

## **Capstone English Language Learners Portfolio**

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### **Abstract**

This English Language Learners portfolio demonstrates the in-depth professional knowledge that I have learned from my two years of study in the English Language Learners program at the Peabody College of Vanderbilt University. Synthesizing with what I have learned through coursework, student teaching experience, fieldtrips, and classroom observations, I present my own interpretation and understanding of teaching English as a foreign language.

This portfolio consists of three sections: 1) Philosophy of Teaching, 2) TESOL Standards, and 3) Implications, Challenges, and New Directions. In the first section of the portfolio, I discuss the overarching teaching philosophy that forms my teaching style. In the second section of the portfolio, I list the eight domains of the TESOL Standards: (1) Planning, (2) Instructing, (3) Assessing, (4) Identity and Context, (5) Language Proficiency, (6) Learning, (7) Content, and (8) Commitment and Professionalism. I then provide artifacts as examples to reflect my mastery in these standards by specifically focusing on learners and learning, learning environment, curriculum, and assessment. Finally, in the third section of the portfolio, I discuss the goals that I plan to achieve in my future practice, identify the challenges that I may encounter and suggest the ways of tackling them, and outline the direction for my continual professional development.

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## **Philosophy of Teaching**

Two years of studying at Peabody and real world teaching experience in both China and the U.S. have equipped me with a better understanding of the theoretical frameworks of teaching and have helped me form my definition of “good teacher,” which have shaped my philosophy of teaching.

As a prospective teacher who is planning to return to my home country and teach Chinese English Language Learners (ELLs) from disadvantaged areas, in this section, I will briefly introduce the background of my future students and carefully explain how the theories and methods I have learned will be implemented in my practice.

### **1. Students and Their Communities**

As future educators, it is significant for teachers in China to consider the unique characteristics and requirements of culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students because of today’s shifting demographics and migration climate in China.

The students I will teach were born and raised in disadvantaged areas in China. They grow up under the care of relatives, usually grandparents with little or no education, since their parents left them at home and moved to big cities like Beijing and Shanghai to seek more opportunities. Most of the students’ families rely on farming to sustain life; their living-standard is very low, barely sufficient for mere survival. Since caretakers of the students do not have the physical abilities, financial means or knowledge needed to take care of them, those students consequently are suffering developmental issues like dropping out of school and becoming vulnerable to poverty and illiteracy. Although the central government has been trying its best to guarantee that the financial and educational resources are fairly distributed, factors like inefficient implement of supplies still result in lacking resources, including certified teachers and enough teaching

facilities. In the face of my students' hardships, I think the very first thing that they need is my care, a good relationship, spaces of trust, and commitment to listening. What do I mean by care? It involves the response to students' needs at different levels (academic, social, emotional, etc.) and building a trusting relationship with them (Risko & Walker-Dahlhouse, 2012). For example, besides disseminating knowledge to my students in class, I would occasionally organize field trips and one-on-one consultations to find out their needs and requirements. When students know that their teacher cares for them, they feel welcomed and secure in the classroom, which to a large extent will help them to prompt their "affective filter" in their language acquisition (Krashen, 1988). In addition to providing them the knowledge, we should care about their daily lives and let them know that the teacher cares about them, which will help to make them feel safer and better able to cope with the teacher in the classroom (de Jong, 2011).

Students' fluency in Mandarin Chinese is considered as a strength that they could bring to the classroom. Thanks to the promotion of the nation-wide use of Mandarin in China, all of the teachers are strongly encouraged to teach in Mandarin at school, which has helped the students to learn standardized Chinese. As an advocate of Ruiz's *language as resource*, I will treat students' first language (L1) as an asset rather than a barrier in their language learning and maximize the opportunities for them to utilize their L1 to assist them in improving their literacy skills in English. The detailed implementation will be introduced in the following part.

From the social perspective, for children from poorer families, the main hope of social mobility is through education. Take English learning for instance; gaining fluency in speaking English will help those kids who live in poor conditions to get more opportunities of engaging in jobs at higher social level that requires employees' grasp of English. By aiding them

to get better jobs, it will be easier for them to raise their social status and enjoy the same social benefits that the wealthy enjoy, which is the true meaning of social equity and justice.

## **2. Curriculum**

Considering the ultimate goals of my teaching are to motivate my students' interests in learning English, to help them gain higher levels of listening, speaking, reading, and writing, and to help them become life-long learners, I will consider my students' literacy in Mandarin Chinese as a resource, implement my teaching practices by following the Mainstream Bilingual Program Model, and use students' L1 to give main instruction (de Jong, 2011). The reason for not using English as the main instructive language is that pure English teaching still sounds a little bit overwhelming to them. The incomprehension of the instruction because of the unfamiliarity with English will devalue students' interests and motivation in studying the language (Suzanne & Owen, 1997). Therefore, I will use Mandarin Chinese to give most of the instruction.

In addition to following the teaching model as mentioned, I will encourage my students to collaborate together in class. In China, the significance of group work has always been neglected because the large class size makes it nearly impossible to implement peer works in class. However, through my observation in fieldwork, I have learned that ELL students always get better results when they work in teams since they are challenged to speak during group work, providing collaborative practice in articulating their ideas in English helps with both social and academic language development. According to Vygotsky's sociocultural theory of learning, an individual develops his/her cognitive and linguistic abilities through social interaction (1978). For students, the classroom is the main social context where relationships are built. As students interact with their peers, socially mediated behaviors finally become internalized and affect cognitive development. Besides, an interaction mode like group-discussion also helps students

learn to value individual ideas through the unique interpretations of the element and structure of literature they discover in group (Suzanne & Owen, 1997). As a consequence, I will divide the students in groups based on their English language proficiency. Pairing students with higher language proficiency with students with lower English proficiency will help the latter group become comfortable and proficient in class (Suzanne & Owen, 1997). Moreover, while my students are discussing in groups, I will always circulate, check if students are engaging the activities, and help struggling students to construct sentence structures. Teacher interaction is fairly important based on Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) theory. ZPD suggests that students can demonstrate a higher level of performance with proper assistance and guidance from others, compared to the performance of completing the same task themselves. The significance of the scaffolding from experienced others inspires me, as a teacher, to offer assistance to our students and help them to achieve deeper levels of learning (1978).

### **3. Theoretical Understandings of Serving ELL Students**

During my study, I have learned a lot of theories that are related to ELL teaching. Specifically, the Funds of Knowledge theory, and Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) pedagogy have had the most impact on my teaching.

A better understanding of my students' cultural background helps me design related activities that students are familiar with, thus arousing their interests in classroom participation. As the collected funds of knowledge "emphasize strategic knowledge and related activities essential in children's development" (Moll, 1992), those activities that are built on them also assist in educating students effectively and efficiently. Consequently, I will arrange home visits with my students and their parents/caretakers to get more information with regard to their linguistic/cultural/financial strengths and weaknesses. After knowing more about my students, I

will apply CRT as my teaching pedagogy as it acknowledges, responds to, and celebrates fundamental cultures in all aspects of learning (Brown University, 2015).

During my fieldwork, I wrote a lesson plan that could reflect my culturally responsive philosophy. I came up with the idea of incorporating students' background knowledge with writing practice. Since most of the students from the community spent a lot of time in helping their families with farmwork, they were familiar with the related knowledge and were good at explaining the process of planting. I designed a writing activity and required students to create a one-page "instruction of potato planting" work. Following the spirit of teamwork, I divided my students in groups and made sure that each group had at least one student who knew farming well (based on the information that I collected from home visiting). The student who is good at planting vegetables would introduce the knowledge while the rest of the students in the group came up with the corresponding English versions of the procedure. When they finished, I invited groups to share their works with the whole class, and then edited their work in group based on the suggestions that were given by their peers. Such activity reflects the core characteristic of CRT: learning within the context of culture that the students are familiar with, which, to a large extent, attracts their attention and increases their participation (Moll, 1992).

There are a lot of other activities that could utilize the linguistic strengths of the students in my ELL teaching, for example, translation activity. I will provide pictures of commercials (simple in language) of different domains such as "clothing," "food," "toy," etc. I will then put students in groups and invite them to categorize these advertisements in genres. Afterwards, I will ask each group to pick one advertisement and translate it into Chinese. Since the language of the commercials is not demanding and the L1 of my students is strong, I am sure that my students can provide a translation of high quality through group work. Such translation activity

practices students' translation and discussion skills since they need to "negotiate the linguistic and pragmatic choices for creating the best translation" (Jiménez, 2009). Moreover, as the CRT pedagogy emphasizes "teacher as facilitator" (Moll, 1992), such translation activity aids ELL students' independence in learning as they explore the meanings of the words by themselves.

#### **4. Partnerships and Advocacy**

As it is depicted in Allen's book, the key of becoming a good teacher is "knowing the children's family cultures through involvement in their communities" (Allen, 2007). A "flexible, adaptive, and active" relationship with parents helps to "reduce the insularity of classrooms and contribute to the academic content and lessons" (Moll, 1992). Therefore, I will try my best to have more engagement with the families, by either home visits or letter writing (telecommunication is not popularized in the village). After knowing more information about the parents, including family history, education levels of the parents, attitudes towards school, parenting styles, as well as the jobs and skills that parents are holding now, I will have a better understanding of the student's growing and living environment, which will enable me to give targeted assistance to each student.

#### **5. Conclusion**

In China, there is no law or legislation that mandates English language learning. However, following the 9-year Compulsory Education Law, as a future ELL teacher at the K-9 level, I have the obligation to promote equity by cultivating knowledge to students on all-levels. However, now in China, there are still approximately seventy million children that are raised in rural areas and have limited access to education. If we keep ignoring the education of this special group of students, they will have little chance to prosper in such a competitive working environment. For children from low-income families, the main gateway to social mobility is through education.

Fluency in English will help those children living under poor conditions to get good jobs that require high levels of competence in English. By helping them get better jobs, people will find it easier to obtain equal access to basic necessities and rights. Only by respecting the special needs of individual people can true social equity and justice be achieved. As a future ELL teacher, I will follow the teaching philosophy that I form through this program to help more ELL students in China to prosper.

## TESOL Standards

The TESOL Standards is the primary resource that I refer to when I plan, implement, and revise my teaching instruction, with the aim of better satisfying the needs of my ELL students. In this section, I am going to present my understanding of the following eight domains in the TESOL Standards: (1) Planning, (2) Instructing, (3) Assessing, (4) Identity and Context, (5) Language Proficiency, (6) Learning, (7) Content, and (8) Commitment and Professionalism. To better convey my interpretation of each domain, I will first discuss my understanding of the standard. Then I will provide concrete artifacts and explain in detail how they prove my competency in each domain by specifically focusing on learners and learning, learning environment, curriculum, and assessment.

### **Domain: Planning**

*Standard 1: Teachers plan instruction to promote learning and meet learner goals, and modify plans to assure learner engagement and achievement.*

Lesson planning is significantly important for both teachers and students. For teachers, especially for novice teachers like myself, planning beforehand enables me to have sufficient time to identify the standards that students need to meet; I can specify the learning objectives (both content and language objectives) that students can achieve; I can brainstorm diversified classroom activities (either individual or group work) to activate students' learning motivation and keep the flow of the class, and; I can design appropriate level of assessments to evaluate students' learning progress. For students, a successful lesson plan does not solely include disseminating novel knowledge. Instead, it has a connection to the learners' existing funds of knowledge (including their L1, social norms, cultural heritages, living skills etc.), making the

whole learning process more engaging. Embedding things that students are familiar with into a lesson plan helps provide scaffolding them when learning new knowledge (Moll, Amanti, Neff & Gonzalez, 1992).

In this section, I am going to use Artifact A, a three-genre lesson plan that I wrote for the *ENED 6340: Reading and Learning with Print and New Media* class. The lesson is designed for 6<sup>th</sup> Grade ELLs. They are exposed to three genres of texts, including the printed version of Robert Frost's poem *The Road Not Taken* with a picture of a split path beside it aside, a 3-minute YouTube video clip about decision making called *Decisions, Decisions, Decisions*, and an audio clip of *The Road Not Taken*. Through analyzing multi-genre texts and accomplishing different assessments like reading comprehension and a triple entry chart, students will understand the process of decision-making and accepting the outcome of that decision.

**Learners and learning.** The students that I am teaching are 6<sup>th</sup> Grade ELLs. Most students at this age level do not like reading poetry because they find that the ideas expressed in poems are vague and difficult to understand. They may recognize every single word in a poem but still fail to comprehend the main idea of the piece. With the aim of helping my students comprehend poetry and piquing their interests in this genre, I wrote this lesson plan and tried to use the *Making Connections* strategy to help them understand *The Road Not Taken* in an efficient way. Moreover, since my 6<sup>th</sup> Grade students are becoming more mature both physically and psychologically, topics like decision making, which is considered a sophisticated yet very common and significant action in their lives will make the theme of poem more understandable to them. For example, at the beginning of the lesson, I will invite students to watch a short video about decision making. Students' interests will be aroused and their *schemas* will be recalled (Piaget & Cook, 1952). Students are also engaged because their identities/experiences are

relevant to the theme of the class. Therefore, because the lesson plan is important to them, they are mentally prepared for what they are going to learn and discuss in the lesson.

**Learning environment.** While planning for this lesson, I made great efforts to provide scaffolding in my students' learning environment. According to van Geert and Steenbeek, scaffolding is defined as the "use of some external support that makes a particular learning process possible and that can be discarded after the learning has taken place" (2005). Efficient usage of scaffolding in the classroom will to a large extent lower the students' affective filter and prevent them suffering from a "mental block". In this state, students' comprehensible input will not be able to be used for acquisition (Krashen, 1988). In this case, I designed scaffolding like modelling and generating graphic organizers to summarize and visualize the connections between the text and learner's lives and assist their comprehending and learning. Before asking my students to read the poem and fill out the Triple Entry Chart, I demonstrated the process of reading for my students first. While modeling, I read the first stanza aloud, as well as ask and answer the following poem-related questions, like: *Where is the author going? Where is he traveling to? Why is he so careful? What do both roads represent? How does this poem connect to our lives?* etc. I then make connections with life experiences and fill in the blanks on the Triple Entry Chart. The questions that I ask while I am modeling not only make my thinking process more explicit for students to understand, but also provide them more time to think and formulate their own thoughts with their limited language proficiency (Herrera, Perez, & Escamilla, 2010).

**Curriculum.** During my lesson planning stage, I created my teaching plan according to the Common Core Local Standards for 6<sup>th</sup> Grade English Language Arts & Literacy. I then developed the content and language objectives in correspondence with these standards. I believe

that when the curriculum seamlessly adheres to the standards, teaching and learning become more specific and students' achievements are clearly and easily to be tracked and evaluated. For instance, one of the standards that I address in this lesson plan is:

*TN.CC.RI.7.1: Cite several pieces of textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.*

To achieve this goal, I take advantage of the graphic organizer Triple Entry Chart since it has the questions regarding what the text says explicitly and the connections that readers can draw between the text and their lives. For example, *what does it actually say? What do we think it means? Why? How does the poem connect to our lives?* What is more, the group work activity requires students to find answers to the questions and write these concise answers on the graphic organizer. This highlights the students' skills of grasping the main idea of the text since the space on the chart is limited.

**Assessment.** In this lesson, I use presentational assessments like Triple Entry Chart presenting, essay writing, and Exit Ticket, which are considered a form of performance-based assessment to evaluate students' learning. According to Sweet, performance-based assessment is "a form of testing that requires students to perform a task rather than select an answer from a ready-made list" (1993). It tests what students can do by using specific skills and competences. Through presenting the Triple Entry Chart orally, students' presentation skills and English oral proficiency can be observed by using the Student Oral Language Observation Matrix (SOLOM) protocol. The observation results will be recorded and analyzed to come up with the new plans for developing individual's oral skills later. By writing the essay, students are asked to make connections between *The Road Not Taken* and their lives and to write a compare and contrast essay. In the Exit Ticket reflection, students are asked to write what they have learned in class.

Through these assessment activities, students' oral proficiency, vocabulary, and writing ability to reflect language functions - like comparing and contrasting the differences and similarities between different items - are evaluated and tested. The result of the assessments can further inform my instruction and help me to modify my next plans to accommodate the different needs of my students.

**Domain: Instructing**

*Standard 2: Teachers create supportive environments that engage all learners in purposeful learning and promote respectful classroom interactions.*

According to Krashen, learners with high motivation and confidence, and a low level of anxiety are better equipped for success in second language acquisition. Conversely, low motivation and anxiety can "raise" the affective filter and impedes students' learning (1988). This theory particularly applies to CLD students given the fact that their English language proficiency is limited; a welcoming and supportive learning environment will help them to survive and thrive in a content where they can hardly express themselves by using the target language. To create such a friendly and supportive environment, teachers should have a good knowledge of students' socio-cultural and linguistic backgrounds and make the best use of them in their teaching practice. When students find that they are able to make connections between the novel knowledge and their own experiences in class, a welcoming environment is built since their funds of knowledge are activated.

What is more, teachers should provide more opportunities for teacher-student interactions and peer-to-peer interactions. When cooperating with others who share different socio-cultural and linguistic backgrounds, students' awareness of embracing and respecting different cultures is

built.

In this section, I am going to use Artifact B, a lesson plan that I wrote for the *EDUC 6570: Teaching Second Language Literacy* class. The lesson is designed for 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Chinese ELLs. They are going to compare and contrast the similarities and differences between Chinese Spring Festival and Christmas. Students will use the knowledge of their own culture to explore in what ways celebrating a familiar holiday can be different from celebrating a holiday from another culture. I use this lesson to elaborate how I lead students to explore the theme of cultural diversity purposefully in a supportive and respectful learning environment.

**Learners and learning.** The ultimate goal of my lesson is to equip my ELL students with the ability to compare and contrast the experience of reading a story and viewing a video or live version of the text, including contrasting what they “see” and “hear” when reading the text to what they perceive when they listen or watch (CCSS, 2017). Given that my Chinese ELLs are very familiar with the Spring Festival, in order to engage them in purposeful language learning, I chose a video about something they are familiar with to help them learn a new cultural concept – Christmas, through comparing and contrasting. This instruction helps to build up connections between content objective: “SWBAT understand cultural diversity by comparing and contrasting Chinese Spring Festival and Christmas Day.” and learners’ background knowledge of their own culture. When students feel proud because their cultural identities/experiences are highly valued in class, their engagement are prompted.

**Learning environment.** In order to create a supporting learning environment, I use strategic grouping and teacher’s intervention in class. All groups in my class will have a mixed group of lower intermediate ELL students, intermediate ELL students, and high intermediate ELL students. By grouping students with different language proficiencies, quick learners will

have the chance to assist slow learners to progress; thus a friendly and cooperative learning environment among peers is created. Besides, I will give ELL students an in-time support during the class. For example, when students are doing quiz questions, I will circulate and check if students are engaging with the quizzes and help struggling readers to comprehend the quiz questions. Also, when it is necessary, I will also incorporate student's L1 (here refers to Chinese specifically) and the definitions of some trickier words in the lesson as scaffolds. For instance, stuffing (馅儿, a season mixture, made of bread crumbs, vegetables, and butter that is typically placed inside the cavity of a turkey and cooked.)

**Curriculum.** The curriculum meets the CCSS. ELA-LITERACY. SL.6.5 Standard: *Include multimedia components (e.g., graphics, images, music, and sound) and visual displays in presentations to clarify information* (CCSS, 2017). I inserted graphic organizer- Van Diagram to help my students visualize the similarities and differences between two holidays under different cultures, which is considered as a process of culture appreciation. Since the theme of this lesson is to explore cultural diversity, embracing the differences highlights the standard of embracing and respecting.

