a dictionary may help him a lot with spelling. As for the grammar, he needs more instruction and he confuses

different classes of words, especially prepositions. Finally, since he uses English everyday, it is very essential for him to get pronunciation corrected. In fact, he corrected the word he pronounced if he detected there is difference between his and mine.

The whole linguistic data and theory analysis gave me some implications about the future teaching experience. Firstly, students' backgrounds should not be neglected. On the contrary, different culture which students brought to classroom are precious resources for teachers to design the most suitable and effective approach to help students. Secondly, feedback is a very important factor which has a huge impact on students' learning pace. However, different feedbacks can derive different outcomes. Feedbacks which could push students to self-correction rather than provides the correct form often benefit students more (Pasty, M. 2006). Finally, although peer correction maybe somehow difficult to deal with, still it is an effective way for students to acquire second language through their collaborative work with the appropriate assistance of teachers.

## Conclusion

In general, Jason has a relatively high-level English ability in both speaking and writing, and this may be due to the early exposure of English in his hometown as well as in USA and he uses English as frequently as possible. In addition, as a voluntary immigrant, Jason welcomes the American culture instead of abhorring this different society, and this acts as an important factor which advances the learning efficiency of his English.

In analyzing Jason's data, I could understand deeply about the specific aspects which are related to linguistics such as phonology, morphology, syntax and semantics. The generalization of the pattern errors also helps me narrow down the mistakes which Jason frequently made. Theoretically speaking, Vygotsky's socio-cultural perspective on first language acquisition shed light on the research about the SLA (Second Language Acquisition).

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## Artifact G

### OBSERVATION REPORT 1

Level of class observed: intermediate

Topic: Presentation skills-gestures & eye contact

**Indicate whether the teaching strategies below were *effective* or *ineffective*.**

**Briefly JUSTIFY your assessment.**

- Use of target language [quality and quantity of L2; teacher talk vs. student talk] :  
**effective      ineffective**

I would say that the use of target language is effective. Although these seven students' spoken abilities vary to some extent, all of them were able to get themselves understood by others. Most of the time, the teacher was talking about the topic, running through the book and highlighting the points. Students occasionally talked about the questions posted by the teacher during the non-activity/exercise session. For example, after the teacher asked the question about the advantages of long eye contact, all students made their contributions to the final list; also, when the teacher asked the question about the definition of "impromptu talk" and "matador", three students talked about their understandings.

There was a lot of L2 input during the class, however students' output about language itself was limited considering the factors like grammar and pronunciation. What I am pretty sure is that all students who were presented today got the idea of this class very well and they all tried their best to apply the strategies to the actual usage.

- Use / integration of 4 skills [listening, speaking, reading, writing]:  
**effective      ineffective**

I would say the integration of four skills is effective although the writing exercise was very limited in the whole class (probably it's because this is an academic speaking class). Since the teacher was talking in English all the time and students' native languages were never used in the class, the listening tasks during the class were sufficient.

As for the speaking part, every student had several chances to practice their speaking both through pair work and individual presentation. After all, this is an academic speaking class.

The teacher also required students to practice speaking after this class by videotaping and the main point of doing so is practicing facial expressions as well as body movements.

Reading skill was also practiced during the class as students were asked to read the information on the book, in addition, the teacher assigned extra reading tasks for students. For example, the teacher wanted them to do the reading assignments listed on certain pages.

- Use of visuals [book, board, technology supported:

**effective**    **ineffective**

The use of visuals is ineffective because the teacher did not use any technology as planned and this was probably resulted from the time limitation. Before the class began, the teacher told students that they were going to review a video about presentation skills in the class, however the teacher failed to do so when time was up.

The teacher mainly focused on the textbook as well as the board. Board was used for demonstrating new vocabularies and important points about presentation skills. For example, the teacher wrote “matador” and “impromptu” on the board to explain their meanings, in addition, when talking about the advantages about long eye contact, students’ responses were also kept on the board. Textbook played a role as guidance for the class because the teacher designed all the activities following the sequence of exercises listed on the textbook.

- Length / variety of activities [indicate average # of minutes per activity]:

**effective**    **ineffective**

I would say the length/variety of activities are effective. There were three activities during the whole class and I will talk about them one by one.

Activity one: #9 minutes

*Walk to the front like a matador and say a proverb you like best*

Right after the class started, the teacher introduced the definition of “matador” on the textbook and then required every student to walk up to the front and say a proverb. This activity, in my point of view, act like a warm-up so that students can get the idea of what will be talked about during this class. Although some students did not get the meaning of proverb at first, this activity was effective in grasping students’ attention about the topic.

Activity two: #2 minutes

*Talk with your partner about anything and look at his/her face*

This activity was brought up by the teacher after they have talked about the advantages of eye contact. Students worked in pairs and talked something they like and at the same time following the four-steps listed on the textbook about how to do eye contact. This activity gave students a chance sense the importance of eye contact in daily talking. According to my observation, every student was participating without any off-the-track chitchat.

Activity three: #36 minutes

*Choose one topic you like and give a short presentation up in the front*

This activity was located at the end of the class. The teacher gave each student a list of topics about students' personal lives and then asked them to pick one to give a 3-minute presentation using eye contact they've learned from the textbook. In my perspective, this activity is a perfect wrap-up for the whole class because it requires students to integrate all the presentation skills they learned in the class and at the same time practicing their speaking abilities.