**Assessment.** I assign a group presentation as homework for this lesson. Students will continue working in the same group that they are assigned in class; each group will choose another festival that is celebrated in western countries, compare and contrast it with Spring Festival, and present the similarities and differences between them by using the Van Diagram to the whole class. The group presentation focuses more on evaluating the speaking and writing skills of the ELL students. They are encouraged to use online resources to facilitate their work. After collecting resources, students will review the materials and choose whatever form they like to present their work to the class. The group will work collaboratively, which means each

member should participate in a role and contribute to the final presentation. Students will be graded respectively based on their performances in the presentation and the process of preparing, for example: to what extent the student pronounces the words accurately, uses grammars properly, and to what extent the student transfers the class-learned knowledge in his/her presentation etc. I think this assessment does not only examine what students learn in class, but also invites them to present their perspectives on cultural diversity and their skills on the usage of the graphic organizer. Students are expected to draw upon their own experience to elaborate on how two cultures vary from each other and are the same.

**Domain: Assessing**

*Standard 3: Teachers recognize the importance of and are able to gather and interpret information about learning and performance to promote the continuous intellectual and linguistic development of each learner. Teachers use knowledge of student performance to make decisions about planning and instruction “on the spot” and for the future. Teachers involve learners in determining what will be assessed and provide constructive feedback to learners, based on assessments of their learning.*

As effective ELL teachers, we should have the ability to use various forms of assessments, including standardized tests, low-stake discernment tasks, and classroom-based observation to have a holistic grasp of students' learning progress and simultaneously provide constructive feedback and effective instructional responses to promote the development of the students. Teachers should definitely not only rely on the standardized test since the performance of the students is influenced by too many factors. For instance, the reliability and validity of the test itself and students' anxiety towards the tests are all influencing students' reactions towards the

standardized tests. Merely relying on the high-stake formal tests could be biased to ELLs and consequently resulting in an inaccurate evaluation on students' true abilities () Therefore, other forms of supplemental assessments like classroom-observation are necessary. Besides, the results that students make in the assessment at the same time examine whether the teacher's decision about planning and instruction are "on the spot."

In this section, I am going to use Artifact C to show my competency in this domain. Artifact C is a case study of a non-native English speaker that I wrote for the *EDUC 6530: Educational Linguistics and Second Language Acquisition* class. In this case study, I interviewed a Chinese student who is studying Theological Studies at Vanderbilt University and collected both of her formal and informal writing samples to analyze. Through listening to the videos of interview between us and analyzing her writing samples, I assessed her English language abilities in terms of four major components of the language: phonology (sound system), semantics (system of meanings), grammar (rules of word and sentence formation), and pragmatics (social aspect). Afterwards, based on the results that I gained from the assessments that my participant had, I gave her the specific instructional learning plan to help her better integrate with the new learning environment of graduate school.

**Learners and learning.** Through causal coffee talk and formal IELTS- style conversations with my participant Ying, I have learned more background knowledge about her. Born and raised in Beijing, Ying spent more than 20 years in China. Mandarin Chinese is her native language. Four months ago, Ying moved to Nashville alone and embarked on her new journey in the States. She did not get any chance of visiting an English speaking country before so she was very excited and looked forward to starting her new life in Nashville.

Ying spent 15 years learning English under the influence of the Chinese education system,

which shaped her current English language proficiency. As a Chinese student, I shared the same experience of studying in China, and I know that the students there are asked to memorize English vocabulary and usage cases that are limited to what is tested on standardized exams. The development of students' speaking competence is particularly ignored. The education system in China that Ying was under is rather score-oriented, which means that the teachers would require their students to recite the things that are tested again and again, with the aim of getting a higher score. Therefore, Ying's knowledge of English language may not be broad.

**Learning environment.** ELLs who have gained more knowledge and experience will put themselves in a stronger position to learn new languages than those who have not (Frankfurt International School, 2015). For instance, a student who has lived and studied in an English speaking country and been exposed to the most authentic western culture has a stronger base for learning English than others who have not had such diversified experiences. Through my conversation with Ying, I learned that she traveled a lot, but mostly in Asian countries. Therefore, a lack of abundant knowledge and quantity of exposure to American culture differentiates her from native speakers. The opportunity of interacting with native speakers also becomes a contributing factor in ELLs' learning process. Native speakers should be considered as linguistic models and they can provide constructive feedback to non-native speakers (Frankfurt International School, 2015). Thus, ELLs who have limited access to native speakers make slower progress, particularly in the oral aspects of language acquisition, compared to those who have access to native speakers. In China, the distribution of foreign language teachers in the K-12 system is unequal, even in big cities. Most of the students like Ying seldom have the opportunity to communicate with foreigners before entering college. After entering college, Ying had the chance to make friends with native speakers through different social events like parties and

becoming language partners with those who were studying in China as exchange students. Though her exposure to native speakers was limited, Ying at least started to have the chance to talk with them and know more about their cultures, which more or less helped Ying's language learning.

**Assessment.** After the careful analysis of my participant's oral and written language abilities in terms of phonology, semantics, grammar, and pragmatics, I place her current speaking ability at the High Intermediate Fluency level and writing ability at the Bridging level according to the WIDA Descriptors of the English Language Proficiency Standard (see Artifact C for more information). According to the descriptions of Ying's phonology, she can use a range of pronunciation features with mixed control. Her oral samples show some effective use of features but it is not sustained. Ying's pronunciation can be generally understood throughout, though mispronunciation of individual words or sounds that mixed with her L1 pronunciation reduces clarity at times. Ying's L1 accent sometimes has an effect on indelibility.

I graded Ying's writing ability at the Bridging level because her written samples basically satisfied the requirements that are outlined in the WIDA Descriptors of the English Language Proficiency Standard (see Artifact C for more information). Through my observations on Ying's writing samples that involve different topics, I found out that she can create pieces that represent the use of a variety of genres. She is available to explain her viewpoints with the support of data, statistics, and examples. Although she had the tendencies of overgeneralizing, her main ideas were addressed with some relevant supporting ideas. Despite the fact that Ying's vocabulary and sentence variety are in need of development, I graded her written English at the Bridging Level.

The overall performance of Ying's writing is better than her speaking. Most of the writing samples addressed all parts of the tasks and presented clear positions throughout her responses,

although the conclusions might be inadequately developed. In terms of coherence and cohesion, Ying's performance was quite similar to how she did in her oral conversation. Ying is deeply influenced by the grammatical rules in her L1. Instead of using connecting words and phrases with variability and flexibility, she used small clauses frequently, sometimes without even indicating the inner logic. In terms of grammatical range and accuracy, though Ying made some errors in grammar and punctuation, they rarely reduced communication.

**Curriculum.** When designing assessment for the students, we need to take the requirement of the curriculum that the students need to meet into consideration. For Ying's case study, the ultimate goal is to diagnose specific needs and difficulties that might block her learning process and to acculturate her into the academic curriculum setting of U.S. Higher Education as soon as possible. The results inform me in making the most personalized instruction for her. In order to help Ying improve her English language abilities, I encourage her to do three things: raise her awareness of the importance of some linguistic concepts, as well as the differences between English and Chinese, broaden her lexical resources (especially academic vocabulary words), and have more engagement with native speakers.

### **Domain: Identity and Context**

*Standard 4: Teachers understand the importance of who learners are and how their communities, heritages and goals shape learning and expectations of learning. Teachers recognize the importance how context contributes to identity formation and therefore influences learning. Teachers use this knowledge of identity and settings in planning, instructing, and assessing.*

To echo my teaching philosophy, the CRT pedagogy teaches me that a caring teacher should embrace students' various cultural backgrounds and take into account their linguistic, academic,

cognitive, and sociocultural assets (Herrera, Perez, & Escamilla, 2010). Incorporating a broader knowledge of students' social and cultural backgrounds in the classroom helps students learn about the diverse composition of their communities (Jiménez, Smith & Teague, 2009).

Additionally, it helps me design relevant and meaningful activities that students are familiar with, thus assisting me in encouraging classroom participation and educating students effectively and efficiently. Besides encouraging students to bring and utilize their unique cultural heritages in class, I also plan to arrange home visits to collect more community literacies with regard to their linguistic/cultural/financial strengths and weaknesses. I will make the best use of them in in planning, instructing, and assessing.

In this section, I am going to use Artifact D and Artifact E to show my competency in this domain. Both Artifact D and E are papers that I wrote for the *EDUC 6520: Foundation for ELL Education* class. Artifact D is from a fieldtrip. During the fieldtrip, we explored Casa Azafrán on Nolensville Pike, a non-profit organization that focuses on serving immigrants and refugees in Nashville and a grocery store called K&S International Market to collect a set of literate artifacts. These are considered valuable resources in collecting funds of knowledge (Moll, 1992). Based on the artifacts that I collected, I have designed some lesson plans for my future students and in order to fully engage in their language learning. Artifact E describes my observation at a sheltered English Language Development (ELD) Reading class and how their ELD program serves ELLs with special needs.

**Learners and learning.** Starting from 1994, immigration patterns began to change. More immigrants from Asia and Africa hit the shores of the United States and places like Nashville became their destinations (J.R. Lind, 2013). Nolensville Pike continues to be a destination for 21<sup>st</sup> century immigrants. According to the information that I collected from visiting the local

community, south Nashville began to attract immigrants from Mexico, Honduras, Guatemala and Panama in the early 1990s. This was then followed by the influx of Kurds, Iraqis, Turks, Vietnamese, Laotians, Burmese, and Nepalese thanks to the inclusivity and assistance provided by Nashville.

**Learning environment.** In Artifact E, through my actual attendance of an ELD class, I collected information on how a welcoming learning environment could be created. The teacher fostered a supportive environment that embraced diversity and cultural sensitivity: on the wall hung a world map, souvenirs from different countries, Chinese students' calligraphy paintings, and photos of the students from International Day 2014. The decorations highlighted the different language and cultural backgrounds of the ELL students. It is important to let ELL students see the value of their home culture and language as they transition to the English language and become acclimated to American culture (University of San Diego School of Education, 2015). The teacher's positive classroom climate relates to the theory of the Pluralist Discourses. Within Pluralist Discourses, diversity is considered a fundamental part of an increasingly mobile, global, and diverse world. It stresses the need to negotiate diversity with respect and fairness to all. Though poor language literacy may be a barrier for ELL students, valuing on diversity in classroom can help bridge differences, encourage communication across groups, and lead to innovation (de Jong, 2011).

Aside from the classroom decorations, the teacher's homogenous grouping strategy also caught my attention. The ELL students in the observed classroom were required to sit at tables with students of the same English proficiency. In this way, they could collaborate together in small groups during class. Since group work requires ELLs speak English, providing collaborative spaces for them to articulate their ideas in English with people of the same

language proficiency helps both social and academic language development (Suzanne F. P, Owen F. B, 1997).

**Curriculum.** As experienced teachers, we should respect all students' identities and incoming cultural knowledge by updating the curriculum to become culturally relevant (Nieto & Bode, 2008). In Artifact E, I observed a sheltered ELD Reading classroom of 18 low intermediate ELLs. After the warm-ups, the teacher led the class in a brief review of *Romeo and Juliet* that they had learnt the week before and transitioned to that day's reading topic: marriage. After making sure the students understood the ideas of each paragraph of *Romeo and Juliet*, the teacher then moved to a deeper level by explaining some difficult terms. During this process, she involved ELLs' cultural background knowledge and made the difficult terms more understandable. For instance, when talking about the "arranged marriage" (which refers to a type of marital union where the bride and groom are selected by a third party rather than by each other), the teacher intentionally invited Indian and Kurdish students to share their culture backgrounds with the class; most of the marriages now in Indian and Kurdish culture are still determined by parents. When students encountered difficulties in explaining some terms in English, the teacher would step in and help them by asking questions like "Do you mean XXX?" and "I think you mean XXX." etc. By involving diverse culture in the classroom, the teacher helped students use their own background knowledge to understand literature, as well as valued each students' individual responses, motivating them to become independent readers of literature (Suzanne F. P, Owen F. B, 1997).

**Assessment.** In order to design the most appropriate assessments for my students with special socio-cultural and linguistic needs, I should recognize students' diverse funds of knowledge and utilize this knowledge in assessing. Also, in order to prevent my ELLs from

being marginalized based on their English language proficiencies and different learning needs, I need to weigh the validity and reliability of the assessments and make appropriate adjustments towards them when it is necessary. In Artifact D, I explained how community literacies could serve as accessible learning resources to students and help them to improve their English competences since they contain language used in everyday contexts (Martínez, 2008). Therefore, I designed an assessment by firstly asking my students to categorize the community literacies that I collected by different domains such as “clothing”, “food” etc. Afterwards, my students were asked to make their own texts according to the contexts. For instance, I grouped my students based on their native languages and asked them to translate the slogans and posters that were written in their own languages into English, and share with the whole class. Students then compared different English translation versions by negotiating the linguistic and pragmatic choices for creating the best translation (Jiménez, Smith & Teague, 2009). The exchange of ideas among students from different communities added to their respect for each other and brought a sense of empathy regarding living in a new place. In this case, embracing these resources in classroom assessments demonstrates an action-driven, culturally responsive caring for ELLs (Gay, 2015), echoing to my teaching philosophy of caring.

**Domain: Language Proficiency**

*Standard 5: Teachers demonstrate proficiency in social, business/workplace and academic English. Proficiency in speaking, listening, reading and writing means that a teacher is functionally equivalent to a native speaker with some higher education.*

As the person who is going to assist students to master a second language, I believe that the teacher’s proficiency in speaking, listening, reading, and writing this target language is

considered as a professional code that a language teacher should have. Specifically speaking, the teacher should have the ability to extract and address both Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) for daily communication and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) for academic and content specific language that are usually utilized in decontextualized learning (Cummins, 1984).

I started to learn English when I was nine years old in primary school. Since then, I have been either learning English or being exposed to an English-speaking surrounding. A total International English Language Testing System Test (IELTS) score of 7.5 demonstrates my strong ability in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. It depicts me as a “very good user” since I “handle complex and detailed argumentation well” (IELTS, 2017).

In this section, I use two artifacts, including one paper document and an audio clip to prove that I have the required language proficiency to teach English. Artifact F is one of the formal papers that I wrote for the *EDUC 7500: Playing to Learn* class. In this paper, I had a systematic review on the historical perspective about the concept *play* in Chinese Early Childhood Education classroom, the changed mindset towards it, as well as the potential problems that we may encounter when implementing it in the classroom. In Artifact G, I interviewed an experienced teacher who is teaching Chinese in Nashville and inquired about her opinion upon what does excellent language teaching look like. Through her answer, I could tell that she believes that the most significant thing for a language teacher is to equip learners with the metacognitive awareness when they are learning a new language. It is important to help learners find their own way of learning, which could be transferred to future study. Artifact F shows I understand this Language Proficiency domain since in order to accomplish this formal paper, I read a massive amount of academic papers in the related field, synthesized their viewpoints with

mine, and formed them in an organized way. It displays my language skills of reading and writing. Artifact G shows my competence of using speaking and listening skills to communicate effectively and sufficiently with others since I can both pose questions and receive information when conducting meaningful conversations. In conclusion, both of the artifacts provide the evidence that I have a good language competence, including linguistic competence (the knowledge of grammar and vocabulary), sociolinguistic competence (the ability to function appropriately in social settings), discourse competence (the ability to conduct consistent and coherent conversation), and strategic competence (the ability to communicate effectively) (Brandl, 2008).

**Learners and learning.** As an ELL myself, I have gone through the procedure of transforming from a *Newcomer* to a *High Intermediate Fluency* speaker (WIDA English Language Development Standards) and I am familiar with the whole second language acquisition process. Besides being sensible towards the change and the needs of my ELL learners and their learning, I hope that I could become one of the motivation in their process of language learning because *If she can, so do we*.

**Learning environment.** Teacher's proficiency in the target language not only sets a modeling role for students in class, but also makes sure that they receive the authentic and accurate input and be surrounded by stimulating learning environment. I hope my developing native-like English proficiency could provide my students a natural communicative environment where all of the conversation sound natural and authentic to them.

**Curriculum.** In order to prepare my future students to become competent in English, my curriculum will not only focus on building their academic English proficiency to cope with linguistically and cognitively demanding academic knowledge, but also on preparing them with

related communicative language abilities to undertake daily activities in different occasions. And my language competence will prepare me to design variable tasks to build students' both BICS and CALP (Cummins, 1984) in a more comprehensive way.

**Assessment.** Native speakers, as linguistic models, can efficiently provide useful feedback to non-native speakers (Frankfurt International School, 2015). Though my English proficiency has not reached Native-like yet, I will keep working hard on it and trying my best to provide the most accurate comments when assessing my students' language skills, such as word choice, fluency, use of sentence structure etc.

### **Domain: Learning**

*Standard 6: Teachers draw on their knowledge of language and adult language learning to understand the processes by which learners acquire a new language in and out of classroom settings. They use this knowledge to support adult language learning.*

As a qualified language teacher who is expected to help my future Chinese ELL students to master a foreign language, collecting funds of knowledge from my students is not enough. Moreover, equipping myself with adequate knowledge about second language acquisition, every component of the target language - phonology (sound system), semantics (system of meanings), grammar (rules of word and sentence formation), and pragmatics (social aspect), as well as the similarities and differences between their L1 (Chinese specifically) and English - is significant for me to support my future ELL students and help them reach their best potential in their English language acquisition.

In this section, I am going to use Artifact C again to demonstrate my competency in this domain. Artifact C is a case study of a non-native English speaker that I wrote for the *EDUC*

6530: *Educational Linguistics and Second Language Acquisition* class. In this case study, I interviewed a non- native English speaker, collected both of her formal and informal oral speaking/writing samples to analyze, and gave her the specific instructional learning plan based on my evaluation.

**Learners and learning.** Besides the information that I presented in the Assessing domain, I collected other useful information that needed to be taken into consideration when giving personalized suggestion to my interviewee-Ying. As most of the linguists would agree, second language acquisition is largely influenced by the age of the learner. Compared to those adult learners who struggle to achieve native- speaker-equivalent pronunciation and intonation, children and teenagers seem to gain a better proficiency in new languages. A study undertaken by York University in Canada suggests that children have the advantage in learning new languages because they have not used their L1s for a very long time, and are not set in their vocabulary and grammar (Today's Zaman, 2011). Ying started to learn English when she was eight. Since she began learning English quite early, this has a good impact on her current English level. What is more, as is stated in a journal that talks about the relations between students' personalities and their English language learning, "introverted or anxious learners usually make slower progress, particularly in the development of oral skills" (Tandoc Jr., 2014). They are less likely to take advantage of opportunities to speak, or to communicate with others to practice their languages due to their personalities. Conversely, those outgoing students who do not worry about making mistakes are more likely to take advantage of chances to practice and would thus make more progress. Through my conversations with Ying, I found out that she never feared sharing her thoughts with others, both in her native language and in English. Although she made oral mistakes frequently, she had a positive attitude, which pushed her to keep talking and practicing.

Consequently, Ying's positive personality also contributed a lot to her English language acquisition.

**Learning environment.** Students in situations where their own culture has a lower status than that of the culture in which they are learning the language make slower progress (Frankfurt International School, 2015). Nowadays, China plays a more important role on the world's stage because of its rapid development in terms of economy, politics, and culture. Specifically, China has always been known for its rich culture with a long history. The spirit of inclusion and coexistence that exist in Ying's learning environment as well supported and accelerated her in her second language acquisition. Plus, due to globalization, the connections between China and other English speaking countries are getting stronger. Chinese government therefore has been motivating its citizens to learn English since 1981 when China started to send more and more students to study abroad. Consequently, the learning environment that Ying has also contributed to her desire to learn English.