- Personalization of materials [relevance to students' lives]:  
**effective      ineffective**

The teacher's list provided evidentiary support of the teacher using personalized materials since all of the topics are related to students' lives. Apart from this list, the teacher also talked about the cultural differences lie in eye contact during the class. Due to the fact that all students have their own background, the teacher realized the possible differences in eye contact. (I will attach the list at the end of this report)

- Small group work [number of students, purpose of activity]:  
**effective      ineffective**

Although there is only one small group activity throughout the class which I have talked about during the previous question, I would still mark this activity as an effective one. One of the reasons I support the teacher to limit the amount of small group activities is that there are only seven students in total in this class. I cannot see much point of dividing this small

group into smaller group to do activities since it won't cost too much for the teacher to pay attention to every student.

Another reason I support to limit the small group activities is that this class only lasts about one hour. How to make the best output within the limited time schedule is the most important thing faced by the teacher. Instead of investing time on small group activities which also may under the risk of off the track chatting, the teacher can fully utilize the time to do individual presentation since the latter one can give a more direct guidance for the teacher to get to know each student.

- Error correction [frequency and kind]:  
**effective**      **ineffective**

I don't think the teacher did an effective job in this correction part. When the first student went up front to do the first activity, this student did not talk about proverb at all. The teacher then only reminded the student of the goal of this activity (say a proverb) using a positive tone. However, when the second student continued, the goal of the activity was again compromised because the student failed to get the meaning of what a proverb is. At this time, the teacher gave a very generous definition of proverb without any specific examples. The third and fourth student just made up two translation versions of proverbs that were unacceptable to me while the teacher only gave one feedback about those two non-native translation versions.

#### **Transcript:**

*The third student: "...if you get up early and you can get many things done."  
(All students and the teacher applauded)*

*The teacher: "well, we call it "early bird gets worms", nice work anyway."*

*The fourth student: "...one seeing is better than a hundred times hearing"*

*(All students and the teacher applauded)*

*The teacher: "so what you mean is that witnessing is important?"*

*The fourth student: "yes"*

*The teacher: "ok, great."*

During the last individual presentation part, the teacher almost neglected all the obvious grammar and pronunciation errors in students' speeches and only focused on the eye contact element. Only when the last student finished talking, the teacher pointed out the incorrect "L" sound.

**Was this lesson successful? BRIEFLY justify your overall evaluation of the class.**

### **Final Reflection**

The overall class is somewhat successful. The teacher focused on the topic all the time and every student got chances to practice speaking in front of the whole class, and so there were a lot of interaction between the teacher and students. The teacher applied communicative language teaching guidelines very well and the main objective for this class is letting students talk in English more professionally using strategies they've learned from the textbook. As for the materials selection, the teacher carefully designed the topic list and guaranteed every student has something to say about himself/herself instead of using decontextualized materials.

Whatsoever, there were no grammatical nor pronunciation instructions throughout the whole class. Even though CLT addressed the importance of communication under authentic circumstances, grammar and pronunciation cannot be totally ignored. What we need is to find the right way at the right time to teach students about the very basic elements about English without sacrificing the end of CLT. In addition, if the teacher can incorporate more writing exercise into this class and that would be better. For example, regardless of the formats of writing, the teacher may require students to do a little bit note taking, words copying, general outlines for the presentations.

### **Attachment:**

- 1. What are the hardest parts of your job?**
2. How could we improve life in the U.S. in your opinion?
3. What do you enjoy about living in Nashville?
- 4. Describe an ideal weekend for you**
5. What advice would you give someone from your country who is coming to the U.S.A?
6. How was your trip to the U.S.? Tell us about it
7. Describe the place where you live
- 8. Describe your hometown**
9. Tell us how to get to your house, apartment or condo
10. Tell us about something really great that happened to you in the past year
11. Describe the ideal spouse

- 12. What are the main differences between your life today and before you came to the U.S?**
13. If you could make two changes in your life, what would they be?
- 14. What recent event in the news really interested you? Tell us about it?  
Why is it important?**
- 15. How could life in your country be improved? What are the major issues in your opinion?**
- 16. What do you miss most about your country?**
17. Describe the ideal vacation

*PS: those topics written in bold were chosen by the seven students*

## OBSERVATION REPORT 2

Level of class observed: \_2nd grade Mandarin\_

Topic: Review Mid-autumn Festival (中秋节), they have already learned some basic knowledge about this festival during the previous class\_

**Indicate whether the teaching strategies below were *effective* or *ineffective*.**

**Briefly JUSTIFY your assessment.**

- Use of target language [quality and quantity of L2; teacher talk vs. student talk] :  
**effective      ineffective**

I would say the use of target language is effective. Throughout the 30 minutes' class, English (L1) occupied about 85% of the whole class. The teacher's talk occupied about 60% of the whole class talking. Most of the interaction occurred in the form of ask-and-answer.

Although the teacher exclusively used English for activity instructions, Chinese characters and phrases were occasionally used and almost no coherent sentences in Chinese were introduced, I still wanted to say the teacher's use of target language is effective because the majority students were able to understand the content as well as language (Chinese) and every student was participated in the activities. I can tell that students were proud of being able to speak Chinese whatever their purposes were.

Since this is a class for 2<sup>nd</sup> graders, the teacher has to do a lot of talking. Judged by the conversations between the teacher and the whole class, I can tell students have had very good background knowledge about the history of Chinese mid-autumn festival. For example, about ¾ students can elaborate the story of Houyi (a mythical character in ancient Chinese fairly tale) in English. Every student tried to get a chance to answer questions posed by the teacher and the atmosphere was very robust.

- Use / integration of 4 skills [listening, speaking, reading, writing]:  
**effective      ineffective**

The use of four skills is not very effective. Although lots of interaction occurred between the teacher and students in Chinese as well as English during the class, there were no systematic reading and writing instructions. The teacher occasionally incorporated Chinese into requesting disciplinary order, asking questions and instructing activities. For example, the teacher said “请安静”(please be quiet) several times when students were too noisy; the

teacher said “男孩子”(boys) and “女孩子” (girls) when he gave directions about the activity; in addition, questions that the teacher posed were centered around Chinese characters and phrases.

There were no reading and writing input at all in this class. After I talked with the teacher, I got to know that they have already had a class on the previous day talking about the history of Mid-autumn festival and the teacher modified an online PPT about the story. There were a lot of readings about the story on their previous class, however the PPT was written exclusively in English. So what they did for today's class was kind of like a review about the story they finished yesterday and students' comprehension about the story. Considering time limitation (30 minutes for second graders), the teacher did not have enough time for more exercise about reading and writing, nor did the teacher give students any assignments to do. (It seems to be the rule for this school not to give students assignment after class)

- Use of visuals [book, board, technology supported]:  
**effective**      **ineffective**

The use of visuals was ineffective. Throughout the whole class, the teacher only displayed a slide of PPT about how to play the activity called *shooting the sun*. In addition, the teacher used the white board to write Chinese characters and Pinyin (Chinese phonetic system) so that students can read the characters according to the correspond Pinyin. Apart from using these tools, the teacher also used a class mascot which, in my perspective, would be very helpful with young language learners. However, there was no textbook, no other technology being used during the class. However, in the classroom there are lots of Chinese books from which students can pick up to read by themselves.

- Length / variety of activities [indicate average # of minutes per activity]:  
**effective**      **ineffective**

There were two activities in this class. I will introduce them as following:

#### *Greetings (#4 minutes)*

When second graders arrived at the door, the teacher greeted each of them saying “你好”.

Students all respond with “你好”. After all students sat down on the carpet, the teacher introduced the topic about “中秋□”. When the teacher asked students how to pronounce each of these three characters, most of them can answer correctly with the help of Pinyin. After introducing the topic, the teacher used the class mascot to review what they have

learned on previous day totally in English. Next, the teacher started to greet individual student with very simple Chinese vocabularies and phrases.

*Shooting the sun (#20 minutes)*

Before this class ends, the teacher led students to do the activity, shooting the sun. The teacher used the soccer and the trashcan as the arch and the sun separately which made the whole activity look like a soccer game. The whole class was divided into two groups according to gender. I can tell students love activity very much and those who shoot all the three suns can get chance to shoot the moon at last. Before they can shoot the moon, the teacher will let them answer questions about Chinese characters and once they got the answers right, they can shoot the moon finally.

- Personalization of materials [relevance to students' lives]:  
**effective**      **ineffective**

The personalization of materials is ineffective. This class is about a Chinese festival and the teacher did not give any comparisons between two countries' similar festivals nor did he personalize the materials for students. Except for the using of the soccer as an arch. This may arouse students' interests about the activity, there were no more evidences to show that the teacher personalized the materials

- Small group work [number of students, purpose of activity]:  
**effective**      **ineffective**

The *shooting the sun* activity may be the only small group work in this class. All students were divided into two groups: one group is for girls (11 in total) and the other one is for boys (8 in total). According to the teacher, this activity aims at helping students understand the story of Mid-autumn festival, however, in my point of view, this activity did not yield this effect except for fun. The reason is because that students view this activity as a sport competition (which team could get more points by throwing the soccer into the trash can) between girls and boys instead of learning more about the festival in Chinese.

- Error correction [frequency and kind]:  
**effective**      **ineffective**

The teacher did a good job in error correction especially during the question part. Before students *shoot the moon*, the teacher asked several questions like:

- If I point Justus, and I say 他, which English word do I mean?
- What do I mean when I say □? Which English word?
- Which number is 柒?
- How can I say □□ in English?
- How to say “eat” in Chinese?
- When I say “你叫什么名字”, what question am I asking?

In my point of view, those questions about Chinese were somehow hard for second graders. Some of those questions talked about different pronouns in Chinese, some were related to Chinese numbers and some of them were talking about certain Chinese character that has two English corresponding meanings. Not only did the teacher provide the right answer to dismiss confusions, but also gave chances for peer correction.

**Was this lesson successful? BRIEFLY justify your overall evaluation of the class.**

### **Final reflection**

I think this class is not that successful because I know the situations of Chinese classes in American public schools. The school I observed places Chinese class under the category of related arts and this indicates Chinese classes are mainly for entertaining instead of systematic serious study. Same thing happens in other public schools and before I went to observe, the teacher also reminded me of the purpose of this Chinese lesson and I totally understand him. The teacher prioritized students' motivation and interests toward Chinese instead of learning this language. This is true because students' interests at least could guarantee the continuous learning about Chinese.

Due to the fact that the teacher is a non-native speaker of Chinese, some pronunciation inaccuracies are predicted. However, the advantage is the teacher can identify some problems which may exist among students when they are learning Chinese because the teacher was wearing the same shoes and could understand the feelings of learning a foreign language. Basically, the teacher did a good job in arousing students' interests toward Chinese as well as the culture behind this language. I would say this class also applies communicative language teaching principles because the whole class aims at using Chinese. What students

have learned in this class can guarantee the very basic communication with Chinese people about some simple topics. In addition, the teacher has addressed some very important points in Chinese like pronouns as well as numbers.