**Assessment.** According to the Interlanguage Hypothesis theory, a second language learner who has not become fully proficient will preserve some features of his/her L1 or overgeneralize L1's language rules in speaking L2 (Frith, 2015). If a particular sound does not exist in L1, it can be difficult for learners to produce this sound and they may try to substitute this sound with similar ones in their mother tongue (Zhang & Yin, 2009). Based on my formal interview with Ying, I found out that her articulation for the "th" sound was wrong because she used /s/ and /d/ as the substitutions for /θ/ and /ð/ to pronounce "th". Since there are no such consonants like /θ/ and /ð/ in Chinese, which require the speaker to place the tip of his/her tongue between the upper and lower teeth when pronouncing the sound. Ying then had trouble perceiving these sounds and consequently found the closest equivalent /s/ and /d/ to substitute the original ones, which caused

imprecision in speaking. Unfortunately, most Chinese speakers like Ying gradually get used to unconsciously using such shortcuts as substitutions. What is more, influenced by her L1, which all syllables take approximately equal time to pronounce while English is a stress-timed language where unstressed syllables are shortened to fit the rhythm, not knowing this difference, Ying unintentionally added a vowel /ə/ at the end of some words to align with the pronunciation of her L1. Her unconscious decision resulted in words like “kind” being pronounced as “kinda,” and “loud” being pronounced as “louda,” which sounds inaccurate to native speakers.

**Curriculum.** For this domain, based on the evaluation that I gave to my interviewee Ying, I gave her recommendation that tailored her needs. Since she had rare awareness on the differences between English and Chinese, therefore the very important thing that she needs is to raise her awareness of the linguistic differences. For example, Chinese is a syllable-timed language while English is a stress-timed language. Being unconscious of such difference, as the Interlanguage Hypothesis theory predicts, the speaker would borrow patterns from L1 and make imprecise pronunciation. As a consequence, it is necessary for my participant to raise her awareness of the language differences between English and Chinese. What is more, concepts that are not largely introduced in her own culture should also be emphasized. When evaluating Ying’s semantics from the register level, it turned out that the concept of register in Ying was very vague since in China, teachers seldom emphasize the significance of register or the formality of the language in class. As a student who had learned English under the Chinese teaching model for more than 15 years, Ying’s learning strategies are stereotyped and fixed. She consequently had no consciousness of the existence of register. However, in English, linguistic concepts like register are very important because inappropriate language use can reduce the speakers’ credibility and undermine their arguments. The mixed usage of formal and informal

words will violate the seriousness of the contexts and alienate the readers. Thus, the first step for helping Ying become a better English speaker must be raising her awareness of some concepts that are not largely introduced in her own culture.

**Domain: Content**

*Standard 7: Teachers understand that language learning is most likely to occur when learners are trying to use the language for genuine communicative purposes. Teachers understand that the content of the language course is the language that learners need in order to listen, to talk about, to read and write about a subject matter or content area. Teachers design their lessons to help learners acquire the language they need to successfully communicate in the subject or content areas they want/need to learn about.*

As an effective teacher, besides equipping our students with adequate knowledge about every component of the target language, helping them to develop their sociocultural and communicative competences in English should be considered the ultimate goal of their learning (Hymes, 1971). As Brandl stated, the primary function of language is to communicate (2008). Except for using the language for academic purpose, we use language more likely in natural settings; therefore, the language should be taught and learned in real-life situations and the teacher should create the most authentic opportunities for students to use the language for genuine communicative purposes. What is more, in selecting the content topics, teachers need to find the topics that are highly relevant to students' lives, which they can make connections to their own lives and show high motivation in learning with the aim of functioning well in real life.

In this section, I am going to use Artifact H, a lesson plan that I wrote for the *EDUC 6560: Teaching English as a Foreign Language* class. In this lesson plan, I designed a class that would

enable my Chinese ELL students to learn holiday-related vocabulary words and achieve communicative goal by exposing them to the authentic materials repetitively.

**Learners and learning.** The targeted students of this unit plan are 10<sup>th</sup> Grade Chinese Intermediate Low level ELLs. In China, reading, writing, and listening are the three parts that are highly valued by teachers and students; the development of the speaking skill of the students have kept being ignored. Consequently, the goals of this lesson are to give students more opportunities to speak and help them to build their confidence while they are communicating with others by using English.

**Learning environment.** In my lesson plan, it focuses on giving the students more chance to practice the vocabulary words and phrases about Thanksgiving through interpersonal task- peer interviews and conversations that they learned previously in the first day of the unit. In order to achieve these goals, students were exposed to language in content in authentic materials repeatedly before being assigned the actual interview task. For example, on the first day of the unit, I presented them a short audio of a native speaker talking about her family's tradition of celebrating Thanksgiving. After listening to the authentic text, I showed my ELL students three more texts under the same topic that I paraphrased by using the content vocabulary words that I wanted them to learn, like *celebration*, *grateful*, *signature*, *dessert*, *savory*, *delicious*, *incredible*, *closeness*, and *blessings*. By listening/reading the materials that I prepared again and again, their grasp of the content-matter language for communicative goal were reinforced.

**Curriculum.** The overall routine that the lesson follows is under the spirit of the Task-Based Approach. The whole class is divided by Pre-Task stage, Task stage, Planning/Report stages, and Analysis/Assessment stages. During the Pre-Task stage, I introduced the objectives and main tasks of the class while students carefully listened to what they were going to do and

what goals were they supposed to achieve. They were then going to be assessed by an interpersonal task and interview one of their classmates and heard their narration on what they were going to do in the coming Thanksgiving holiday by using the vocabulary words from the word list that they sorted last class. Students are supposed to work in pairs, do the one-on-one interview regarding their plans for the coming holiday.

**Assessment.** After making sure that they've grasped those content-related words that they learned and sorted in the first day of the unit, I designed an interpersonal -style interpretive task that asked them to put the authentic input into meaningful output. Therefore, they get the chance to use the content words that they learned to construct sentences and achieve communicative purpose. For the task, each student was assigned a partner of similar language level and practiced in group. They were going to ask each other questions about their plans about Thanksgiving. Students came up with their own questions in this part. While my students were doing the assessment, I sat aside, took notes on their performances and assessed whether they had achieved the expected communicative goals by using the ACTFL IPA Interpersonal Mode Rubric for Intermediate Learner (see Artifact H for more details).

### **Domain: Commitment and Professionalism**

*Standard 8: Teachers continue to grow in their understanding of the relationship of second language teaching and learning to the community of English language teaching professionals, the broader teaching community, and communities at large, and use these understandings to inform and change themselves and these communities.*

I consider myself not only as a teacher, but also a learner. Learning is a continuous process that always needs updates. Consequently, despite disseminating the knowledge to my students, as

a professional educator, I should also continuously equip myself with the latest research results in the ESL/EFL-related teaching field and apply them to my future teaching practice. What is more, as a teacher who is planning to go back to China and teach English upon graduation, I should also be open-minded to utilize what I have learned in the U.S. in my future practice in China.

In this section, I am going to use Artifact I, a term paper that I wrote for the *EDUC 6570: Teaching Second Language Literacy* class. In this paper, I investigated how American situational comedy could help junior high students in China to develop their literacy skills and explained the implementation of utilizing situational comedy as a form of *New Literacy* in details. Unlike the documentaries on *Discovery.com* or *TED Talk* speeches, which are more likely to provide audiences with knowledge and inspiration and help them to learn, most consider watching situational comedy to be merely a form of relaxation and entertainment and the linkage between watching situational comedy and learning does not seem to be obvious, especially in China. However, after learning more about *New Literacy* through lectures and reading topic related professional journals, I found that the implementation of authentic video clips, like situational comedy is beneficial, especially to Chinese ELLs who have very limited exposure to English speaking environments. Therefore I wrote the paper and discussed the significance of giving situational comedy more credit since I evaluated it as a form of *New Literacy*.

**Learners and learning.** The target students are Chinese junior high students. The reasons for choosing junior high students as my target students are twofold: firstly, junior high students are already equipped with a considerable vocabulary and basic communication and comprehension skills, thanks to the foundational English classes they had in pre-K and elementary school classrooms. Therefore, without too many language restrictions, the range of

suitable materials for junior high students is much wider. Secondly, compared to senior high students, junior high students have freer class schedules. It is hard to devote senior high students' precious time to situational comedy due to the fact that they are facing intense pressure from the Chinese standardized testing system. Therefore, junior high students are my target population.

**Learning environment.** The significance of utilizing situational comedy is barely recognized, especially in Chinese classrooms. Since the long-followed Confucian Heritage guides students to revere authority and maintain harmony in the classroom, a strictly prescribed hierarchical structure of schools and approved curriculum are currently in place. Consequently, China's "top-down, facts-based" approach to education is entrenched (Huang, 2013). As a result, the students do not get many opportunities to practice their communication skills, especially with regard to reading and writing when they learn English (Dai, 2013). What is more, most parents do not think of school as a place for amusement, nor do they think that entertaining and learning are compatible. Therefore, they view utilizing situational comedy in the classroom and serious teaching as dichotomous and do not widely believe that learning occurs through watching television.

**Curriculum.** Literacy is a social and cultural achievement (Gee, 2000). And since we all engaged in social and cultural practices, literacy needs to be understood and studied in its full range of contexts—not just cognitive—but social and cultural (Gee, 1992). Therefore, when designing the curriculum to develop students' literacy, language that is used differently in different practices by different social and cultural groups should be taken into consideration. As a tool of *New Literacy*, American situational comedy to a large extent reflects people's lives in America in a more comprehensive way because its multiple subjects cover all walks of life. For example, there are science-fiction shows, crime shows, medical shows, adventure shows, fantasy

shows etc. Different types of shows use different types of language to fit different contexts and plots in a most authentic way. They provide Chinese ELLs access to various language types that fit different social practices. Plus, the introduction to American people's lives brings Chinese ELLs knowledge and vast exposure to American culture, which is valuable in their literacy development.

**Assessment.** In order to make sure that my students have mastered using situational comedy as a form of new literacy, I will assign students a similar video clip after class. After watching the clip, they will answer both content and language -related questions, like what they do at school to make sure that they understand the content of the video clip. For more advanced students, I will design activities, like asking them to work in groups, use what they have learned in class to write a sequel of the video clip that is played in class, and shoot the script into a short video. Such activities allow students to come up with ideas collaboratively, practice the writing strategies that they learn in class, hear feedback from peers, and improve their performance in organizing ideas and acting while in the classroom.

## **Implications, Challenges, and New Directions**

Two years of course study, student teaching at schools, and fieldtrips to the local community have thoroughly prepared to become a real-world teacher. After proving my competency in each domain in the TESOL Standards by specifically focusing on learners and learning, learning environment, curriculum, and assessment, in this last section of my capstone, I will discuss the goals that I plan to reach in my future practice, identify challenges I may encounter and methods of tackling them, and delineate the direction of my continuing professional development.

### **1. Future Implications**

#### **Helping students develop their communicative competence via meaningful activities.**

As a future teacher in the ESL/EFL field, my ultimate goal is to help my students achieve communicative competence through meaningful activities. Influenced by the Communicative Learning Teaching (CLT) theory, my ideal classroom instruction involves focusing on the use of language for communication in “real-life” situations (Brown, 2001). I personally emphasize the question “what can my students do with the language?” instead of “what do my students know about the language?” It is important for them to learn the grammar of the target language. However, it is equally, if not more even important for them to master the language skills needed to produce a meaningful communication in a social context. Therefore, I will provide my students with more communicative events that focus on meaning rather than form in order to practice pragmatic, authentic, and functional uses of language in a variety of settings, and to various audiences (Brown, 2001). These settings will include debate, panel discussion, role play, and interviews. By participating in these activities, students will have the opportunity to practice using their language skills and abilities as well as apply what they have learned to express and

exchange their opinions with others on everyday topics. Thus their communicative competence can be promoted.

**Helping students raise their cultural awareness and with their process of acquiring a new language.** Besides embracing the funds of knowledge of my students and their values, I will also try my best to create a learning environment with the most authentic target culture.

According to Schumann's Acculturation Theory, culture is a significant factor which influences language teaching and learning. The more a learner is exposed to the target –language culture, the better his/her progress in second language acquisition (1978). Thus, an emphasis on the target-language culture should be highly valued. For instance, I will incorporate authentic and culturally relevant materials that match their language level, such as American situational comedies, music, and cartoon clips. For example, Artifact I describes in detail my use of situational comedy as a form of New Literacy to develop my students' literacy skills.

Considering my students are from disadvantaged areas, I will provide them the transcripts of the materials and design low-stake discernment tasks to make sure that they comprehend the essence of the materials and gain best outcome.

**Constructing a student-centered classroom.** As descendants of Confucianism, Chinese people have been greatly influenced for more than 2, 500 years by the Greatest Teacher philosophy. The long-followed Confucian Heritage guides students to revere authority and maintain harmony, establishing a strict hierarchical structure in the classroom. Consequently, China's "top-down, facts-based" approach to education has been ingrained in school culture (Huang, 2013). Studies of cognitive processes have shown that the way a teacher views him/her self influences the classroom strategies that teacher adopts; teachers attempt to develop teaching styles that match their own images (Calderhead, 1996). Similarly, in China, instructors' teaching

styles and their perceptions of their roles as teachers are congruent, resulting in the didactic and teacher-centered “force-feed” teaching methods in China.

However, after my two years of learning and teaching at Peabody, my understanding of the role of a teacher in the classroom has changed. In the first section of my capstone, I talked about how Vygotsky’s Sociocultural Theory of learning, which states that individuals develop their cognitive and linguistic abilities through social interaction should be taken into consideration (1978). Obviously, the learning goal will not to be achieved if students only receive knowledge passively in class. Students should therefore be active learners and encouraged to take initiative in exploring new knowledge. Therefore, in the classroom I posit myself a facilitator who provides scaffolding to students and assists them in demonstrating higher levels of performance while respecting their learning authority (Vygotsky, 1978). For instance, I will try my best to reduce my teacher talking time (TTT) and give my students more of a chance to interact with either myself or their peers. When they are talking and facing higher-order thinking questions, I will carefully circulate, observe, and give an appropriate amount of intervention and assistance including providing sentence stems, graphic organizers, and anchor charts in advance for them to refer to when they encounter difficulties. Additionally, to echo the CRT Pedagogy framework that I discussed in the first section of my capstone, I will build a trusting learning atmosphere and encourage them to engage more by making mistakes and errors acceptable in my class.

## **2. Challenges that I may Encounter**

**What if the parents of my future students are not willing to cooperate?** In the first section of my capstone, I have discussed that a “flexible, adaptive, and active” relationship with parents helps “reduce the insularity of classrooms and contribute to the academic content and lessons” (Moll, 1992). Therefore, I will try my best to have more engagement with the families,

through either home visits or letter writing (telecommunication is not popularized in the village). However, I totally understand how it could be intimidating for parents to face people of a different culture when I do my home visiting. I am afraid that the families will reject my good intentions or be very hesitant to speak with me. Therefore, I will make good connections with my colleagues who are more familiar with the local community and invite them to be my guides while I am doing my investigation. When dealing with the parents who are not willing to cooperate, I will respect their choice, but patiently encourage them to share their stories with me so that I can help their children reach their best potential.

**What if implementing the CLT pedagogy is really difficult in traditional Chinese classrooms?** Wang conducted a survey in China in which teachers were asked to adopt this new communication-oriented approach. They were expected to change their traditional ways of evaluating students, their own role from being a transmitter of knowledge to being a multi-role facilitator, and their understanding of language learning from one based on knowledge-acquisition to one based on a holistic development of competence (2007). As a new teacher, I can expect a lot of other challenges that I am going to face if I teach students in disadvantaged Chinese areas. For instance: the large class sizes in China may result in my losing control of the situation if I give them more authority. My students' inadequate English proficiency may prevent me from using adequate amount of English in the classroom to effectively 'stretch' their English competence. Too much focus on fluency and accuracy may negatively affect their scores on Chinese public examinations since they are mostly based on exclusively pencil-and-paper tests. The students and their parents may be reluctant to follow the new pedagogy because they are afraid of receiving bad results on the exams. Despite these challenges, I still have faith in my future teaching. I will cooperate with other experienced

teachers in this field to make some adjustments to the traditional CLT approach and make it more suitable to the Chinese educational environment. However, I need more time to think and more opportunities to put my thoughts into practice.

### **3. Vision of Professional Development**

Well goes an English proverb, *Live and Learn*. Similarly, I consider myself as a life-long learner even after my graduation. I will never stopping learning and I look forward to more opportunities for professional development. Besides keeping in touch with my Peabody network, including professors, alumni, and my cohort, I will also keep up with the latest research results in the TESOL field to stay up to date on new trends, as well as equip myself with the most updated techniques. Regarding my long-term professional goals: I hope that within 5 years of independent teaching and professional training, my own teaching style will be formed and be accepted and endorsed by students, parents, and peers. Additionally, after accumulating more experience in EFL education, I will return to school and continue with my doctorate study in the TESOL field.

### **Conclusion**

In this portfolio, I firstly state my teaching philosophy under the theoretical framework of Funds of Knowledge and Culturally Responsive Teaching; then I demonstrate my competency in eight domains in the TESOL Standards by specifically focusing on learners and learning, learning environment, curriculum, and assessment; lastly I discuss the goals that I plan to achieve, identify the challenges that I may encounter, and show the directions for my continual professional development. As a prospective teacher who is going to teach independently soon, I am ready to embark my new journey. I will bear my goal of helping children from low-income families in China in mind and utilize what I have learned at Peabody to help more ELL students in China to prosper.

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## Appendixes

## Artifact A: Three-Genre Lesson Plan

**Lesson 1. *The Road Not Taken*: Making Connections while Reading Poetry****Name:** Xueyue Shen**Date:** April 3, 2016**Estimated Time:** 90 minutes**Grade/Subject:** 6<sup>th</sup> Grade, ELL

Instructional Context	
What do I know about my students that will inform this lesson?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Most 6<sup>th</sup> graders do not like reading poetry because they find that the ideas expressed in poems are vague and difficult to understand. They may recognize every single word in the poetry but still fail to comprehend the main idea of the piece. Consequently, with the aim of assisting students in comprehending poetry and piquing their interests in this literature genre, I will use the Making Connections strategy that we just learned to help students understand the poetry <i>The Road Not Taken</i>.</li> <li>Decision making, as a sophisticated yet very significant action, has always played an important role in our lives. The 6<sup>th</sup> graders are becoming more mature both physically and psychologically, which makes the theme of poem more understandable to them. Plus, since they have already mastered a large amount of vocabulary words, the language of the poem is not difficult to understand.</li> </ul>	
How does this lesson connect with and build on the previous lesson(s)?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In <i>The Road Not Taken</i>, there are more than one metaphors. Therefore, the poem has a perfect connection with previous classes when the rhetorical device metaphor was comprehensively introduced.</li> <li>I just introduced the Making Connections reading strategy last week in class. In the following weeks, in order to help my students build a deeper understanding on the usage of this strategy, I will provide them different literature genres and ask them to comprehend these works with the help of Making Connections strategy. And for this week, the genre is poetry.</li> </ul>	
How do you expect to build on this lesson in subsequent lessons?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Future lessons can build upon the topic of the poem, Decision Making, like writing a short essay to discuss "The Biggest Decision that I Have Ever Made" and practice their writing skills.</li> </ul>	
Standards Addressed	
Common Core State Standards/Local Standards	
<u>TN.CC.RL.7. Reading Standards for Literature</u>	
RL.7.2.	Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text; provide an objective summary of the text.
<u>TN.CC.RI.7. Reading Standards for Informational Text</u>	
RI.7.1.	Cite several pieces of textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
<u>TN.CC.L.7. Language Standards</u>	
L.7.4 (a)	Use context (e.g., the overall meaning of a sentence or paragraph; a word's position or function in a sentence) as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase.
Learning Objectives	
Objective	Assessment
SWBAT analyze different kinds of texts (print, video, audio, images etc.) around the topic of <i>The Road Not Taken</i> and understand the process of decision-making and the acceptance of the outcome of that decision.	<b>Reading Comprehension:</b> Students will complete the reading comprehension questions independently, including true/false questions, multiple choices, fill-in the blanks, etc.
SWBAT master one Think-Aloud reading strategy: Making Connections to connect what they read with what they have experienced in their lives.	<b>Triple-Entry Chart:</b> Students will complete the teacher-designed Triple-Entry Chart and list the connections between the poem and their lives. <b>Essay writing:</b> Students are asked to make connections between poem and their lives and to write a compare and contrast essay.
SWBAT interact and collaborative in pairs and in groups to work on a project (e.g. timeline, poster, etc.)	<b>Group Work:</b> Students will be divided into different groups and accomplish multiple tasks together.