## OBSERVATION REPORT 3

Level of class observed: Intermediate-advanced level

Topic of the day's lesson: Presentation skills (move from organization to visual aids)

**Indicate whether the teaching strategies below were *effective* or *ineffective*.**

**Briefly JUSTIFY your assessment.**

- Use of target language [quality and quantity of L2; teacher talk vs. student talk] :  
**effective      ineffective**

I would say the use of target language is effective. There are a lot of interactions in this classroom. The teacher took about 80% of the L2 talking. The teacher motivated students to talk by asking questions that require students to give personal opinions as well as the content they learned during the previous day. I really like the teacher's review part although it took him a long time to finish (the whole class is 90 minutes, the review part took about 60 minutes). There were large amount of IRF instead of IRE in this class because the teacher likes students to probe deeply about what they have said and he asked many clarification questions based upon students' responses.

- Use / integration of 4 skills [listening, speaking, reading, writing]:  
**effective      ineffective**

I would say the integration of 4 skills is effective. During this class, the teacher successfully integrated the four parts by asking students to read the book, express their opinions, write some notes and listen to others. The teacher was talking in L2 all the time which means students need to pay intense attention to what the teacher said. Students were also asked to provide their opinions about the questions. When students were doing the exercises in the textbook about *partner interview*, students need to read the instructions as well as write down their answers.

- Use of visuals [book, board, technology supported]:  
**effective      ineffective**

I would say the use of visuals is effective. The teacher used books and board. During their previous class (two days ago), they even videotaped presentations of each one so that they can review their body language. When the teacher was introducing the new topic of this class, he wrote several key points on the white board. High technology was also used to support

the teacher's teaching. For example, the teacher used the smart board and a website to show a high-tech visual aid called "GapMinder" to demonstrate its effectiveness.

- Length / variety of activities [indicate average # of minutes per activity]:  
**effective**      **ineffective**

I would say the length/variety of activities is effective. There should have 8 students in total, however only 7 were present on that day. I will list the activities one by one.

#### #Activity one (6 minutes)

The teacher divided his students into three groups (3,2,2) and let them discuss about where they have used transitions in their presentations and where they should have used transitions. Everyone was engaged. With the help of videotapes, students were able to recognize the weaknesses as well as advantages of their presentations.

#### #Activity two (7 minutes)

The teacher divided students into two groups (4,3) and students were required to share their answers to one exercise they've finished in the textbook and then they were asked to work on the *partner interview* exercise in the textbook together. The teacher went around the classroom and talked with each group about their discussion.

#### #Activity three (5 minutes)

Students were divided into three groups (2,3,2) and asked to discuss the types of visual aids they have used before/what worked & what did not work/what they will use for the next presentation. After the teacher introduced the three big types of visual aids which include no-tech, low-tech and high-tech, he required students to brainstorm about their own experiences using different visual aids.

- Personalization of materials [relevance to students' lives]:  
**effective**      **ineffective**

I would say that the personalization of materials is somehow effective. The teacher addressed each student's needs when reviewing their previous videotapes. For example, the teacher tried to let every student talk about his/her own video and he would give feedback according to what the student has said. The teacher also tried to involve each student discussing his/her own experiences when doing presentation in front of the whole class. However, the hand-outs (please see my attachment 1) he gave to students are about some general guidelines of transitions/organization without emphasizing personalization. The

second hand out which the teacher gave to his students before the class ends shows provide some evidentiary support of material personalization. In addition, the teacher required students to prepare a presentation about their own study field which can help motivate students to think about their own studies.

- Small group work [number of students, purpose of activity]:  
**effective**      **ineffective**

I would say the small group work is effective. As I mentioned above, the teacher initiated three small group discussions. One more point I need to make here is that in order to guarantee every student had the chance to talk with different classmate during group work time, the teacher intentionally allocated different students to different groups every time. The purpose of the first activity is to review what they have learned about transitions and think about the limitations in their presentations. The second small group work aimed at checking homework on one hand, on the other hand, the partner interview section was designed to let student realize the importance of addressing audiences' background when delivering a talk in public. The last small group work was designed to arouse students' memories about using visual aids so that the teacher can introduce the new topic more effectively.

- Error correction [frequency and kind]:  
**effective**      **ineffective**

I would say that the error correction is effective. According to my observation, the teacher applied indirect/implicit strategies to provide negative feedback. For example, many students had certain grammatical errors when they talked in the class, the teacher usually replied with recasts/clarification questions so that students were given more time to reflect what they just said.

**Was this lesson successful? BRIEFLY justify your overall evaluation of the class.**

#### **Final reflection**

In my perspective, this class is very successful. The teacher himself is very passionate about the class and he also excels at motivating students to dig deeply into their original thoughts. I draw my conclusion based upon the following reasons. Firstly, the teacher applied

communicative language teaching principles to the class perfectly. Each feedback he gave was intended to make students think more deeply about the topic. The teacher replied students with many clarification and reflective questions and the purpose of him doing so is to do real communication. The teacher tried every chance to let students talk confidently. Secondly, the teacher makes successful presentation more accessible for students by introducing effective methods like generating the organizations as well as transitions. This can be proved from the hand-outs he gave. Thirdly, the teacher made students realize the importance of diverse cultural backgrounds existed among their possible audiences and he encouraged students to do more research about their listeners before they actually give presentations. Lastly, the teacher adroitly incorporate students' individual study field into presentation skills. By doing so, the teacher made it possible for students to explore different issues that they need to consider when preparing presentations and at the same time personalize their individual interest.

## Artifact H

### SECOND LITERACY LESSON PLAN

- Name: Man Yang
- Grade level: 8<sup>th</sup> grade students
- Lesson title: Explore “Becoming Naomi Leon”

Step 1—learning objectives
<p>Language objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Understand several Spanish words (no need to recite them).</li><li>• Understand the dialogue style of novel (the novel was written in the first person)</li></ul> <p>Content objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Understand the story grammar of the novel</li><li>• Understand the main point beneath the novel</li><li>• Understand different role's features in the novel</li></ul>
Step 2—Assessment Evidence
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Students talk about the story grammar by themselves and the differences between the novels written in the first person and the third person<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Students will be able to reiterate the whole story in their own words (where, when, who, why and how)</li><li>• Students rewrite some plots of this novel in the third person.</li></ul></li><li>2. Students know what are those Spanish words referred to, there is no need for them to spell those Spanish words out.<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Students will be able to predict those Spanish words with correspond English meanings.</li></ul></li><li>3. Students can share what they think of this novel's main point<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Students will be able to talk about how Naomi has changed at last and why she changed.</li></ul></li><li>4. Students can distinguish main characters based upon their personal features<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Students will be able to tell which figures help Naomi changed and which ones had bad influences on Naomi.</li></ul></li></ol>
Step 3—Detailed Instructions (Activities included)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Video clip watching (basic introduction of the novel) <a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TxtnRnQSBiY">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TxtnRnQSBiY</a></li><li>• Lead-in Question (In My Head Activity): “What would you do if you had a family problem? Imagine what if you had a alcoholic mother, a deformed brother and a old grandmother?”</li></ul> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Hand out the copies of In My Head.</li><li>2. Let students write whatever in their head about this lead-in question.</li></ol> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• See the relative pictures and the map</li></ul> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Teacher shows several pictures-cover of the book and Baby Belvga-through the</li></ol>

- over-head projector.
2. Teacher asks students if they know what the main figures are and make predictions about how these figures might fit in the story.
  3. Teacher gives a introduction of general plot in the novel and read some interesting paragraphs to arouse students' interests
    - Teacher shows the map of Mexico and point out the places where did they go during the trip to look for her father.
    - Word Activity
1. Divide students into four groups and each group should include at least a Spanish-speaking student.
  2. Teacher assigns each group the sheets of *guessing Spanish words* to students as well as the novel.
  3. Teacher asks students to go back and predict the meanings of these words, and then discuss in small groups about the answers
    - True or False Activity
1. Teacher hands out the copies of "True or False" sheets
  2. Let students write what they think of each figure before they read the novel
  3. Teacher asks students to keep this sheet so that they can come back later to see whether they had made right decisions

#### Step 4—After-class Assignments

- **What are your hobbies?**  
Naomi usually carved many different figures with soap, for example, elephant. Do you have any hobbies that you want to share with classmates?
- **Using your own web 2.0 tools to illustrate this novel**  
Teacher asks students to use *Prezi* or *Glogster* illustrating this novel. For example, you can draw pictures, copy some good sentences and write your own journal.
- **Make your own lists about words in this novel**  
Naomi kept a list of many new Spanish words. After reading this novel, what words or sentences attracted you most? List your own choices and share with the classmates.
- **Rewrite some plots in a perspective of one character in the third person**  
Teacher asks students to rewrite some plots in the novel in the perspective of one character they chose in the third person. What if you were the Naomi's mother? What would you say in the court to win your daughter back?

The End

The template of my lesson plan comes from Dr. Pendergrass

*Materials used in the lesson:*

1. Maps of Mexico
2. Video clip
3. "In My Head" copies
4. "True or False" copies

5. Book cover and picture of baby Belvga
6. Guessing Spanish words copies

Name:

Topic: Becoming Naomi Leon

Read each of the following statements, and write down your prediction before reading the novel	BEFORE I READ THE NOVEL: T or F	As you read the novel, write down your reaction to each of the statement. Also, write down a novel quote and page number to support your response. Did your prediction change after reading the novel?	DURING I READ THE NOVEL: T or F
1. Naomi's mother left her when she was seven.			
2. Naomi and her Grandma lived together at a large house.			
3. When Naomi's mother came back to her, Naomi's Grandma was very happy.			
4. Naomi's mother loved Naomi's brother better than Naomi.			
5. Naomi did not find her father at last			
6. Naomi loved soap carving very much and this was like her father.			
7. Naomi did not tell the judge anything during the court.			

Framework comes from: Herrera, S. G., Perez, D. R., & Escamilla, K. (2010).

*Teaching reading to English language learners.* Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

## In My Head

Name:

Question:

*"What would you do if you had a family problem? Imagine what if you had a alcoholic mother, a deformed brother and a old grandmother?"*

I THINK...

*"Becoming Naomi Leon"*  
*By Pam Muñoz Ryan*

Framework comes from: Herrera, S. G., Perez, D. R., & Escamilla, K. (2010).  
*Teaching reading to English language learners.* Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

**Instructions:**

Predict each Spanish word or phrase in column A and write down their English meanings in Column B based upon the contexts. The book pages have already been listed for you. Go back to each page and look for some clues about the Spanish words. Once finished, discuss with your classmates as well as check your answers.