SWBAT understand the significance of decision-making and the acceptance of the outcome of that decision, which are emphasized in the poem.		<b>Exit Ticket:</b> Students will write an Exit Ticket and share what they have learned in class.
Note any expectations related to student participation in the lesson.		
Students are easily distracted by trivial things in the classroom. Therefore, I should distribute the handouts after my modeling so that students will not look at the handouts and miss the important details while I am modeling.		
<b>Academic Language Demand/Language Function</b>		
<b>Language Function</b>	<b>Support/Scaffold</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seek information</li> <li>• Inform</li> <li>• Compare and Contrast</li> <li>• Infer</li> <li>• Synthesize</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Building Background knowledge:</b> recall students' background knowledge about the academic language before assigning the reading.</li> <li>• <b>Teacher's modeling:</b> teacher will model the usage of the academic languages for students at first, and then ask them to practice this language through accomplishing different tasks in class.</li> </ul>	
<b>Instructional Strategies and Learning Tasks (Procedures &amp; Timelines)</b>		
<b>Time</b>	<b>Instructional Strategies/Learning Tasks</b>	<b>Purpose</b>
10 minutes	<p><b>Pre-Reading Activity:</b> The teacher starts the class by playing a 3-minute YouTube video clip about decision making called <i>Decisions, Decisions, Decisions</i> (<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WmWO3E1kJT4">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WmWO3E1kJT4</a>) and asks the following questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) What is a decision?</li> <li>2) Is decision making a hard or easy thing? If easy, why? If hard, why?</li> <li>3) Have you ever experienced regretting a decision?</li> <li>4) What would you do if you were facing a difficult decision?</li> </ol> <p>Afterwards, the teacher divides the students into three groups (all groups will have mixed groups of lower intermediate students, intermediate students, and high intermediate students) and asks them to discuss the answers in groups. Each group then writes their answers on the blackboard.</p>	<p>By inviting students to watch a short video about decision making (the theme of the poem that is introduced in the class), students' interests will be aroused and their background knowledge and experiences will be recalled. Students will feel proud because their identities/experiences are significantly relevant to the theme of the class. By sharing the answers of different groups, the teacher and students have the opportunity to exchange personal attitudes towards decision making.</p> <p>Students' group work ability will be largely improved by working with others.</p>
10 minutes	<p><b>During-Reading Activity:</b> The teacher transfers the topic "Decision Making" to the poem <i>The Road Not Taken</i> by giving students a brief introduction of the schedule of the class: today we are going to be working on one poem. Specifically we are working on theme of the poem: decision making. This is important because as you are getting older, you will face a lot of big decisions; learning how to make decisions and accepting the consequences of them are important skills. I'm telling you this because I want you to focus your attention on how we know that this is the theme of the poem, by using the Making Connections strategy that we learned last week. And you will find that with the assistance of the reading strategy, the process of understanding the theme of the poem will become easier.</p> <p>Then the teacher distributes students Handout 1 (see Appendix A), plays the audio of the poem <i>The Road Not Taken</i>: (<a href="http://www.poetryfoundation.org/features/audioitem/5188">http://www.poetryfoundation.org/features/audioitem/5188</a>), and projects an image of a split path (shown in Appendix A) to help the students to understand the theme.</p>	<p>The theme of the poem is introduced in class, which helps students to have a clear image about what they are going to do in class and why. Helping students understand the purpose of the day, the activities, and the sequence can help generate buy-in and enthusiasm.</p> <p>Instead of directly presenting the students the text that they are going to learn, multiple forms of the text like audio and pictures will make the class sounds more interesting and diversified.</p>
8 minutes	After reading the whole poem, the teacher gives a brief review on the Making Connections strategy and explains that they will use this reading strategy to comprehend the poetry.	For students, it is necessary to know the new reading strategy in details before it is

	<p>Then the teacher models the first stanza of <i>The Road Not Taken</i> for students. Before modeling, the teacher presents the students three columns on the Triple Entry Chart on Handout 2 (see Appendix B).</p> <p>While modeling, the teacher reads the first stanza aloud, asks and answers the following poem-related questions, makes connections with life experiences, and fills in the blanks on the Triple Entry Chart.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Where is the author going? Where is he traveling to?</li> <li>2) Is he going to start a new life?</li> <li>3) Why couldn't he travel both roads? Why is he so careful?</li> <li>4) What do both roads represent?</li> <li>5) How does this poem connect to our lives?</li> </ol>	<p>implemented. A better understanding of the strategy will facilitate students' practice in a more efficient way.</p> <p>The questions that the teacher asks while he/she is thinking-aloud make the thinking process more explicitly understood, which will help students in their practice as well.</p>
6 minutes	<p>The teacher distributes students Handout 2.</p> <p>After modeling reading the first stanza, the teacher asks students to come up with three important things to bear in mind while using the Making Connections strategy. The teacher brings the class together to make a common list of Three Important Things To Do while using the Making Connections strategy.</p>	<p>The teacher needs to make sure that the students understand what they should do during thinking aloud so that they can use it in a more efficient way.</p>
15 minutes	<p>The teacher asks students (in small groups) to finish the rest of the three stanzas. Each group will be assigned a stanza. While comprehending each stanza, students are asked to make connections with their lives and fill out the Triple Entry Chart.</p>	<p>Students will practice the knowledge that they learn through team work after the teacher's modeling.</p>
12 minutes	<p>Each group selects a representative to share their Triple Entry Chart with the whole class and explain his/her reading process explicitly in details. For instance, he/she would explain how the poem connects with his/her life.</p>	<p>To make sure that students master the Making Connections strategy and to practice their speaking skills, the teacher will ask each team to select one representative and explain his/her answer to the whole class.</p>
10 minutes	<p>The teacher brings the whole class together, asks students to find clues from their Triple-Entry Charts to support the idea that "decision making is crucial and you need to accept the consequences of the decision once you make it.", and write them on leaf-shaped sticky notes. Each student is asked to put their leaf-shaped sticky notes on the "mind tree" poster that is hung on the wall, and read each other's answers.</p>	<p>The teacher makes sure that the theme of the poem is understood by each student, with the help of Making Connection strategy.</p>
5 minutes	<p>The teacher ask the students the following questions: What did we learn today? How did our reading skills support our understanding of them?</p>	<p>This helps the teacher determine both what students learned, and what they might need next class</p>
10 minutes	<p><b>Post-Reading Activity:</b> The teacher assigns students 5 quiz questions on <i>The Road Not Taken</i> and checks the answers with them together (The teacher circulates and checks if students are engaging with the quizzes and helps struggling students to comprehend the quiz questions while they are answering the questions).</p>	<p>These post-reading activities help guarantee that the students fully understand the theme of the poem, and the class.</p>
4 minutes	<p>The teacher draws a conclusion for the class, assigns homework, and gives students exit tickets to write down what they have learned in the class.</p>	
<p><b>Homework:</b> To evaluate students' mastery of this lesson, two different assessments are designed: an essay writing task and a reading comprehension exercise.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Essay writing: students are asked to make connections between <i>The Road Not Taken</i> and their lives and to write a compare and contrast essay. Students are encouraged to use the dictionary and other online resources to assist in their works. This task focuses on testing the writing skills of students.</li> <li>2. Reading comprehension exercise: students are asked to use the Making Connections strategy, to read another poem about decision making, and then fill out the Triple Entry Chart. After reading the poem, students will answer the comprehension questions. The</li> </ol>		

<p>questions include true/false questions, multiple choices, fill-in the blanks, etc., which are required to be completed independently. This task focuses more on testing the reading and writing skills of students.</p>
<p><b>Student Supports</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Consider the topic, skills, and strategies used in this lesson. How and where have supports and scaffolds for these been incorporated into the lesson(s)?</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Building Background Knowledge:</b> the process of comprehending the poem reinforces students' background knowledge of the Making Connections strategy.</li> <li>• <b>Modelling:</b> in order to give the students a clear picture of the usage of the Making Connections strategy, I will carefully model the process before they start to read themselves.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ What are the places in the lesson where the content might be confusing or "knot up"? What alternative ways do I have to present/explain the content if I need it?</li> </ul>
<p>When analyzing the main idea that is depicted in the poem, I use the Making Connections as the main reading strategy and ask the students to fill out the Triple-Entry Chart to comprehend the poem. However, I am afraid that the students will feel bored if they spend most of their time listening to the lecture and filling out the blanks. Therefore, I will use visualization as an alternative to assist my teaching to make the elements of the poem more explicit and easy to understand.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Are there additional supports that specific students/student groups might need? ELL? IEP? 504? Gifted?</li> </ul>
<p>ELL students will be paid a special attention in my future classroom.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All groups will have mixed groups of lower intermediate ELL students, intermediate ELL students, and high intermediate ELL students. I will ask native speakers to help ELLs in comprehending the difficult language.</li> <li>• During the class, teacher will give ELL students an in-time support. For example, when students are doing quiz questions, the teacher will circulate and check if students are engaging with the quizzes and help struggling readers to comprehend the quiz questions. Also, when it is necessary, the teacher will also incorporate student's L1 in lesson. For example: the quiz will be formatted with helpful tips (like definitions of some trickier words will be provided).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Materials and Resources</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Printed version of <i>The Road Not Taken</i> (By Robert Frost)</li> <li>○ Audio Clip of <i>The Road Not Taken</i> (By David Garrison): <a href="http://www.poetryfoundation.org/features/audioitem/5188">http://www.poetryfoundation.org/features/audioitem/5188</a></li> <li>○ YouTube Video Clip: <i>Decisions, Decisions, Decisions</i>: <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WmWO3E1kJT4">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WmWO3E1kJT4</a></li> <li>○ Pictures of split paths that echo the theme of the poem</li> <li>○ Copies of Triple Entry Chart</li> <li>○ Posters, leaf-shaped sticky notes, and markers</li> <li>○ Projector</li> </ul>
<p><b>Reflection</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ What worked and for whom? Why?</li> <li>○ What didn't work and for whom? Why?</li> <li>○ What are instructional next steps based on the data from this plan?</li> </ul>

## Appendix A

Handout 1

### **The Road Not Taken**

By Robert Frost

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,  
And sorry I could not travel both  
And be one traveler, long I stood  
And looked down one as far as I could  
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair,  
And having perhaps the better claim,  
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;  
Though as for that the passing there  
Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay  
In leaves no step had trodden black.  
Oh, I kept the first for another day!  
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,  
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh  
Somewhere ages and ages hence:  
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—  
I took the one less traveled by,  
And that has made all the difference.







## Artifact B: Lesson Plan on Compare and Contrast

<b>Topic:</b> Compare and Contrast Cultural Diversity	<b>Class:</b> 6 <sup>th</sup> Grade Chinese ELL	<b>Date:</b> February 8, 2016
<p><b>Standards:</b></p> <p><b>Integration of Knowledge and Ideas</b>  <b>CCSS. ELA-LITERACY. RL.6.7</b>  Compare and contrast the experience of reading a story, drama, or poem to listening to or viewing an audio, video, or live version of the text, including contrasting what they “see” and “hear” when reading the text to what they perceive when they listen or watch.</p> <p><b>Comprehension and Collaboration</b>  <b>CCSS. ELA-LITERACY. SL.6.1</b>  Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher led) with diverse partners on grade 6 topics, texts, and issues, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly.</p> <p><b>Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas</b>  <b>CCSS. ELA-LITERACY. SL.6.5</b>  Include multimedia components (e.g., graphics, images, music, and sound) and visual displays in presentations to clarify information.</p> <p><b>Research to Build and Present Knowledge</b>  <b>CCSS. ELA-LITERACY. W.6.9</b>  Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.  a. Apply grade 6 Reading standards to literature (e.g., “Compare and contrast texts in different forms or genres [e.g., stories and poems; historical novels and fantasy stories] in terms of their approaches to similar themes and topics”). (CCSS, 2017)</p>		
<p><b>Content Objectives: (Stated in Student Friendly Language)</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. SWBAT introduce Spring Festival and answer the comprehension questions correctly.</li> <li>2. SWBAT know the traditional food that westerners eat and celebrating activities that they do during Christmas.</li> <li>3. SWBAT understand culture diversity by comparing and contrasting Chinese Spring Festival and Christmas Day.</li> </ol>	<p><b>Language Objectives: (Stated in Student Friendly Language)</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. SWBAT use their second language to introduce Spring Festival, the most important festival in their culture (speaking).</li> <li>2. SWBAT present their self-designed Venn diagrams to the class and name 3 to 5 differences and likenesses between the two festivals (speaking, writing).</li> <li>3. SWBAT write simple comparison and contrast essay (writing).</li> <li>4. SWBAT have a better understanding of culture diversity (reading, writing).</li> </ol>	

**Key Vocabulary:**

## ✧ Content Vocabulary:

Spring Festival  
 Lunar calendar  
 Paper-cuts  
 New Year paintings  
 Propose a toast  
 Red lantern  
 Red packets  
 Lion/dragon dance  
 Nian-gao (rice cake)  
 Dumplings  
 Eight treasures rice pudding  
 Festival temple fair  
 Christmas (Eve)  
 Family reunion  
 Boxing Day  
 Santa Claus  
 Christmas tree  
 Christmas carol  
 Angel  
 Candy cane Ornament  
 Turkey  
 Salad  
 Red(white)wine Bread  
 Apple pie  
 Diversity  
 Celebration

## ✧ Academic Vocabulary:

Likeness  
 Similarity  
 Difference  
 Differently  
 Compare  
 Contrast  
 Similarly  
 Likewise  
 As well  
 Conversely  
 Note  
 Outline  
 Describe  
 Name  
 Introduce  
 Venn diagram

**Materials (including Supplementary and Adapted):**

- *English1* (textbook for 6<sup>th</sup> grade students in China)
- Supplementary reading materials
- YouTube video clips
- Copies of Venn Diagram templates (see Appendix A)
- Posters, sticky notes, and markers
- Projector

**Introductory Activity:**

The teacher starts the class by playing a 1'30" YouTube video clip about the Spring Festival (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5qcvRVysXq8>) and ask the following questions:

- 1) Which Chinese festival do you think was played in the video?
- 2) How do you celebrate it with your family and friends?
- 3) What food will you eat and what activities will you do?

Afterwards, the teacher divides the students into five groups (all groups will have mixed groups of lower intermediate ELL students, intermediate ELL students, and high intermediate ELL students) and asks them to discuss the answers in group for 2 minutes. Each group then selects a representative and writes their answers on the blackboard. By sharing the answers of different groups, teacher and students have the opportunity to exchange personal attitudes and stories about festivals. Moreover, teacher will know more about the diverse backgrounds of students, and students will feel proud because their cultural identities/experiences are highly valued in class. (5 minutes)

<b>Time:</b>	<b>What steps, procedures, and components of your objectives do you need to identify or explicitly teach? (analysis)</b>
3 minutes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Teacher transmits the topic from Spring Festival to Christmas by asking the following questions:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) If Spring Festival is the most important festival in China, which festival do you think is the most important one that will be celebrated in the West?</li> <li>2) How do they celebrate it with their family and friends?</li> <li>3) What food will they eat and what activities will they do?</li> </ol> </li> </ol>
5 minutes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Teacher asks the students to read the supplementary materials: <i>The Story Behind Christmas</i></li> </ol>
5 minutes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Students are assessed whether they understand the article or not by answering the following questions:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) When is Christmas Day?</li> <li>2) Who is the Christmas Day celebrating for?</li> <li>3) Why people celebrate Christmas Day?</li> </ol> </li> </ol>
5 minutes	<p>During this part, students read the article individually and answer the questions in groups. To ensure that everyone has mastered the story, intervention from the teacher, like explaining the meaning of some difficult vocabularies in advance, are necessary. However, students are still encouraged to guess the meaning of new words/phrases/sentences with the help of pictures and their background knowledge while reading the article.</p>
5 minutes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. Teacher asks students to brainstorm the characteristics of Christmas and guess the food and things they will eat and do during that day. Each student is asked to follow the Gallery Walk routine, write his/her answers on the poster that are hung on the wall, and read others' answers.</li> </ol>
5 minutes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. Teacher asks the students to read <i>It's Christmas Day!</i> from the textbook <i>English 1</i>.</li> </ol>
5 minutes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6. Teacher asks the students (in small groups) to compare and contrast the way of celebrating Christmas with the way of celebrating Spring Festival. How are they the same and how are they different? Each group will design a Venn diagram and later bring it to the whole class to share.</li> </ol>
7 minutes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7. Each group selects a representative to share their Venn diagram to the whole class</li> </ol>

2 minutes	and explain the similarities and differences between Christmas and Spring Festival in details.
10 minutes	8. Teacher brings group together to make a common list of the similarities and differences between two important festivals that are celebrated in the East and the West.
2 minutes	9. All students write a short essay, making a comparison and contrast between two festivals (Teacher circulates and checks if students are engaging the writing activities and helps struggling students to construct sentence structures).
1 minute	10. Teacher draws a conclusion of the class and emphasize the culture differences that are embedded in two festivals.
(55 minutes in total)	11. Teacher assigns homework.

**Assessments:**

To evaluate students' mastering of this lesson, two different assessments are designed: independent reading comprehension exercise and the group presentation.

1. Read a short passage about Christmas and answer the comprehension questions. This assessment is designed to practice students' reading and writing skills. The questions include true/false questions, multiple choices, fill-in the blanks, etc., which are required to be completed independently. Students are encouraged to use dictionary and other resources to assist their works. This task focuses more on testing the reading and writing skills of students.
2. Group presentation. Students will continue working in the same group that they are assigned in class; each group will choose another festival that is celebrated in western countries, compare and contrast it with Spring Festival, and present the similarities and differences between them two by using the Van Diagram to the whole class. Compare to the first assessment, the group presentation focuses more on evaluating the speaking and writing skills of the ELL students. They are encouraged to use online resources to facilitate their work. After collecting resources, students will review the materials and choose whatever form they like to present their work to the class. The group will work collaboratively, which means each member should participate as a role and contribute to the final presentation. Students will be graded respectively based on their performances in the presentation and the process of preparing, for example: to which extent the student pronounces the words accurately, uses grammars properly, and to which extent the student transfers the class-learned knowledge in his/her presentation etc.

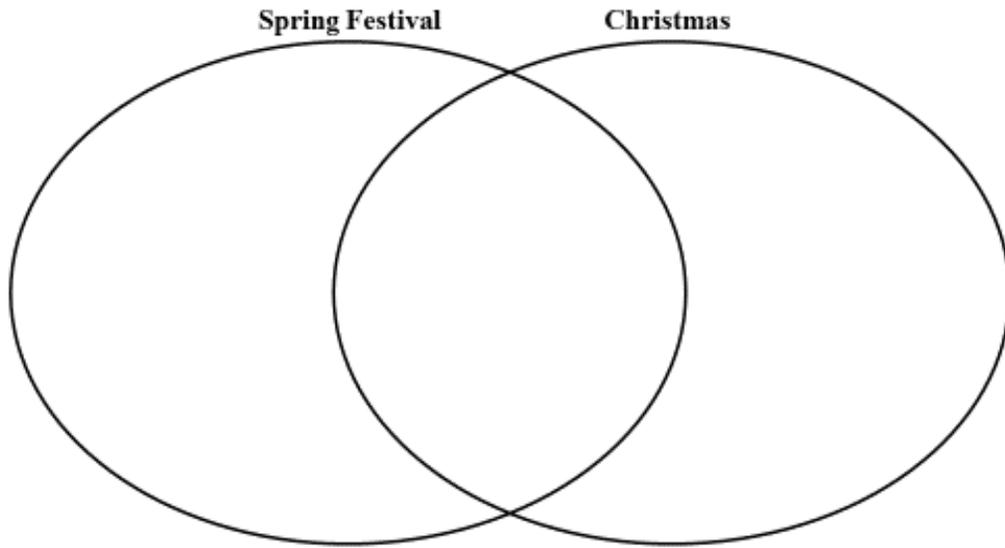
**What special challenges will ELL students face with this material?**

1. I anticipate that my ELL students may have difficulties in understanding some idiomatic expressions like candy cane and unfamiliar background knowledge like the religious story behind Christmas. Therefore, I will explain some important vocabularies and phrases before they read the article and utilize the animation video clips on YouTube channel to assist their understanding.
2. ELL students often face formidable barriers in a written text without any accompanying visual context. I will consequently use colorful pictures, video clips, contextualized vocabulary, and interesting content that are written in my supplementary material to hook their interest in reading.

Appendix A

Van Diagram

**Van Diagram**



## Artifact C: Case Study of a Non-Native Speaker

### I. Introduction of the Learner

Before describing the learner's oral and written language abilities in detail, I would like to give a brief overview of the participant and the sociocultural factors that may influence my participant's English language proficiency.

#### 1. Brief Overview of the Participant

My interviewee, Ying, is twenty-two years old. As a first-year graduate student, Ying is now studying Theological Studies in the Divinity school at Vanderbilt University. Born and raised in Beijing, Ying spent more than 20 years in northern China. She speaks Mandarin Chinese at school and Beijing dialect at home with her parents, which she considers as her two native languages. Ying started to learn English when she was eight years old in primary school, and she continued focusing on English literature when she entered college. During her four-year undergraduate study, she had the opportunity to make friends with native speakers; some of her professors were from countries like America, Britain, and Australia. Therefore, she had contact with native speakers before visiting the States. In addition to knowing Chinese and English, Ying reads Hebrew and Greek as well. After enrolling in the Theological Studies program at Vanderbilt, she had to learn these languages because that would assist her in reading the original Bible and other religious works that were originally written in Hebrew or Greek. Though Ying's Hebrew and Greek language competences are still at the emergent/beginner level, her knowledge of multiple languages makes her linguistic background quite diversified.

Four months ago, Ying moved to Nashville alone and embarked on her new journey in the States. Studying at Vanderbilt was her first time studying and living abroad. Through my conversation with Ying, I learned that she traveled a lot, but mostly in Asian countries and areas.

She did not get any chance to visit an English speaking country before. She was very excited and looked forward to starting her new life in Nashville.

## **2. Influencing Sociocultural Factors**

After giving a brief overview of my participant's linguistic background, I am going to analyze some sociocultural factors that influence her English language proficiency. When learning English, different students have different learning abilities. As a result, some students learn a new language more quickly and easily than others. Obviously, some English Language Learners (ELLs) are successful thanks to their talent, hard work, and persistence. However, there are also other crucial factors influencing ELLs' learning outcomes. These factors can be broadly categorized as internal and external (Frankfurt International School, 2015).

**1). Internal factors.** Internal factors are those that the individual learner brings with them to the particular learning situation (Frankfurt International School, 2015).

**Age.** As most of the linguists would agree, second language acquisition is largely influenced by the age of the learner. Compared to those adult learners who struggle to achieve native- speaker-equivalent pronunciation and intonation, children and teenagers seem to gain a better proficiency in new languages. A study undertaken by York University in Canada suggests that children have the advantage in learning new languages because they have not used their L1s for a very long time, and are not set in their vocabulary and grammar (Today's Zaman, 2011). As introduced previously, Ying started to learn English when she was eight. And since she began learning English quite early, this has a good impact on her current English level.

**Personality.** As is stated in a journal that talks about the relations between students' personalities and their English language learning, "introverted or anxious learners usually make slower progress, particularly in the development of oral skills" (Tandoc Jr., 2014). They are less

likely to take advantage of opportunities to speak, or to communicate with others to practice their languages due to their personalities. Conversely, those outgoing students who do not worry about making mistakes are more likely to take advantage of chances to practice and would thus make more progress. Through my conversations with Ying, I found out that she never feared sharing her thoughts with others, both in her native languages and in English. Although she made oral mistakes frequently, she had a positive attitude, which pushed her to keep talking and practicing. Consequently, Ying's positive personality also contributed a lot to her English language learning.

***Intrinsic Motivation.*** Intrinsic motivation of the learner has been found to correlate strongly with his/her educational achievement (Frankfurt International School, 2015). Clearly, students who enjoy the process of learning a new language would do better than those who do not. Ying told me that when she started to learn English, in addition to taking English classes at school, she joined an after-school English class and many English clubs at school, like English Corner and English Salon to practice her oral English with her Chinese friends. And her inner motivation and interest towards learning English cannot be ignored.

**2). External factors.** External factors are those that characterize the particular language learning situation (Frankfurt International School, 2015).

***Experiences.*** ELLs who have gained more knowledge and experience will put themselves in a stronger position to learn new languages than those who have not (Frankfurt International School, 2015). For instance, a student who has lived and studied in an English speaking country and been exposed to the most authentic western culture has a stronger base for learning English than others who have not had such diversified experiences. As stated previously, though Ying traveled a lot, it was her first time visiting an English speaking country. Therefore,

a lack of abundant knowledge and quantitative exposure to American culture differentiates her from native speakers.

***Education Background.*** For ELLs, it is significant that their educational experience is appropriate to their special needs. Ying spent 15 years learning English under the influence of the Chinese education system, which shapes her current English language proficiency. As a Chinese student, I shared the same experience of studying in China, and I know that the students there are asked to memorize English vocabulary and usage cases that are limited to what is tested on standardized exams. The education system in China that Ying was under is rather score-oriented, which means that the teachers would require their students to recite the things that are tested again and again, with the aim of getting a higher score. Therefore, Ying's knowledge of English language may not be broad.

***Access to Native Speakers.*** The opportunity of interacting with native speakers also becomes a contributing factor in ELLs' learning process. Native speakers should be considered as linguistic models and they can provide constructive feedback to non-native speakers (Frankfurt International School, 2015). Thus, ELLs who have limited access to native speakers make slower progress, particularly in the oral aspects of language acquisition, compared to those who have intensive access to native speakers. In China, the distribution of foreign language teachers in K-12 system is unequal, even in big cities. Most of the students like Ying seldom have the opportunity to communicate with foreigners before entering college. After entering college, Ying had the chance to make friends with native speakers through different social events like parties and becoming language partners with those who were studying in China as exchange students. Though her exposure to native speakers was limited, Ying at least started to have the chance to talk with them and know more about their cultures, which more or

less helped Ying's language learning.

***Culture and Status.*** Students in situations where their own culture has a lower status than that of the culture in which they are learning the language make slower progress (Frankfurt International School, 2015). Nowadays, China plays a more important role on the world's stage because of its rapid development in terms of economy, politics, and culture. Specifically, China has always been known for its rich culture with a long history. And the spirit of inclusion and coexistence that exist in Ying's cultural background as well supported and accelerated her to learn more about other cultures, as well as other languages. Plus, due to globalization, the connections between China and other English speaking countries are getting stronger. Chinese government therefore has been motivating its citizens to learn English since 1981 when China started to send more and more students to study abroad. Consequently, Ying's cultural background also contributed to her desire to learn English.

With the aim of better analyzing my participant's oral and written language ability, I collected her language samples by either recording the interview that we did together or asking her to send me the essays and pieces that she wrote before. I gauged Ying's language competence in terms of phonology, semantics, grammar, and pragmatics by asking questions within different contexts (formal/informal, academic/causal etc.). Afterwards, I transcribed her answers into sentences and analyzed them carefully to evaluate Ying's language ability.

## **II. Assessment of Interviewee's Language Abilities**

In order to assess the English language abilities, we need to take the four major components of the language into account (Mancilla-Martinez, 2015). They are phonology (sound system), semantics (system of meanings), grammar (rules of word and sentence formation), and pragmatics (social aspect). Specifically, phonology refers to the sound system

in a language; semantics indicates knowledge and meanings of the words; grammar is the study of the way the sentences of a language are constructed; and pragmatics focuses on the knowledge of appropriate uses of language (Mancilla-Martinez, 2015).

## 1. Phonology

To better assess Ying's English phonological abilities, my analysis emphasizes pronunciation, fluency, and coherence. Each of these elements will be elaborated and analyzed with concrete oral language examples.

**1). Pronunciation.** According to the Interlanguage Hypothesis theory, a learner of a second language (L2) who has not become fully proficient will preserve some features of his/her first language (L1) or overgeneralize L1's language rules in speaking L2 (Frith, 2015). And if a particular sound does not exist in L1, it can be difficult for learners to produce this sound and they may try to substitute this sound with similar ones in their mother tongue (Zhang & Yin, 2009).

Example (1): Sanks for having me. (thanks /θæŋks/ → sanks /sæŋks/)

Example (2): Hebrew Bible focus on de writing and reading. (the /ðə/ → de /də/)

In example (1) and (2), Ying's articulation for the "th" sound was wrong because she used /s/ and /d/ as the substitutions for /θ/ and /ð/ to pronounce "th". Since there are no such consonants like /θ/ and /ð/ in Chinese, which require the speaker to place the tip of his/her tongue between the upper and lower teeth when pronouncing the sound. Ying then had trouble perceiving these sounds and consequently found the closest equivalent /s/ and /d/ to substitute the original ones, which caused imprecision in speaking. And unfortunately, most Chinese speakers like Ying gradually get used to unconsciously using such shortcuts as substitutions.

Example (3): kinda (kind /kaɪnd/ → kinda /'kaɪndə/)

Example (4): louda (loud /laʊd/ → louda /laʊdə/)

As shown in examples (3) and (4), when pronouncing “kind” and “loud”, Ying overemphasized the end sounds of each word, which are supposed to be pronounced subtly as the last syllables. As most linguists would agree, Chinese is a syllable-timed language in which all syllables take approximately equal time to pronounce (British Council Teaching English, 2008) while English is a stress-timed language where the stressed syllables are said at approximately regular intervals, and unstressed syllables are shortened to fit the rhythm (British Council Teaching English, 2008). However, influenced by her L1 and not knowing this difference, Ying unintentionally added a vowel /ə/ at the end of the word to align with the pronunciation of her L1. Her unconscious decision resulted in “kind” being pronounced as “kinda,” and “loud” being pronounced as “louda,” which sounds inaccurate to native speakers.

**2). Fluency and Coherence.** Generally speaking, the overall fluency of Ying’s spoken English was fine. When collecting her oral sample during the interviews, I tried my best to use as many words and phrases with which I predicted she would have difficulty in pronouncing, and her reaction was satisfactory. She could articulate organized expression of ideas with a variety of sentences that matched her intended meanings. For instance: she used adverbial clauses of reason (“Since we’ve learnt English since childhood ...”) and attributive clauses (“I have a Chinese roommate, so after class, when I go home I can speak Chinese with her.”), which satisfied the quality of High Intermediate Fluency (see Appendix A for more information on language ability). Ying was willing to speak at length, though lost coherence sometimes because of occasional hesitation. She liked using connectives between sentences; however, they were not always appropriate. For example, in a ten-minute interview, Ying said

“you know” 27 times and “well” 10 times. The extensive repetition of fixed phrase patterns suggested her lack of related knowledge of connectives and discourse markers. Ying’s limited knowledge about connectives made the fillers that she used in communicating monotonous and repetitive, which more or less diminished the overall quality of her fluency and coherence.

Example (5): “But you know since my major required us to you know/ know some Hebrew and Greek so the class normally combined with only a minor part of Hebrew and Greek/ But you know the major language is English/ yes.”

What is more, Ying’s talking speed was too fast. Example (5) is one concrete sample that shows the pauses during her speech; each slash denotes a breathing space. As is indicated in the example, Ying did not pause within phrases or at the ends of sentences, meaning that she was not taking in enough air to support her voice. Her breath stream became weaker, and the words near the end of her utterance lacked volume and clarity. This not only made it difficult for Ying to construct the next sentences, leading to hesitation and repetition, but also made it hard for me to follow during the interview. Moreover, the rushed speed hurt Ying’s diction. When she flew through her words, her tongue and lips failed to keep up with her mind. Ying consequently dropped important vowels and consonants, causing me sometimes to miss her meanings. Additionally, her fast talking speed can also be considered as a sign of nervousness and a lack of self-confidence. Speakers’ fast talking speed can make it appear as though they do not think others want to listen to them, or that what they say is not important (Wyeth, 2014). If she could slow down her talking speed, her performance would be greatly improved.

## **2. Semantics**

To better assess Ying’s semantic skills, my analysis emphasizes register and diversity of word choice, which will be explained with concrete examples from Ying’s 250-word

conversational transcription and a 150-word written piece that was prepared for the International English Language Testing System Writing Test (IELTS).

**1). Register.** Register means the formality or informality of the language used in a particular situation (University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations, 2015). The language a speaker uses should fit the situation he/she is in; and the level of formality a writer uses should be determined by the expectations of his/her audience and his/her purposes. For instance, if the writer is writing a cover letter for a graduate school application, he/she would write in a formal style. If the writer is writing a personal letter to a friend, he/she would use a more informal style.

Ying's language during the conversation was in accordance with the relaxed and friendly situation in which we spoke. In that writing setting, it is absolutely fine for her to write as she speaks, like using a conversational tone and idioms. For instance, she used informal words and phrases like "and", "so", "actually", and "you know" repetitively to hesitate and to think, and this was acceptable since the context was not formal.

However, the formality of the language in her writing sample was not appropriate for the context. The writing sample differs from the transcription because language usage in academic writing should avoid a dialectic tone and slang terms (Writing Commons, 2015). However, Ying used several phrases and words that seemed to be inappropriate.

Example (6): about (concerning), hang out (to meet up, to get together), things (issues), young (immature), a lot of/ lots of (much, many), kids (children), good (positive), bad (negative)

In example (6), I name eight examples that failed to be consistent with the register of the text, as well as the formal versions of them aside. Ideally, the language in an academic setting is

supposed to be clear and concise. It is important for the speaker or writer to use language that fits the readers and matches the purpose. Inappropriate language use can damage the speaker or writer's credibility, undermine his/her argument, or alienate his/her audience (Purdue OWL, 2015). In Ying's case, the words and phrases that she used in her writing sample were the ones we often use in daily conversation, which failed to coincide with the tone and formality of the overall task. Ying's mixed usage of formal and informal words in her writing sample violated the seriousness of the international standardized test of English language proficiency, thus resulting in a grade reduction.

**2). Word Diversity.** To better assess Ying's word diversity, I used the Lexical Density Test and Type-Token Ratio (TTR) to make a comparison between the word choices in both her oral and written samples.

Lexical diversity of a text measures the proportion of the unique words over the total words. Texts with a higher density are more difficult to be understood. As a guide, a dense text has a lexical density of around 60-70%, and a text which is not dense has a lower lexical density measure of around 40-50% (Usingenglish.com, 2015).

According to the statistics in Appendix B, both of the samples are lexically dense since both of their lexical diversities are above 60% (Usingenglish.com, 2015). However, the words Ying chose in both contexts were neither sophisticated nor difficult since the proportions of the words that have three or more syllables in the two samples are both low (4.76% and 7.94% of the total words used respectively). If I broke down the word length, it would clearly show that in a 63-word oral sample, there are only five 8 letter words (7.9%); and in a 63-word writing sample, there are only two 8 letter words (3.3%). Nonetheless, compared with Ying's language in the dialectic conversation, the words and phrases in the academic writing sample were more

advanced and less common. For example, the longest word length in Ying's oral example is 8 letters, however in her writing sample, the longest word length is 10 letters. In addition, by changing the sentence patterns and adding conjunctions, she used them in a more natural and flexible way. Although there existed some inaccuracies and formality errors, they did not impede communication and the deliverance of the meaning.

After viewing Ying's performances in two different settings, I think the inner motivation from my participant made a major contribution. The writing sample was a test; Ying therefore intentionally paid extra attention to her language, which made the words in the writing sample more diversified. Moreover, since the sample was for the test that would influence her graduate school application, Ying was likely to make greater efforts and thus gain better results.

### 3. Grammar

To better assess Ying's grammatical skills, my analysis emphasizes Ying's morphological ability and syntactical ability, which will be explained with the examples from Ying's two 294- word conversational transcription and written practices for IELTS.

**1). Morphology.** I calculated Ying's Mean Length Utterance (MLU) and analyzed the usage of affixation to explicitly assess her morphology.

***Mean Length Utterance.*** MLU means number of morphemes produced per sentence. It is calculated by dividing the number of morphemes by the number of utterances (Dictionary.com, 2015). According to my calculations in Appendix C, the MLUs of Ying's oral transcription and writing sample were 17.61 (317/18) and 19.17(345/18) respectively. Both of Ying's MLUs exceeded those of native speakers who are over 60 months of age. In addition, a higher MLU is always taken to indicate a higher level of language proficiency (Dictionary.com, 2015); therefore, Ying's grammar is stronger in her writing.

**Affixation.** I paid more attention to Ying's usage of suffixes in both samples since she did not use many prefixes in either one. Specifically, she did a fair job in using derivational suffixes.

Example (7): easy-easily, surprise-surprising,

health-healthy, advertise-advertisement,

aware-awareness

In example (7), I list some successful derivational examples that Ying used in her oral and written samples. As can be seen from the examples, the changes of the root words were appropriate and were in accordance with the grammar of the sentences.

However, her control of inflectional suffixes was not as developed. She sometimes forgot to add plural markers, resulting in wrong phrases like "advertisements is ..." In Chinese, there are no separate singular and plural forms for nouns; the context is used to distinguish between singular and plural (Guo, 2008). If someone says "one advertisement" in Chinese, the character for "advertisement" is singular; and it does not need to be changed when "advertisement" is made plural. There is no separate plural form for "advertisements" in Chinese. Consequently, Ying said "advertisements is..." which was grammatically incorrect.

**2). Syntax.** To better assess Ying's syntactic ability, I analyzed Ying's use of word order and cohesive devices.

**Word Order.** Word order refers to the way in which words are arranged in sequence in a sentence or smaller construction (About Education, 2015). A fixed and proper word order helps to ease the processing of sentence semantics and reduce ambiguity (Guo, 2008). From my evaluation, I found that Ying had a good understanding of word order. In her two 18-utterance samples, there was only one sentence whose word order was wrong ("... and even there are some violence advertisement on television."). Except for the incorrect sentence, her overall

arrangement of word order was fine. I counted the number of different sentence types that were embedded in two 294-word samples. Instead of only using simple sentences, Ying added sentence variety and complexity to language by using compound sentences, complex sentences, and compound-complex sentences without making more word order mistakes. Given Ying's strength in this area, I then evaluated her usage of cohesive devices.