Spanish	English
Quesillo-	page 157
Pina, coco-	page 157
La cathedral-	page 159
Busca a Saantiago Leon-page 164	
Animalitos-	page 174
Las candelas-	page 181
Manana-	page 165
Pan dulce-	page167
No hay posada-	page183
Que?-	page189
Maravilloso-	page190
Aqui-	page190
El leon-	page194
El zocalo-	page197
Bunuelos-	page207

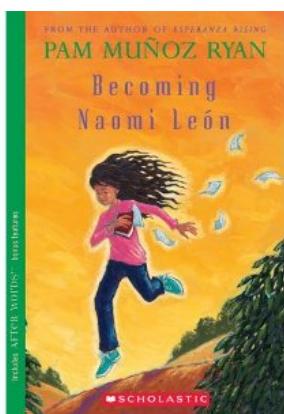
Framework Source:

[http://teacher.scholastic.com/lessonplans/bookfairs/currconnection/naomi\\_leon.htm](http://teacher.scholastic.com/lessonplans/bookfairs/currconnection/naomi_leon.htm)

Map of Mexico



Map Source: <http://www.explorandomexico.com/map-gallery/1/23/>  
Book cover



Picture source:  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Becoming\\_Naomi\\_Le%C3%B3n](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Becoming_Naomi_Le%C3%B3n)

Picture of Baby Belvga



Picture source:

[http://jillsbooks.wordpress.com/2010/09/14/fiction-favorites-becoming-naomi-leon/airstream\\_3/](http://jillsbooks.wordpress.com/2010/09/14/fiction-favorites-becoming-naomi-leon/airstream_3/)

## Artifact I

### SUMMARY PAPER

#### ANGLE ONE

##### *Professor & Tool*

Throughout this semester, the professor gradually developed a tool list along with the pacing of the classes. The tool list was built based upon all the discussions and readings we have had so that we were quite familiar with the categories and content of the whole bunch of tools. The tool building process led by our professor was a very entertaining and inspiring experience. Although fumbling at the very beginning, I finally was able to handle it with facility. There are two main aspects I want to talk about the tool in my final reflection here and I would reduce them into two adjective words: quintessential and pragmatic.

For the first word ‘quintessential’, the reason why I chose it lies in the rich theories embedded in the tool list. I would define our tool list an essence-packed reading which lend a hand for me to better comprehend the reading materials I have read throughout the semester, and at the same time to effectively apply the theories to realistic teaching analysis. Compared with the lengthy papers, the list makes it possible for me to grasp the essence in a more simplified and selective way. After all, the ultimate goal is to use and whatever approach can serve us this end to the largest should be suggested.

For the second word ‘pragmatic’, I chose it because I found the tool especially helpful when I was conducting the observation report because it saved me a huge amount of time thumbing through the papers/books to locate one specific aspect. For instance, when the teacher was interacting with students, there were many things going on at this point such as scaffolding, feedback and probably reciprocal teaching. If I had to return back to Bransford or Allen to check which theories I need to quote here, time would slip by without reminding me of other important factors embedded in the teacher-student talk. The tool acts

as an effective guide for me to search for any information I want and thus largely advance the efficiency of analysis.

Speaking of my professor, the way he conducted this class impressed me a lot. We discussed every week's readings in a note-taking way that saved me much energy to summarizing the biggest point from big chunks of words. Through analyzing the sample videos and classmates' presentations, we took the tool into the practical teaching analysis. This activity not only strengthens the use of tool, but also leads us to think more about how to develop better understanding of what a good teaching should be like. In addition, I especially enjoy working on those interesting games such as Santa Clause gifts, survival on the desert and looking for the wrong things in the picture. I realized the importance of teamwork and the way students think about the question. These would definitely inspire me of my own teaching philosophy. Last but not the least thing I learned from the professor is the role of prober. For example, the professor requires us to provide logical evidentiary support for every judgment we made and this perfectly proves the value of accountability. He made me believe that no student should be labeled as incompetent at the first beginning without probing enough to see their talents. Every child is special and he/she has his/her own way to look at this world. What we should do is to encourage the exploration and thus foster their courage to challenge themselves as well as the impossibilities. Another teaching method the professor used which I like very much is to use videos. Apparently, the videos were carefully selected and all of them give me a way to probe deep into many phenomena that I used to take as granted. For instance, the blue-eye and brown-eye class shocked me to a large extent that I don't expect the prejudice on the black would make people feel so devastating. As Elle Woods said in the movie *Legally Blond II* "You cannot tell how terrible one thing is until it happens on you personally." Indeed, the teacher in the video applied a

really risky way in order to let her students understand the negative effect of racism. She made use of the authority role as a teacher to make this experiment continue until students themselves figure out the reason why they need to abandon the prejudice on people who have different skin color.

A biggest problem I have thought of for a long time is the possible difficulties for me to utilize what I learned here in my country. Considering the fact that we have larger population of students per class, it poses a big challenge for me to realize the expected outcome when teaching in the way appreciated by people like Vygotsky or Bransford. The reconciliation between the ideal and realistic seems to loom large in my future study. However, the ultimate goal of education that is to empower every student remains the same.

## **ANGLE Two**

### *Classmates*

Their understandings of the reading materials influenced me to a large extent. On one hand, this can be demonstrated from the presentations my classmates have done. I was astonished by the novelty of their ideas in conducting the sample lessons. Guided by the readings, we incorporated the theories into our sample lessons. The topics my classmates chose ranges from math, social studies, language arts to the basic argument writing instruction. The ways they presented the topics differentiated from the formal teaching to casual circle talk which cast shadow on my thoughts of the possible future teaching styles.

On the other hand, their positive attitude toward class participation also impressed me as a student. The situation I encountered here differentiated so much from what I have witnessed in China and the sharp contrast gives me much space to rethink what an ideal classroom should be like. Although the classroom discourse is always embedded within certain cultural context, it is our obligation to change the discourse which apparently doesn't work for students. The biggest problem with China's foreign language teaching lies in the

language classroom style in public schools. Influenced by the tradition Chinese culture, the lack-of-motivation environment prevails among the language classroom. It is obvious that we failed to serve our potential good language learners well by suppressing their creativity, motivation and participation. This pedantic teaching style yields a long-lasting negative influence on Chinese students like me when I arrived in the United States. It usually takes a student one whole semester time to adjust to the classroom atmosphere here because our beliefs on education were challenged severely by the robust participation of local students. Thank my classmates to make me realize the happiness of being a student in a country that embraces personal voice and speak-out. It also helps me strengthen my stance of an education reformist when I go back to China.