***Cohesive Device.*** Cohesive devices refer to words and phrases that are used to combine ideas in writing, thus ensure that ideas within sentences and paragraphs are elegantly connected (English Language Smart Words, 2015). By investigating Ying's language models, I found that her knowledge of logical linking devices was limited.

Example (8): more, what else, another, besides (reinforcement)

mainly, basically (highlighting)

maybe, may, more likely, thus, if (inference)

rather than (reformulation)

therefore, so (result/consequence/summary)

In Ying's two 294-word conversational and written samples, the linking words that she used are limited. Example (8) shows all of the linking words that she used to match different logical functions. It is true that those logical linking devices helped to connect sentences together in a more natural and flexible way, which made her ideas very easy to follow. However, most of them are very simple and are used repetitively. Besides, there existed misusages of grammatical and lexical linking words and phrases like "and" and "you know", which caused redundancies and misunderstandings. Ying's incorrect ways of using of connecting words made her language become distracted and difficult for me to follow.

#### 4. Pragmatics

In the field of linguistics, pragmatics refers to the study of what words mean in particular situations (Merriam-Webster, 2015). To better evaluate Ying's pragmatic strengths and areas of improvement, I chose a 320-word conversational sample of Ying and analyzed it with concrete examples in the spirit of the Context Types theory and Grice's Maxim of Conversation theory.

**1). Context Types.** Pragmatics focuses on the relationship between context and meaning. Meaning involves linguistic, situational, and social factors where the context of language use is essential.

***The Linguistic Context.*** The linguistic context refers to the linguistic environment in which a word is used within a text. It has to do with what preceded a particular utterance in discourse (Mancilla-Martinez, 2015).

Example (9): "He basically taught us British and American culture, which requires a lot of, you know, history learning. So, and ah, how am I going to describe the class?"

In example (9), I asked Ying to describe an English class under the Chinese teaching model. Instead of directly telling me what was going on in the class, she described her teacher first. Then she noticed that she was off topic, so she immediately used the underlined sentence in example (9) to transfer back to what I had asked.

***The Situational Context.*** The situational context provides information about the situation in which something is uttered. It allows us to refer to things even if they have not been mentioned before in the discourse (Mancilla-Martinez, 2015).

Example (10): "This year, I also have a, you know, someone who is a year before me; and

he is actually is from Beijing. So that's cool but, you know, we tend to see each other a lot."

In example (10), I asked Ying whether she had any chance to speak Chinese here in the States, since I had learned that she was the only Chinese student in her program. Although she did not give me an explicit yes or no, she told me that she had met another Chinese peer at school. Since she mentioned that they met up often, I understood that she definitely had the opportunity to speak her mother tongue.

*The Social Context.* The social context includes information about the relationships between the speakers and their roles (Mancilla-Martinez, 2015).

Example (11): Thanks for having me.

Example (12): It's my pleasure to be here.

Before starting the conversation, I greeted Ying and asked her permission to record the interview. She responded with the sentence in example (11). And when the conversation came to an end, I thanked Ying again for her cooperation. She responded with the sentence in example (12). I think these utterances reflected a sense of politeness in my participant. This impressed me a lot because I had learned most English Language Learners (ELLs) would omit such pleasantries, which make them sound 'rude'. However, Ying did a good job in the social context.

**2). Maxim of Conversation.** According to Grice, when interpreting an utterance of a sentence, the speaker has complied with a number of principles ensuring that conversation is a cooperative activity. And he called the principles "Maxim of Conversation" (Spector, 2013). Specifically speaking, there are four maxims.

*The Maxim of Quality.* Maxim of quality requires the speaker to not say something unless one believes it is true, based on adequate evidence (Mancilla-Martinez, 2015).

Example (13): “Yeah, between English and Chinese, I think, is, the differences is not too obvious, you know. . . . . So I think there isn’t much difference between English and Chinese.”

In example (13), when I asked Ying about the differences between Chinese and English languages, she told me that there isn’t much of a difference between the two. As a future ELL teacher, I know this is definitely not true since there are obviously huge differences between these two languages in terms of phonology, semantics, grammar etc. Consequently, in example (13), Ying violated the maxim of quality.

***The Maxim of Relevance.*** Maxim of relevance suggests the speaker should not convey any information that is not relevant in the context (Mancilla-Martinez, 2015).

Example (14): “Actually I have a favorite professor or teacher back in my college, undergraduate, ah he was like, he was born in Texas. He basically taught us British and American culture, which requires a lot of, you know, history learning. So, and ah, how am I going to describe the class?”

In example (14), when I asked Ying to describe an English class in China, she uttered 97 words before talking about what was going on in class. However, as stated before, she quickly recognized her mistakes and went back on topic. I think the main reason that caused the mistake in example (14) was Ying’s Chinese mode of thinking. English tends to stick to the point at the very beginning of the speech, offering a straight and frank theme of the speech before proceeding on to present the relevant details and accompany. Chinese, on the other hand, will present the relative information in great detail before hitting upon the theme, is abundant in expressions with a long head with a short ending (Guo, 2008). For Chinese speakers like Ying, they prefer to introduce the most important idea at the very end of the speech. Thus, there is no

wonder why Ying intentionally spoke a lot before stating her main argument, which caused redundancies and increased the possibility of being off topic.

***The Maxim of Quantity.*** Maxim of quantity advises that the speaker should provide as much information as needed given the conversation's goal, and no more information than what is needed (Mancilla-Martinez, 2015).

Example (15): "Yeah, my name is Y and my English name is Fiona. I am a first year MTI student. Yep."

In example (15), I invited Ying to introduce herself in detail, since it was our first meeting. However, the response she provided was simple and not detailed at all. And I had to ask one more time for her to give more information about herself. Here, instead of considering Ying's answer as a violation of the maxim of quantity, I think she was just nervous or shy, since it was our first meeting after all. In most of the circumstances, she provided proper length of answers and did a good job in adhering to the maxim of quantity.

***The Maxim of Manner.*** Maxim of manner instructs speakers to express themselves in an orderly way (Mancilla-Martinez, 2015). Ambiguity should be avoided.

Example (16): "In the first half of the class, we were divided into like two groups, ah four groups, ah two groups, sorry. And ah, in the first ten minutes, the first half, the first group is, you know, they are going to stand outside of the classroom. And he want us to taught, you know, to the other half of the class. And after ten minutes, the group which is outside, there are going to come back and the second group which they listened what my teacher taught them, are going to teach what they learned to the other students, you know, which are outside when the teacher is talking."

In example (16), when Ying told me what was happening in her English class, she firstly went back and forth about the size of the groups, then gave an unclear picture of the stages of the class. Because of her inconsistent delivering, I had to run the recording several times to understand what the class was like. Ying's language was very confusing, therefore she violated the maxim of manner.

### **III. Assessment of the Learner's Current Stage of Second Language Acquisition**

After the careful analysis of my participant's oral and written language abilities in terms of phonology, semantics, grammar, and pragmatics, I stated both her strengths and areas of improvement with the support of the samples that I collected. I place her current speaking ability at the High Intermediate Fluency level and writing ability at the Bridging level, based on her overall performance and frameworks of the Fundamental Difference Hypothesis theory and the Interlanguage Hypothesis theory.

#### **1. Theoretical Frameworks**

**1). Fundamental Difference Hypothesis Theory.** According to the theory, adults and children are different in many significant ways when it comes to English language learning. Since adults already know what language is about, they are able to use diverse forms adequately according to social contexts. Therefore, the only thing that they need to learn is the specific language forms, while children have to learn different forms to be used in different situations. The Fundamental Difference Hypothesis claims that adult ELLs do not have access to Universal Grammar, which is instead fully accessible to L1 in normal conditions. Consequently, their language universals are supposedly constructed through their L1. Hence, adult ELLs will hardly achieve a native-like proficiency. This theory also predicts fossilization, which is when the learner gets stuck and does not go beyond a certain level of

language knowledge as one of the main factors that limit adult learners' competence (Language Alive, 2013).

**2). Interlanguage Hypothesis Theory.** Interlanguage is the type of language produced by second and foreign language learners who are in the process of learning a language. According to the Interlanguage Hypothesis theory, a learner of L2 who has not become fully proficient will preserve some features of their L1, overgeneralize L1's language rules in speaking L2 (Frith, 2015). The errors that are caused by the Interlanguage Hypothesis theory include: borrowing patterns from L1; extending patterns from the target language; expressing meanings using the words and grammar which are already known, etc.

## **2. Overall Assessment of Participant's Speaking and Writing Abilities**

**1). Speaking.** I put Ying's speaking ability at the High Intermediate level because she satisfied most of the requirements that are written in the Language Acquisition Chart (see Appendix A for more information on language ability). In order to collect Ying's conversational samples, I interviewed her several times and during our conversations, I designed many questions that covered various topics. I also gave her pictures and graphs and invited her to narrate stories and describe the tables and pie charts that I provided. Though she made language-related hesitations and corrected herself several times, she could communicate thoughts completely and could participate in everyday conversations without highly contextualized supports (Language Acquisition Chart, 2015). However, her less developed usage of cohesive devices and unprecise pronunciations of some words stopped me grading her oral English at the Advanced Fluency level.

According to the descriptions of Ying's phonology, she can use a range of pronunciation features with mixed control. Her oral samples show some effective use of features but it is not

sustained. Ying's pronunciation can be generally understood throughout, though mispronunciation of individual words or sounds that mixed with her L1 pronunciation reduces clarity at times. Ying's L1 accent sometimes has an effect on indelibility, which corresponds to the Fundamental Difference Hypothesis theory. According to the theory, since adult ELLs do not have access to Universal Grammar and they have used their L1 for a very long time, they are stuck in the L1's rules and will consider their L1 as the only standard when learning English as their L2.

As discussed in the second part of the paper, Ying used a lot of simple sentences instead of complicated ones and seldom added cohesive devices to connect the clauses when she talked. It is predictable under the Interlanguage Hypothesis theory. As Eugene Nida said, the biggest difference between the Chinese and English languages is that Chinese is a parataxis language, while English on the other hand is a hypotaxis language. It is often observed that English tends to be 'close-knit' due to the frequent usage of cohesive devices, whereas Chinese is believed to be more "loose-knit" as its favor usage of short clauses (2004). The differences between two languages usually have a significant influence on Chinese ELLs and their ways of presenting their language, since Chinese has low demand of utilizing logical linking devices among sentences to achieve cohesion. Therefore, it makes sense that Ying has limited knowledge of connecting words and phrases when she speaks English since she was influenced by her L1, which was corresponding to the Interlanguage Hypothesis theory. Though Ying lost language-related coherence at times due to the influence of her L1, she was willing to speak at length and produced simple speech fluently, so I consequently placed her speaking ability at the High Intermediate level.

**2). Writing.** I graded Ying's writing ability at the Bridging level because her written samples basically satisfied the requirements that are written in the WIDA Descriptors of the English Language Proficiency Standard (see Appendix D for more information). Through my observations on Ying's writing samples that involve different topics, I found out that she can create pieces that represent the use of a variety of genres. She is available to explain her viewpoints with the support of data, statistics, and examples. Although there existed tendencies of overgeneralizing, her main ideas were addressed with some relevant supporting ideas. Despite the fact that Ying's vocabulary and sentence variety are in need of development, I graded her oral English at the Bridging Level.

The overall performance of Ying's writing is better than her speaking. Most of the writing samples addressed all parts of the tasks and presented clear positions throughout her responses, although the conclusions might be inadequately developed. In terms of using coherence and cohesion, Ying's performance was quite similar to how she did in her oral conversation. As the Interlanguage Hypothesis theory indicates, Ying is deeply influenced by the grammatical rules in her L1. Instead of using connecting words and phrases with variability and flexibility, she therefore used small clauses frequently, sometimes without even indicating the inner logic. In terms of grammatical range and accuracy, though Ying made some errors in grammar and punctuation, they rarely reduced communication.

I think the main reason that influenced the different performances of Ying's language in dialectic conversations in contrast to her academic writing samples was her self-consciousness. All of the writing samples that I chose to analyze are from her IELTS writing test. IELTS, as an international standardized test of English language proficiency for non-native English language speakers, has its own academic purpose. Student would take IELTS to enter higher education in

foreign countries. As a general rule, the top ranked universities in the United States require a higher IELTS band, typically an overall Band 7.0 (IELTS, 2015) from the candidates. Ying took the IELTS test three times last year when she was applying for graduate school. For Ying, getting a Band 7.0 for overall test and a Band 6.5 for writing part would increase the possibilities of being accepted. Facing the test that would influence her graduate school application, Ying was likely to pay more attention and make greater efforts in brainstorming, drafting, editing, and revising. Ying made greater efforts and thus created better writing samples than conversational ones. However, Ying's semantics and techniques of using cohesive devices needed to be improved, which will help to move her writing ability to a higher level.

#### **IV. Specific Instructional Plans for Learner**

In the previous two parts of the paper, I analyzed Ying's phonology, semantics, grammar, and pragmatics and assessed her current stage of second language acquisition with the supports of the Fundamental Difference Hypothesis theory and the Interlanguage Hypothesis theory. In order to help Ying improve her English language abilities, I will encourage her to do three things: raise self-awareness, expand vocabulary, and speak more English with native speakers.

##### **1. Raise Self-Awareness**

During the process of analyzing Ying's language samples, I noticed that sometimes she made mistakes, not because she was careless, but because she did not have the awareness at all. Therefore, before giving my participant any professional suggestions from the linguistics perspective, the first and foremost thing to do is to raise her awareness of the importance of some linguistic concepts, as well as the differences between English and Chinese.

When evaluating Ying's semantics from the register level, it turned out that the concept of register in Ying was very vague since in China, teachers seldom emphasize the significance of

register or the formality of the language in class. As a student who had learned English under the Chinese teaching model for more than 15 years, Ying's learning strategies are stereotyped and fixed. She consequently had no consciousness of the existence of register. However, in English, linguistic concepts like register is very important because inappropriate language use can reduce the speakers' credibility and undermine their arguments. The mix usage of formal and informal words will violate the seriousness of the contexts and alienate the readers. Thus, the first step for helping Ying become a better English speaker must be raising her awareness of some concepts that are not largely introduced in her own culture.

In order to improve Ying's English competence, she needs to be aware of the differences between Chinese and English as well. For example, Chinese is a syllable-timed language while English is a stress-timed language. Being unconscious of such difference, as the Interlanguage Hypothesis theory predicts, the speaker would borrow patterns from L1 and make imprecise pronunciation. As a consequence, it is necessary for my participant to raise her awareness of the language differences between English and Chinese.

## **2. Expand Vocabulary**

After having a better understanding of important linguistic concepts, I will help Ying to broaden her lexical resources.

Ying has limited vocabulary due to the previous education that she received in China. She spent 15 years learning English under the influence of the Chinese education system, which shapes her current use of language. I shared the same experience of studying in China, and I know that the students are asked to memorize English vocabulary limited to what is included on standardized exams. Therefore, it makes sense that Ying's knowledge of vocabulary is not that broad. In order to further develop Ying's semantic skills, she needs to intentionally

memorize more advanced academic words and phrases. In order to help Ying know more vocabulary, I will encourage her to remember a certain amount of words (15-25) per day and keep a journal of all the new words she learns, so that she can refer back to the list and build them into her everyday vocabulary. Additionally, keeping a journal can provide positive reinforcement for Ying to learn more, especially when she sees how many new words she has already learned. To help her to achieve the highest proficiency, I will suggest that Ying make her own flashcards and bring them with her to memorize the vocabulary words that she finds unfamiliar.

In order to tackle the problem of mingling formal and informal words, I will assist Ying to form a list of commonly confused and misused English words and phrases, as well as coming up with the corresponding ones that match the contexts in which she will be writing. After Ying gets more familiar with the words, I will then design more exercises for her to practice what she has learned to consolidate the conception of register.

### **3. Speak More English with Native Speakers**

The opportunity of engaging with native speakers both within and outside of the classroom will play a positive role in Ying's English language learning. Native speakers, as linguistic models, can efficiently provide useful feedback to non-native speakers efficiently (Frankfurt International School, 2015).

Before visiting the States, Ying's contact with native speakers was limited. After arriving in Nashville and started her graduate school life at Vanderbilt, Ying's exposure to English was expanded noticeably. She now speaks English everywhere: when attending lectures in the classrooms, when buying coffee at Starbucks, when making appointment with dentists through phones, etc. For most of the ELL students, it is true that when they first arrive in some places

where they seldom have the chance to speak their mother tongues, they would choose to stay in their comfort zones instead of embracing the new challenges. They might always stick with the group of people who share the same nationality, cultural background, and identity since they think it would make their life easier. But that would only make it even harder for ELLs to progress and be successful in language learning because they are afraid of practicing and engaging with natives.

I will suggest that Ying take advantage of the time studying in the States and practice her oral English with more native speakers. For example, it is a good idea to become a language partner with native speakers, meet them regularly, and practice oral English with them. Through communicating with natives, in addition to gaining more opportunities to practice oral English, Ying will know more about American culture. What is more, I will encourage Ying to find some part-time jobs that demand high communicative skills, which would not only help her to expand her vocabulary, but also strengthen her understanding of register through working in different contexts and situations.

## **V. Critical Reflections**

### **1. Things that I Learned Through the Case Study**

During the process of accomplishing this case study, I have not only discovered the linguistic strengths and weaknesses of my participant, but also learned many other issues that will be useful in my future ELL teaching.

Firstly, I have deepened my understanding of many new methods and theories that could be utilized as frameworks of analyzing ELLs' language abilities, such as Mean Length of Utterance (MLU), Type-Token Ratio (TTR), Maxim of Conversation, etc. Luckily, this case study has given me the opportunity to put what I have learned into practice and has motivated

me to evaluate an ELL's language abilities from a holistic angle. So next time when I analyze ELL's language ability, I will use the new concepts that I have learned this semester, like MLU and TTR to digitalize and visualize my participant's performance, and make my analysis more convincing.

Secondly, I have learned how different thinking patterns could reflect language usage. For instance, when analyzing Ying's pragmatics, I found out that she violated the maxims of relevance and quantity because of the different modes of thinking between the East and the West. Westerners prefer to state the most important information at the beginning of the speech while easterners like the Chinese are more used to presenting the relative information in detail before hitting upon the theme. Being influenced by the thinking mode of her L1, Ying therefore mentioned a lot of less relevant information before talking about the most important one and violated the maxims of relevance and quantity. So next time when I teach ELL, I would not only introduce them to the ways of constructing sentences, but also to the rationales behind them.

## **2. Implications**

Through this case study, I have a better understanding of my future Chinese student group, which will help me to come up with more specific instructional suggestions for them to enhance their language skills.

Being influenced by the Fundamental Difference Hypothesis theory, I have learned that for adult ELLs, it is hard, or nearly impossible for them to speak like natives since their language has been largely influenced by their L1. Therefore, facing my adult ELL students, instead of spending more time on drilling them on their pronunciation, I will pay more attention to building their grammar, semantics, and pragmatics. But for my children ELL students, I will take advantage of the fact that the influence of their L1 is not that fixed, and pay more attention

to their pronunciation and vocabulary building.

What is more, I will pay extra attention to the conception of register and help my students to build their awareness of the significance of it. Since nowadays in the Chinese education system, the register of the language has always been ignored, I need to pay special attention to it in my future teaching. Similarly, I will help my future students to differentiate the formal and informal versions of the words and give them a clearer view of the differences.

Last, but not least, I will increase my ELL students' exposure to authentic American culture. From this case study, I have learned the powerful impact that the environment has on language learning. The more exposure one has to a language, the more quickly one will learn it. Although in China, there are not many foreign English teachers, I can make the best usage of the Internet and incorporate American TV dramas and music clips in my teaching practices. For children ELL students, I can play Disney cartoons and movies without subtitles for them to practice their listening skills. For adult ELL students, I can play them Oscar-winning movies with subtitles to develop their interest in English language learning.

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## Appendix A

## Language Acquisition Chart (From Level 1 to Level 5)

Language Acquisition Chart

	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
<b>OFFICIAL NAME</b>	Preproduction	Early Production	Low Intermediate	High Intermediate Fluency	Advanced Fluency
<b>OTHER NAMES</b>	Newcomer Emergent Speaker Silent Period Stage	Emergent/Beginner One-Two Word Social Language Stage	Short Phrases/Simple Sentences Social Language Stage	Bridging Academic Language Stage	Exitable Fluency Academic Language Stage
<b>DEFINITION</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students not ready to actively produce language</li> <li>Listening and responding in non-verbal ways to show understanding</li> <li>Adjusting to U.S. culture</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students can attend to hands-on demonstrations with more understanding</li> <li>May initiate conversation by pointing or using single words</li> <li>Very limited comprehension/vocabulary</li> <li>Adjusting to U.S. culture</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students begin speaking in short phrases and simple sentences</li> <li>Many mistakes in grammar, word order, word usage</li> <li>Limited comprehension and vocabulary</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students can communicate thoughts more completely, can participate in every day conversations without highly contextualized support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students have advanced skills in cognitive/academic language</li> </ul>
<b>VOCABULARY</b>	0-500 receptive word vocabulary	Up to 1000 receptive word vocabulary	Up to 7,000 receptive/active word vocabulary	Up to 12,000 receptive/active word vocabulary	Beyond 12,000 receptive/active word vocabulary
<b>STUDENT BEHAVIORS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Depends heavily on context</li> <li>Has minimal receptive vocabulary</li> <li>Comprehends key words only</li> <li>Indicates comprehension physically (points, draws, gestures, etc.)</li> <li>May not produce speech</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Depends heavily on context</li> <li>Produces words in isolation</li> <li>Verbalizes key words</li> <li>Responds with one/two word answer or short phrases</li> <li>Indicates comprehension physically</li> <li>Mispronunciation/grammar errors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Depends heavily on context</li> <li>Produces whole sentences</li> <li>Makes some pronunciation and basic grammatical errors, but is understood</li> <li>Demonstrates comprehension by responding orally and in written form (charts, graphs, diagrams)</li> <li>Hears smaller elements of speech</li> <li>Functions on a social level</li> <li>Uses limited vocabulary</li> <li>Initiates conversation &amp; questions</li> <li>Shows good comprehension (given rich context)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Depends on context</li> <li>Engage in and produce connected narrative (discourse)</li> <li>Shows good comprehension</li> <li>Uses expanded vocabulary</li> <li>Makes complex grammatical errors</li> <li>Functions somewhat on an academic level</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Functions on an academic level with age/grade peers</li> <li>Maintains two-way conversations</li> <li>Uses more complex grammatical structures</li> <li>Demonstrates comprehension in decontextualized situations</li> <li>Uses enriched vocabulary</li> </ul>
<b>ABLE TO</b>	Observe, locate, label, match, show, classify, categorize	Name, recall, draw, list, record, point out, underline, organize	Tell, describe, restate, compare, question, map, dramatize	Imagine, create, appraise, contrast, predict, express, report, estimate, evaluate, explain	Relate, infer, hypothesize, outline, revise, suppose, verify, rewrite, assess, justify, critique, summarize, illustrate, judge, demonstrate
<b>TEACHING STRATEGIES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use manipulatives, visuals, realia, props, games</li> <li>Create climate of acceptance/respect that supports acculturation</li> <li>Use cooperative learning groups</li> <li>Require physical response to check comprehension</li> <li>Display print to support oral language</li> <li>Model activities for students</li> <li>Use hands-on activities</li> <li>Use bilingual students as peer helpers</li> <li>Adjust rate of speech to enhance comprehension</li> <li>Ask yes/no questions</li> <li>Ask students to show/point/draw</li> <li>Teach content area vocabulary/terminology</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue Stage I Strategies PLUS</li> <li>Simplify language – not content</li> <li>Lessons designed to motivate students to talk</li> <li>Ask students questions that require one/two word responses: who?, what?, which one?, how many?</li> <li>Lessons expand vocabulary</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue Stages I &amp; II Strategies PLUS</li> <li>List and review instructions step by step</li> <li>Build on students' prior knowledge</li> <li>Incorporate more reading and writing</li> <li>Engage students in producing language: describing, retelling, comparing, contrasting, summarizing, graphs, charts, diagrams, creating, rebus</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue Stages I-III Strategies PLUS</li> <li>Have students brainstorm, list, web, use graphic organizers</li> <li>Ask questions soliciting opinions, judgment, explanation (more why and how questions)</li> <li>Introduce figurative language</li> <li>Develop more academic language (oral and written)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue Stages I-IV Strategies PLUS</li> <li>Incorporate note-taking skills, study skills, &amp; test-taking skills</li> <li>Demonstrate how to verify answers (oral and written)</li> <li>Expand figurative language (idioms)</li> </ul>
<b>RELATIVE TIMELINE FOR EACH LANGUAGE ACQUISITION STAGE</b>	0-6 Months in U.S. School	6 Months-1 Year in U.S. School	1-3 Years in U.S. School	3-5 Years in U.S. School	5-7 Years in U.S. School

## Appendix B

## Comparison of Vocabulary Variation within Two Samples

<b>Transcription of the Conversation</b>	<b>Writing Sample</b>
<p>“Ah, actually we have the special method I think that would answer the question, that is, ah, we have a website and there is some kind of like Hebrew for kids, and some of the alphabet and some of the words are in the form of songs, so</p>	<p>“It is not surprising at all that many rules are mentioned by the parents to limit their behavior. Children aged between 3 and 5 are curious about all the things which emit light, such as fire. Without any alert, they may touch the fire and get themselves hurt.</p>
Total words (tokens) = 63	Total words (tokens) = 63
Total unique words (types) = 41	Total unique words (types) = 53
Total hard words = 3 (4.76%)	Total hard words = 5 (7.94%)
8 letters words = 5 (7.9%)	8 letters words = 2 (3.3%)
Lexical diversity (41/63) = 65.08%	Lexical diversity (53/63) = 84.13%

(Usingenglish.com, 2015)

## Appendix C

## Comparison of Grammatical Ability within the Two Samples

	<b>Conversational Transcription</b>	<b>Writing Sample</b>
No. of Word	292	294
No. of Utterance	18	18
No. of Morpheme	317	345
MLU	17.61	19.17
No. of Incorrect Affixation	4	2
No. of Correct Linking Device	5	11
No. of Sentence Fragment	1	0
No. of Sentence with Wrong Word Order	1	0

(WIDA, 2015)

## Appendix D

### WIDA Can Do Descriptors: Grade Level Cluster 9-12



#### Can Do Descriptors: Grade Level Cluster 9-12

For the given level of English language proficiency and with visual, graphic, or interactive support through Level 4, English language learners can process or produce the language needed to:

	Level 1 Entering	Level 2 Beginning	Level 3 Developing	Level 4 Expanding	Level 5 Bridging	
READING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Match visual representations to words/phrases</li> <li>Read everyday signs, symbols, schedules, and school-related words/phrases</li> <li>Respond to WH- questions related to illustrated text</li> <li>Use references (e.g., picture dictionaries, bilingual glossaries, technology)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Match data or information with its source or genre (e.g., description of element to its symbol on periodic table)</li> <li>Classify or organize information presented in visuals or graphs</li> <li>Follow multi-step instructions supported by visuals or data</li> <li>Match sentence-level descriptions to visual representations</li> <li>Compare content-related features in visuals and graphics</li> <li>Locate main ideas in a series of related sentences</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Apply multiple meanings of words/phrases to social and academic contexts</li> <li>Identify topic sentences or main ideas and details in paragraphs</li> <li>Answer questions about explicit information in texts</li> <li>Differentiate between fact and opinion in text</li> <li>Order paragraphs or sequence information within paragraphs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Compare/contrast authors' points of view, characters, information, or events</li> <li>Interpret visually- or graphically-supported information</li> <li>Infer meaning from text</li> <li>Match cause to effect</li> <li>Evaluate usefulness of data or information supported visually or graphically</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interpret grade-level literature</li> <li>Synthesize grade-level expository text</li> <li>Draw conclusions from different sources of informational text</li> <li>Infer significance of data or information in grade-level material</li> <li>Identify evidence of bias and credibility of source</li> </ul>	Level 6 - Reaching
WRITING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Label content-related diagrams, pictures from word/phrase banks</li> <li>Provide personal information on forms read orally</li> <li>Produce short answer responses to oral questions with visual support</li> <li>Supply missing words in short sentences</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Make content-related lists of words, phrases, or expressions</li> <li>Take notes using graphic organizers or models</li> <li>Formulate yes/no, choice and WH- questions from models</li> <li>Correspond for social purposes (e.g., memos, e-mails, notes)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complete reports from templates</li> <li>Compose short narrative and expository pieces</li> <li>Outline ideas and details using graphic organizers</li> <li>Compare and reflect on performance against criteria (e.g., rubrics)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Summarize content-related notes from lectures or text</li> <li>Revise work based on narrative or oral feedback</li> <li>Compose narrative and expository text for a variety of purposes</li> <li>Justify or defend ideas and opinions</li> <li>Produce content-related reports</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Produce research reports from multiple sources</li> <li>Create original pieces that represent the use of a variety of genres and discourses</li> <li>Critique, peer-edit and make recommendations on others' writing from rubrics</li> <li>Explain, with details, phenomena, processes, procedures</li> </ul>	

The Can Do Descriptors work in conjunction with the WIDA Performance Definitions of the English language proficiency standards. The Performance Definitions use three criteria (1. linguistic complexity; 2. vocabulary usage; and 3. language control) to describe the increasing quality and quantity of students' language processing and use across the levels of language proficiency.

## Artifact D Exploration of Community Literacy

### **I. Understanding of the Community**

Starting from 1994, immigration patterns began to change. More immigrants from Asia and Africa hit the shores of the United States and places like Nashville became destinations (J.R. Lind, 2013). And the Nolensville Pike, where Casa Azafrán is located became a destination of the 20<sup>th</sup> century immigrants. According to a survey conducted by Louisiana State University, south Nashville began to attract immigrants from Mexico, Honduras, Guatemala and Panama in the early 1990s. Then, it was followed by the influx of Kurds, Iraqis, Turks, Vietnamese, Laotians, Burmese, and Nepalese thanks to the inclusivity and assistance provided by Nashville. As a journalist from NashvillePost describe in her article, “A drive on Nolensville is like a drive around the world. There are taco trucks and kebab restaurants, Kurdish bakeries, Thai groceries and a store specializing in all things Nepalese” (J.R. Lind, 2013), Nolensville Pike symbolizes Nashville’s dynamic immigrant community, with the businesses acting as gathering places, employment centers and economic drivers as the region continues to develop (Lizzy Alfs, 2014). Traveling south on Nolensville Pike from Casa Azafrán during the field trip, I found international markets, food trucks, bakeries, and restaurants serving cuisines from all around the world.

### **II. Community Literacies and their Implementation in ELL Classroom**

Community literacies have very intimate association with immigrants’ daily life, therefore they should be considered as valuable resources in collecting funds of knowledge (Moll, 1992). Consequently, I am planning to incorporate the community literacies that I collected to achieve the following two goals: Firstly, to better understand the life worlds of my students and build more meaningful relation with them. Secondly, help students from all

backgrounds learn about the diverse composition of their communities (Jiménez, Smith & Teague, 2009).

ELL students are more likely to make progress in school when teachers understand and incorporate their home and community literacy into school practice; and the teachers will learn more about students' lived realities if they become more familiar with literate forms founded within students' communities (Jiménez, Smith & Teague, 2009). During our trip to Nolensville Pike, we visited an international market called K&S. And I collected a set of literate artifacts that involved seasonings and food products (see Appendix A), including a range of items that are familiar to specific communities yet unfamiliar to others. Take one price tag for example (see Appendix B). It is a picture of the price tag for Chinese cabbage. What I find interesting is that the spelling of its English name shares the same pronunciation with the Chinese characters, but does not follow Chinese Pinyin<sup>1</sup> system (*BAI CAI*). What is more, in Chinese culture, since the pronunciation of "Chinese cabbage" and "wealth" are similar, cabbage represents luck and fortune as well. It would be a good idea for both teachers and students to know more about the cultural values that are embedded in the food that they frequently eat. Things like seasonings and food products reflect cultural realities of students, as well as help to build on their prior knowledge (Jiménez, Smith & Teague, 2009). And the exchange of ideas among students from the same community adds to their familiarity with each other, adding to sense of belonging and empathy in living in a new place. In this case, embracing these resources demonstrates the action-driven culturally responsive caring for them (Gay, 2015).

What is more, since community literacies contain language use in everyday context, they also serve as accessible learning contents to students and help them to improve their English competences (Martínez, 2008). In order to make the best usage of the materials that I collected,

I would firstly ask them to categorize different materials by different domains such as “clothing”, “food” etc. After knowing different purposes of different community literacies, I would encourage my students to make their own texts according to the contexts. For instance, I would group my students based on their native languages and ask them to translate the slogans and posters that are written in their own languages into English, and share with the whole class. Students could compare different English translation versions by negotiating the linguistic and pragmatic choices for creating the best translation (Jiménez, Smith & Teague, 2009).

### **III. Barriers and Difficulties that Teachers are facing**

Firstly, this is time consuming. Some teachers may consider that not only the task of community literacies collecting and home visiting, but also lessons planning that integrate the materials with more traditional, school-based reading and writing take too much extra time (Jiménez, Smith & Teague, 2009). And it is true. However, teachers who work with ELLs should be encouraged to get to know more about their students, especially for students from immigrant families since according to the definition of Culturally Responsive Caring, a teacher who is care for his/her students should specifically use action to show his/her actual caring (Gay, 2015).

Secondly, when visiting the community, teachers may feel uncomfortable spending time in communities that are likely to feel foreign to them (Jiménez, Smith & Teague, 2009). And they are afraid of being rejected by students’ parents, which would make the situation awkward. My suggestions is teachers could collaborate with the teachers working with ESL specialists and teachers who teach different languages together to visit the community and design their lesson plans afterwards. When facing the parents who are not willing to cooperate, I highly suggest teachers to have patience, to negotiate with them, and to tell them you are looking forwards to knowing more about them.

In conclusion, incorporating community literacies not only helps teachers better understand and build a more intimate relationship with their ELL students, but also help students from linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds learn about the diverse composition of their communities. Although there exist barriers in the process of collecting materials and implementing them into the classroom, patience and positive attitude should always be accompanied. And that is what we say “we care for our students.”

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### Appendixes

#### Appendix A Seasonings and Food Products in K&S Market



Appendix B Price Tag in K&S Market



### Artifact E: Classroom Observation Paper

After giving a brief introduction to Overton based on online research and interview with a focus on the student population and school-wide support for ELLs, it is time to have a careful look at how the teaching theories written in books are addressed in practice. This part of the paper illustrates the observation of teacher's teaching in ELL classroom at Overton.

On September 4<sup>th</sup>, my colleagues and I visited Overton and did our first class observation. We were in Ms. Lynne Robinson's sheltered English Language Development (ELD) Reading 3 classroom of 18 low intermediate ELLs. After several sentences of self-introduction, we entered the classroom and started our observation. Looking around the classroom, I found the environment the teacher set was such a supportive one since it embraced diversity and was culturally sensitive: there hung a world map, souvenirs from different countries, Chinese students' calligraphy paintings, and photos of the students from International Day 2014 on the wall. The decoration highly valued the differences of languages and culture backgrounds of the ELL students. It is important to let ELL students see the value of their home culture and language as they transition to the English language and become acclimated to American culture by decorating the classroom and creating a welcoming community for them (University of San Diego School of Education, 2015). The teacher's positive classroom climate relates to the theory of the pluralist discourse. Within pluralist discourses, diversity is considered a fundamental part of "an increasingly mobile, global, and diverse world," and it stresses the need to negotiate diversity with respect and fairness to all. Though poor language literacy may be a barrier for ELL students, building on diversity in classroom can help to bridge differences, encourage communication across group, and lead to innovation (de Jong, E.J, 2011). Aside from the classroom decoration that embraced diversified cultural backgrounds, the way that the ELL students were arranged caught my attention as well. The ELL students in the observed classroom were required to sit

around tables (3-4 students at each) so that they could collaborate together in small groups in class. Since ELLs are challenged to speak during group work, providing collaborative practice in articulating their ideas in English helps both social and academic language development (Suzanne F. P, Owen F. B, 1997).

As the school bell rang, the sheltered reading class started and processed in four stages.

Stage1: Warming up. In the preproduction stage, Ms. Robinson greeted the students with the sentence, “How is your day?” The students then actively called out words and phrases like “So far so good,” “exhausted,” and “So busy,” etc. Meanwhile she wrote them down on the whiteboard and led students repeat those words chorally. After this, the teacher divided the students in six groups according to their English Language Proficiency test scores: students with higher scores were paired with students with less English proficiency, with the aim of helping the latter group become comfortable and proficient in class (Suzanne F. P, Owen F. B, 1997).

Stage2: Emerging. After the warm-ups, Ms. Robinson led the class in a brief review of *Romeo and Juliet* that they had learnt the week before and transitioned to today’s reading topic: marriage. After presenting an article about different attitudes towards marriage through an overhead projector, the teacher informed students to work in group, read for the gist, and answer the gist/detailed questions that were designed for each paragraph. She first modeled a response to the question, emphasizing the variety of acceptable responses, and then provided the students the questions. During the group discussion, the teacher walked around to see whether the students needed assistant, and the students shared opinions with each other regarding the questions they had read. This group-discussion interaction mode helps students learn to value individual ideas not only through individual feelings but also through the interpretation of structure and form of literature (Suzanne F. P, Owen F. B, 1997).

Stage3: Developing. At this stage, students were invited to share the results of their

group work with the whole class. Each team answered one at a time, and students were welcome to express different ideas and engage with others in discussion. After making sure the students understood the ideas of each paragraph, the teacher then moved to a deeper level by explaining some additional terms. During this process, she involved ELLs' cultural background knowledge and made the difficult terms more understandable. For instance, when talking about the "arranged marriage"<sup>1</sup> point, the teacher intentionally invited Indian and Kurdish students to share their culture backgrounds with the class: most of the marriages now in Indian and Kurdish culture are still determined and controlled by parents. And when students encountered difficulties in explaining some terms in English, the teacher would step in and help them by asking questions like "Do you mean XXX?" and "I think you mean XXX." etc. By involving diversified culture into the classroom, the teacher helped students use their own background knowledge to respond to literature, as well as valued students' individual responses and motivated them to become independent readers of literature (Suzanne F. P, Owen F. B, 1997).

Stage4: Expanding. In this stage, the teacher again informed students to work in groups, answered the questions on teacher-designed cue cards, and then shared with the whole class. At the end of the class, the teacher asked students about their personal viewpoints towards marriage: "XXX, what do you think?" and "How do you think of XXX's idea?" etc. Then the teacher summarized the class and assigned the homework.

After observing Ms. Robinson's sheltered reading class, I was impressed by the clear stages that were designed for ELLs, as well as the usage of the special classroom setting and the emphasis on group work. But I highly suggest that the teacher may monitor students, especially those students with low English proficiency to speak more during the discussion section since students with higher language level may take initiative role in speaking while

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<sup>1</sup>Arranged Marriage: refers to a type of marital union where the bride and groom are selected by a third party rather than by each other.

the rest are keeping salience. But overall, under Ms. Lynne Robinson's teaching mode, the ELL students not only practiced their reading techniques and cooperation skills through group discussion, but also introduced their cultures and brought diversities to the classroom.