In sum, my classmates represent the typical ideal students which I wish to have in my classroom in the future. I fully understand the difference about education between my country and the United States has something to do with the national situations and it is not easy to change it immediately. However, with such a blueprint in my head, I will strive to achieve the final anticipation through my personal effort as a dream catcher for students.

### **ANGLE THREE**

#### *Observation report*

The two observation projects I have done were so enlightening and I learned a lot both from the teacher and students I interviewed. There are so many to tell and I will mainly focus on the following aspects.

### **THE TEACHER**

#### *The role of assessment*

Assessment plays such an important role in classroom because it not only helps the teacher locate the problems of an impasse but also provides assistance in adjusting following instructional decisions. During the two observation projects, I can tell that the teacher put

much emphasis on the assessment. There is evidence showing that she changed her plans according to the assessment results. For instance, she decided to have more teaching on the relationship between addition and subtraction after she formally assessed her students' understanding of the topic. In addition, I feel like the teacher was more inclined to use the informal assessment because it gives her immediate estimation of her students' understanding toward the topic. For example, she always asked students to answer questions and checked their answers to see whether to invest more time on those specific points or not.

What I want to add here is that in order to make sure the students were on the right track, we can also encourage students to predict and ask for their explanations. By predicting, we can better control students' thinking through clarifying possible errors students may make. In addition, prediction can be used as one form of facilitation / scaffolding that embedded within teacher-student interaction suggested by Bransford, Allen and Blythe.

### *The role of activity*

There were limited amount of activities in the teacher's two classes. However the activities designed by the teacher were introduced in a logical sequence like from simple to complicated and the activities chosen sharply questioned what students know about the lesson topic. The teacher always started with an interesting and simple activity to draw students' attention before she moved to the lesson topic. For example, the first class I attended was about the relationship between addition and subtraction. The teacher chose a coin problem for students at the very beginning and then gradually transferred to the relatively complicated fact family to test her students' comprehension of the lesson topic. So basically the students were asked to choose three numbers for the triangle and practiced the addition and subtraction with these three numbers. Simple as it seems to be, the activity gave

the teacher chances to know that it was not so simple for her students because they always got confused when considering how to find a missing number.

What's more, the teacher was not satisfied with only one solution to the questions she raised and so she tried to push her students to think more ways to solve the problem. For the coin activity, the teacher asked students to think more about the effective way to solve the problem instead of focusing on the most common way her students planned to use. Apart from that, students were encouraged to explain their approaches to the whole classroom because think aloud provides the teacher a chance to see students' thinking process as well as to instruct academic languages in math. By presenting the solution to the problem, other students also gave their feedbacks to this student which happened to prove the value of peer review. The teacher used group work when she required students to do the relatively complicated activities because students can check each other's work by pointing out the errors and at the same time competing with each other. The example can be shown from the factor game in the second lesson I observed.

### *The role of strategy*

I can tell that the teacher was very good at adjusting her strategies in teaching because she proficiently transferred her strategies according to students' needs. For example, when she worked with the low-performing students in the small group, she gave different assistance for different student. Sometimes, she reminded one or two of them of the finger pointing and sometimes, she required them directly to use the calculation table. During the second after-class interview, she told me that they have had a class to discuss the classroom norms and students all know the rules of talking in the classroom which is respect people when they are talking, no talking when the teacher is talking, question when people done

talking. The classroom norm makes it possible to train students to be good listeners as well as support the reciprocal discourse within the classroom.

## THE STUDENTS

Firstly, I was impressed by the politeness of Ms. H's students when I first went to observe. They were eager to know about you and probably it's because they are in third grade. Some of them even told me their life in the school when I first came to visit. Secondly, It is apparently that the relationship between students and the teacher is in harmony, for example, they have those daily routine called daily announcement which students and teacher share about their personal stories. This is an amazing phenomenon for me who grew up in a culture in which there should be certain kind of distance between students and the teacher. Thirdly, students have a strong sense of group work and this is what our students in China severely lack of. Partially it's because the teaching model in China deprives students of the chances to work in groups because we put much emphasis on the central role of teachers.

The two students I have interviewed gave me a typical expression of students here in the United States. For one thing, they reminded me of how American students were encouraged to say whatever they want to say without worrying about the consequence of their so-called inappropriate talking in teachers' eyes. In China, we highly value the community honor and anything that could put our community in danger would be unacceptable. If this interview happened in China, I would doubt the students' courage to talk about negative sides of their teacher. For example, both of the two students critiqued the teacher as well as the test and they have their own opinions about how problems should be solved. For another thing, although the two students have misunderstandings toward the class content that has been taught, they understand why they need to learn certain things. For example, the second student I interviewed told me that the multiplication is another way

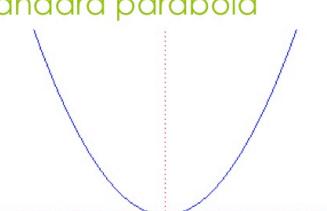
to do addition and it would make some work easier and more convenient. The first student told me that she does not like math because she thought math is really confusing to her, however she knows that she needs to learn math because it is useful.

## **CONCLUSION**

In sum, analysis of teaching rendered me a more comprehensive and systematic angle to think of teaching. Teaching is hardly a simple task to give something my students. It involves intelligence as well as patience to check what best works for my students. Through working on the tool, I get to know the minutia of teaching; through my professor's creative teaching, I sense what it means to be good teaching; through interacting with my classmates, I figure out the difference between us; through conducting the two observation projects, I get the way to probe into the American education system.

# Artifact J

## PARABOLA PRESENTATION

 <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Parabola</b> Man Yang EDUC 3170 Instructor: Professor Trapper</p>	<h3>Prior knowledge</h3> <p>I will assume you are 10-11th graders who...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Familiar with linear functions</li><li>• Know how to plot a function</li><li>• Know positive/negative/absolute values</li><li>• Familiar with 2D coordinate system</li></ul>
<h3>Linear function</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To plot a linear function, we need to find the coordinates of <i>at least two points</i> that fit the rule.</li><li>• Then, what about parabola?</li></ul>	<h3>Parabola</h3> <h4>Why do we learn parabola?</h4> <p>Two examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Solar radiation collectors</li><li>• headlight reflectors</li></ul> <p>Animation: <a href="http://www.intmath.com/plane-analytic-geometry/4-parabola.php">http://www.intmath.com/plane-analytic-geometry/4-parabola.php</a></p>
<h3>Brief Introduction</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What is a parabola?<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• An object travel trajectory when freely moving in the space. For example:</li><li>• Play soccer/throw a ball</li></ul></li></ul> <p>In this class, we will...</p> <p>Firstly, properties of parabolas Secondly, how to draw a parabola Thirdly, how to define a parabola function with 3 points which are not on the same line</p> <p><b>Use it-Angry bird game!</b></p>	<h3>A standard parabola</h3> 

## Parabola Properties

- All the parabolas are **symmetrical** somehow
- Has a **center line** which can be used to divide a parabola into two identical parts
- Has a **highest/lowest** point, those points locate on the center line

## Parabola polynomial form

**Binary quadratic equation**  
(Two variables, the highest order is 2, three coefficients)

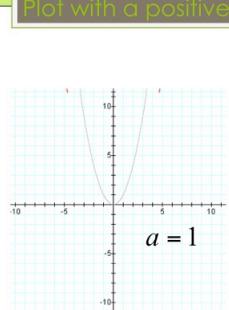
$$y = ax^2 + bx + c$$

$$y = 2x^2 + x + 1$$

If the rule for a relation between two variables is given, then the graph of the relation can be drawn by constructing a table of values

$$y = ax^2$$

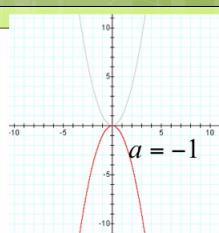
Opening upward  
Has a lowest point



## Plot with a negative

$$y = ax^2$$

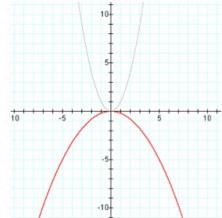
Opening downward  
Has a highest point



## Let's try

$$Y = ax^2$$

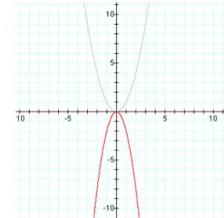
$$(-1 < a < 0)$$



## Let's try

$$Y = ax^2$$

$$(a < -1)$$



## Changing "a"

In general, negating the value of "a" will reflect the existing graph across the x axis. As "a" increases (positive values) or decreases (negative values) from zero, the parabola will narrow.

**The larger  $|a|$  is, the narrower the parabola opens**

"a" determines the shape of a parabola

## Changing "b" & "c"

In general: changing "b" and "c" only determine the location of parabola

## Test it!

<http://www.mathsisfun.com/definitions/parabola.html>

## Review

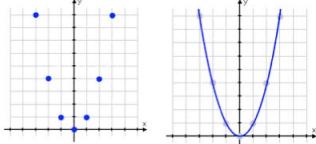
- What does "a" indicate? What about "b" and "c"?
- When does a parabola have a highest/lowest point?
  - plotting time

## Drawing a parabola

- How to draw a parabola?

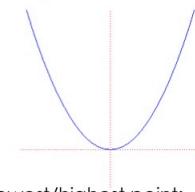
Take  $y=x^2$  as an example

x	$y = x^2$
-3	$(-3)^2 = 9$
-2	$(-2)^2 = 4$
-1	$(-1)^2 = 1$
0	$0^2 = 0$
1	$1^2 = 1$
2	$2^2 = 4$
3	$3^2 = 9$
4	$4^2 = 16$



## An effective way

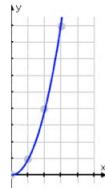
$$\begin{aligned}y &= ax^2 + bx + c \\&= a(x + \frac{b}{2a})^2 + c - \frac{b^2}{4a}\end{aligned}$$



The coordinates for the lowest/highest point:  
 $(-\frac{b}{2a}, c - \frac{b^2}{4a})$   
Center line is  $x = -\frac{b}{2a}$

$$y = x^2$$

(0,0)  
(1,1)  
(2,4)



## Group work time

- $y = -x^2 + 4$
- $y = (1/2)x^2 + 2x$
- $y = x^2 + 4x + 3$
- $y = x^2 - 3x + 4$

## Think backwards

How can I get the function?

## How to get the function

- Once you are told a parabola covers three points, then...

## Model

- $y = ax^2 + bx + c$ , it covers(0,1),(1,3),(2,7)

First step...

Then...

Finally...

## Before we go on...

- Review the key information

- Properties of parabola
- The meanings for a, b and c
- How to be effective in plotting?
- How to think backward?

## Angry bird game

<http://www.teachmaths-inthinking.co.uk/activities/angry-birds.htm>

- A:(0,0)  
B:(5,4)  
C:(10,0)

What is the polynomial formula for this parabola?

Right answer is...



$$y = -4/25 x(x-10)$$