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### Artifact F *Playing to Learn* Paper

#### **Questions:**

1. What was the historical perspective about play in Chinese Early Childhood Education classrooms?
2. Is there any evidence that this mindset has changed?

#### **I. A Brief Review of the Historical Perspective on Play**

Play is defined as a self-chosen and self-directed action that allows participants to be involved in an imaginative and relatively non-stressed frame of mind. It is always intrinsically motivated (Gray, 2015). Although historically there has always been a great number of philosophers, psychologists, and educators studying the rationales of play in learning, the concept of “learning through play” was barely recognized and accepted in China, especially in Chinese Early Childhood Education classrooms. The reasons are summarized as follows.

##### 1. Central Beliefs of Chinese Culture: Confucian Ideologies

As descendants of Confucius, Chinese have been greatly influenced for more than 2,500 years by the philosophy of the Greatest Teacher. The long-followed Confucian Heritage guided students to revere authority and maintain harmony in the classroom, and a strictly prescribed hierarchical structure of schools is still in place. Consequently, China’s “top-down, facts-based” approach to education has become entrenched in classrooms; and the self-image of the teacher is mostly authoritative (Huang, 2013). Studies of cognitive processes have shown that the image of oneself as a teacher has a crucial role in influencing the classroom strategies a teacher adopts; teachers attempt to develop the teaching style that matches their own image (Calderhead, 1996). Similarly, in China, teachers’ teaching styles and the conceptions of their own roles as teachers are congruent, which has resulted in the didactic

and teacher-centered “force-fed” teaching methods in China.

## 2. Beliefs in Chinese Education

*Diligence yields rewards while play gets nowhere.* Play has the connotation of not being serious, as people have a feeling of ‘mere play’ (Gadamer, 1960). Plus, the school stresses teaching and learning knowledge. The comprehension and the systematization of the subjects taught in school has been an outstanding characteristic of Chinese education for decades; Early Childhood Education was no exception. It was common for most pre-K classrooms to take instruction seriously, which consisted mostly of direct teaching of knowledge and skills. What is more, kindergarten programs in China range from relatively traditional classes to highly structured, academically oriented classes, all of which stress the importance of teachers’ instructions. The push to teach skills, such as reading, writing, and mathematics has created more academic focused kindergartens where worksheets and teacher-directed lessons become priorities (Lau & Cheng, 2010).

## 3. Teachers’ Status in China

There is a well-known Chinese saying regarding to the role of teacher: “Rearing without upbringing is the fault of the father; teaching without disciplining is the flaw of the teacher.” Teachers in China face great pressure and expectation from administrators, parents, and students. Allowing children to play and teachers to take a non-directive role would likely be regarded as a kind of negligence and dereliction of duty by parents, as well as by the teachers themselves (Cheng, 2001). The teachers think that it is their responsibility to “instruct” and “intervene” with children in their learning and to ensure that they gain something from planned activities. Consequently, teachers in Chinese Early Childhood Education do not feel confident in using “student-oriented” play in their classrooms.

## 4. Teacher’s Educational Backgrounds in Chinese Early Childhood Education

Until recently, the competition for teachers in Chinese Early Childhood Education was

less fierce, compared to that of elementary, secondary, and higher education. Most of the teachers from Early Childhood Education classrooms were graduates of second-tier universities and other tertiary institutes; rote-learning was exceedingly likely to have been utilized in these teaching training programs, thus resulting in its implementation in the classrooms of those teachers (Cheng, 2001). With such an educational background, teachers' grasp of professional knowledge, like the abstract concept of "play," could not be guaranteed. "To what extent could they scaffold children's learning through high quality interactions in a supportive learning environment? Were they likely to be skillful enough to operate 'play' to stimulate a sense of playfulness in children in classroom?" (Cheng, 2001) Probably not.

## II. Change of the Climate

Beginning in 1950, following the Soviet model, the basic content of the Early Childhood Education curriculum included six subjects: language, math, social sciences, music, art, and physical education (Gu, 2006). Teachers paid attention to the quality of outcomes, and frequently gave children specific directions or instructions during these activities.

The subject-based teaching model mentioned above was later changed after the introduction of Western ideas in philosophy, psychology, and pedagogy. After having a better understanding of different pedagogical ideas, curriculum models, and theories of Nietzsche, Schopenhauer, Freud, Piaget, Dewey, and Montessori, Chinese educators tried to reshape and optimize their insights into the nature of child development, goals and purposes of education, and teaching patterns.

Specifically, the newly formulated institutional and structural changes in Chinese Early Childhood Education adopt play and experience-based activities to facilitate children's learning. The important role of play in Early Childhood Education is clearly stated in the official document -- *Regulations on Kindergarten Work*:

*Play is an important way to carry out all-round development education.*

*Children's play shall be selected and guided in accordance with the age characteristics of the children. Kindergarten shall create favorable play conditions (time, space, and materials) for the children. The functional multiplicity and variability of toys shall be emphasized. Teachers shall respect children's desire to choose the forms of play and encourage them to produce their own toys. Teachers shall provide proper guidance for children in their play and keep them joyful, thus promoting the overall development of children's ability and personality (1996).*

According to *Regulations on Kindergarten Work*, the curriculum guidelines place “child-centered, play-based” pedagogy at the heart of Early Childhood Education quality (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 1996). Play is recommended as a learning strategy to be incorporated so that children can learn in a more relaxing atmosphere. The traditional “teacher-centered” paradigm is outdated and now play-based learning has become the key approach in Chinese Early Childhood Education. *Regulations on Kindergarten Work*, as the official document from the government was immediately and widely disseminated and studied nation-wide.

Let us take one step further and analyze the core reason for implementing play in Chinese Early Childhood Education classrooms. In response to the dynamic environment of the society, high quality programs that aim at preparing kids to be well-rounded are necessary. Consequently, an integrated and play-based curriculum and pedagogy have been implemented in classrooms. According to Gordon and Browne, “integrated curriculum means a set of courses designed to form a whole; coordination of the various areas of study, making for continuous and harmonious learning” (1995). Play is not subject-based, but an activity that integrates and interrelates different areas of development. Consequently, in order to enhance the holistic development of children, play is implemented (Lau & Cheng, 2010).

### III. Difficulties of Implementing “Play” in Practice

However, does the implementation of play in Chinese Early Childhood Education classrooms match the theoretical framework stated in the *Regulations on Kindergarten Work*? No. There are actually three roadblocks while implementing play in Chinese pre-K classrooms, namely teacher’s attitudes towards learning; misunderstanding the concept of “play-based” pedagogy; and the weak educational backgrounds of teachers.

1. Teacher’s attitudes towards child and child’s learning.

The biggest barrier to implementing play is the teacher’s attitudes towards child and child’s learning. The traditional view of the child as dependent on adults still plays a dominant role in the majority of Chinese kindergartens (Tang, 2006). Teachers believe that young kids cannot learn independently through play, which has resulted in teachers’ high level of control (Chen, 2002). For example, children might be given different choices at the beginning of the class; however they are virtually under the control of teachers because the class is designed and implemented based on the teacher’s prescription. Children’s initiatives and autonomy are not taken into account.

2. Misunderstanding the concept of “play-based” pedagogy.

“Play-based pedagogy is perceived as the teachers intended act in mobilizing contextual resources (the school and the classroom environments and the available human resources from the children’s macro surroundings) to capture, sustain, and extend the children’s unintended enjoyable experience through a continuous process that helps them construct and reconstruct new meanings of the world themselves” (Cheng, Fung, Lau & Benson, 2008). However, it seems that nowadays the teachers’ understanding on this concept is still superficial, thus resulting in an inefficient implementation of “play-based” pedagogy in Chinese Early Childhood classrooms. They do design playful activities for students in classrooms. However, they have not realized the significance in giving students more free

time and autonomy to learn while they are involved in the activities. “Play-based” pedagogy differs from the teacher-centered “force-fed” teaching method; in fact, it only needs teachers to provide an enjoyable environment and ensure autonomy for the young children while playing. Too much intervention may violate the students’ rights as independent players, which might cause the opposite effect. On the other hand, the teachers in Chinese Early Childhood classrooms intervene too much to ensure that learning takes place for children (Cheng & Lau, 2010). Consequently, they think play takes too much time. Although the idea of “play-based” pedagogy is welcomed by different stake holders, given the limited school hours, learning through direct and “pre-planned” teaching pedagogy becomes the priority because it seems to be more efficient.

3. The educational backgrounds of teachers from Chinese Early Childhood Education are not strong enough.

Unlike most of the elementary and secondary schools that are publicly run, there are a big proportion of privately-owned kindergartens in China, which are outside the formal educational system. According to the official statistics, the number of private kindergartens has grown faster than public ones in recent years. By the end of 2013, there were 133,451 private kindergartens in China, a jump of 8,813 or 7.1% from 2012, accounting for 67.2% of the total number of kindergartens nationwide (Bharat Book Bureau, 2014). Without intervention from the government to redeem operational costs and due to the financial difficulties of many enterprises, many small-sized kindergartens have fewer children, and worse physical and material conditions. They even tend to employ teachers with minimal qualifications as they can pay them less, which lowers costs (Cheng, 2001). Therefore, teachers’ lack of sufficient training results in a failure to recognize children as independent learners who can learn through play. Also, without efficient training and practice centering on learning through play before they enter the real-world teaching, they lack the strategies that

can be utilized in practice at kindergartens. Consequently, they fail to give children the opportunity to play or provide sufficient support to students in Early Childhood Education classrooms. The gap between kindergarten teachers' knowledge about children's learning and applying that knowledge into kindergarten activities has led to a cleavage between the concept of learning through play and the practice of this concept in the kindergarten.

#### **IV. Recommendations for Improvement**

The newly formulated institutional and structural changes in Chinese Early Childhood Education have resulted in the emergence of adopting play to facilitate children's learning during the past few years. However, some barriers, such as the traditional view of learning, the misunderstanding of the concept of "play-based" pedagogy, and the weak academic background of the teachers from Early Childhood Education, are still present. In order to tackle the problems that are described above, the following recommendations are provided.

1. The need for a moderate amount of intervention from the teachers.

According to Miller & Almond, play does not mean "anything goes," nor is play so structured by teachers that children are denied the opportunity to learn through their own initiative and exploration (2009). No guidance causes chaos; having too many rules violates students' autonomy as independent learners. Consequently, there should be a balance between child-initiated play and guided learning by teachers. Rubin, Fein, and Vendenberg define play as an intrinsically motivated action: it requires the active engagement of the participants. Within limited class time, too many interventions by the teachers means the loss of individual time for students. As a result, the teachers should have faith in students and provide a moderate amount of intervention while students are involved in playful activities in class.

2. The need for standardized teacher training programs.

As mentioned previously, insufficient teacher training has led to some of the problems associated with Early Childhood Education. Also, kindergarten teachers in China are trained

in different programs organized by different institutions that have different approaches.

Different approaches to training and varying interpretations of theory in learning through play, which originate from different ideological stances would in turn jeopardize the consistence of practice among pre-schools in China (Cheng & Lau, 2010). Consequently, a standardized teacher training program is necessary, with the aim of providing opportunities for teachers who are involved in Early Childhood Education to change their long-held ideological stance on teaching and learning and helping children to learn in a more efficient way. Through the systematic training, the teachers would have a better understanding of the concept of play, and thus utilize it in their classrooms.

3. The need for an explicit incorporation of play into kindergarten curricula.

Existing curricula do not expand on the use of play-based learning. Future revisions of kindergarten curricula should give teachers greater direction on how to use play-based learning methods. Also, play should not stand alone. It should be incorporated into the teaching of other disciplines. For example, when learning arithmetic, teachers can utilize card games and help students to master the related concepts.

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Artifact G: Interview Audio Clip

(IS UPLOADED INDEPENDENTLY)

## Artifact H: Lesson Plan on Holidays

<b>Teacher / School:</b>	Xueyue Shen (Emily)
<b>Unit Theme:</b>	Holidays
<b>Which “Can Do” statements for this unit will students be making progress on today?</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. I can understand the contextualized vocabulary words about holiday.</li> <li>2. I can comprehend what I listen to from my classmates about holidays.</li> <li>3. I can write a short paragraph on my classmate’s plan of the coming holiday.</li> </ol>
<b>Which standards will students be making progress on today?</b>	Intermediate Mid (ACTFL)
<b>Time:</b>	45 minutes
<b>Materials Needed:</b>	Copies of teacher-designed vocabulary list (see Appendix A); Copies of transcriptions of the authentic video clips (see Appendix B)
<b>Methodological Approach:</b>	Culturally Responsive Teaching
<b>What is this lesson’s connection to other lessons in this unit?</b>	This lesson is the second day of the unit, which focuses on giving the students the chance to practice the vocabulary words and phrases about Thanksgiving that they learned previously in the first day of the unit through real conversation.

Stage	Teacher Activity	Student Activity	Issues Anticipated	Time	Materials Used
1) <b>Preparation the night before</b>	The teacher provides students a vocabulary list that includes all of the words and phrases that they went through during the first day of the unit. What is more, the teacher will print out the transcriptions of the authentic audio clips that they listen during the first day.	<p>Students are asked to go through the vocabulary list again, pick out those unfamiliar ones, and put them on their vocabulary journal.</p> <p>They are encouraged to use dictionary or other online resources to reinforce their</p>	Most of the Chinese ELLs might look up the words solely on Chinese-English dictionary, which may cause it difficult for them to explain the vocabulary words in English.	40 minutes	<p>Copies of teacher-designed vocabulary list;</p> <p>Copies of transcriptions of the authentic video clips</p>

		grasp of the meanings and the usages of those words. Then, they are asked to read the transcriptions of the audios that they listened previously and have a tiny sip of the way of describing what they are going to do during holiday.			
<b>2) Opening activity Retrieval Practice</b>	The teacher asks students to work in pairs, do the vocabulary sorting game, and put all of the vocabulary words that they reviewed last night in the correct category. During the process, to ensure that everyone has mastered the vocabulary, intervention from the teacher, like explaining the meaning of some difficult vocabularies are necessary.	Students work with their partners and put the vocabulary words in the correct category.	When working in pair, there is always a student who plays the dominant role and the other student, on the other hand, speaks less. Thus, it is crucial for the teacher to walk around and monitor the students to make sure that both of them devote the same efforts in this activity.	5 minutes	Teacher-designed vocabulary list
<b>3) Pre-Task</b>	The teacher introduces the objectives, main tasks, and the instruction of the designed task of today's class.	Students carefully listen to what they are going to do and what goals are they supposed to achieve after today's class. They are asked to	Some of the students might listen carelessly, thus the teacher might need to repeat and ask CCQs (Concept Check Questions)	5 minutes	Teacher-designed PowerPoint slices

		interview one of their classmates and hear their narration on what they are going to do in the coming Thanksgiving holiday by using the vocabulary from the word list that they sorted just now. When the interviewee is talking, the interviewer is supposed to take notes of what they listen.	to make sure that students understand what they are going to do.		
<b>4) Task</b>	<p>The teacher puts the word list on the PowerPoint slide for students to refer when they are doing the interview activity.</p> <p>The teacher circulates, checks if students are engaging the interview activity, and assesses the students' performance by using the ACTFL IPA Interpersonal Mode Rubric for Intermediate Learners</p>	Students work in pairs and do the interviews.	Some of the students might use their L1 as a shortcut to communicate. Therefore, it is significant for teacher to walk around and make sure that the students are using the target language and practicing what they've learned.	10 minutes	Teacher-designed word list

<b>5) Planning/Report</b>	When the interview is finished, the teacher asks students to wrap up and reflect on what they have learned while collecting all of the data that he/she collects when assessing the students.	Students review their notes that they took during the one-on-one conversation and write a short paragraph regarding their learning and takeaways through the lesson.	Some of the students might make noise while other are doing silent work. Classroom management techniques are needed.	10 minutes	
<b>6) Analysis/Assessment</b>	After students handing in their takeaways, the teacher gives feedbacks regarding their performances when they were conducting the interview.	Students read the feedbacks from the teacher and raise questions that needs clarification.	Students might feel confused about some feedbacks that are given by the teacher; thus the teacher should walk around and check with the students to make sure that they understand what they mean.	10 minutes	Students-written pieces;  Teachr-written feedback
<b>7) Closing</b>	The teacher assigns homework.	Students take notes on homework.	N/A	5 minutes	Copies of homework.

## Appendixes

### Appendix A Vocabulary List

- |                       |                       |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Celebration        | 26. Mashed potato     |
| 2. Turkey             | 27. Plum pudding      |
| 3. Roast              | 28. Reunion           |
| 4. Oven               | 29. Fairly            |
| 5. Grateful           | 30. Reserve           |
| 6. Signature          | 31. In advance        |
| 7. Stuffing           | 32. knock off work    |
| 8. Cranberry sauce    | 33. Beef Wellington   |
| 9. Gravy              | 34. Roast salmon      |
| 10. Pumpkin pie       | 35. Beverage          |
| 11. Dessert           | 36. Paella            |
| 12. Spices            | 37. Filet steak       |
| 13. Chunk             | 38. Duxelles          |
| 14. Celery            | 39. Wrap              |
| 15. Savory            | 40. Puff pastry       |
| 16. Delicious         | 41. Crispy            |
| 17. Incredible        | 42. Cheesecake        |
| 18. Closeness         | 43. Chocolate brownie |
| 19. Blessings         | 44. Tasty             |
| 20. Annual            | 45. Dumplings         |
| 21. Gathering         | 46. Dough             |
| 22. Feast             | 47. Boil              |
| 23. Head of the table | 48. Fry               |
| 24. Propose           | 49. Simmer            |
| 25. Toast             | 50. Steam             |

## Appendix B Transcriptions of the Authentic Video Clips

Transcript of the authentic text: In my family, we began the celebration early. Family members come from far away to attend this dinner; guests and family usually arrive around 1 p.m. We have drinks and chat while the turkey is roasting in the oven. Everything depends on when the turkey is done. When it has been cooked just right, we sit down at the dinner table. Before we eat, we go around the table and each say one thing we are grateful for in our lives. The signature dishes for Thanksgiving are turkey and stuffing, cranberry sauce, gravy, and most importantly, pumpkin pie for dessert. The stuffing is the best part. It is made from small squares of bread with spices and chunks of celery. And the stuffing cooks inside of the turkey in the oven. Stuffing is really savory and delicious, I can never decide if I like stuffing better, or if pumpkin pie is my favorite. I am very excited about Thanksgiving this Thursday. I love seeing my family all together. (<http://www.audio-lingua.eu/spip.php?article805>)

Text A: In my family, we began the Christmas celebration early. Family members will drive from far away to my grandparents' place to have the annual celebration. Family and friend always arrive at around 11 in the morning and help to prepare for the feast. We chat and drink while the turkey is still roasting in the oven. When the turkey is ready, we sit down at the dinner table and start the feast. Before we eat, the head of the table (usually my grandpa) will give a speech and express how grateful this year is. The signature dishes for Christmas are roast turkey and stuffing, ham, cranberry sauce, and mashed potato. And most importantly, plum pudding and apple pie for dessert. The stuffing is the best part. It is made from small squares of bread with spices and chunks of celery. And the stuffing cooks inside of the turkey in the oven. Stuffing is really savory and delicious, I can never decide if I like stuffing better, or if apple pie is my favorite. I am very excited about Christmas this Saturday.

Text B: My husband and I always start the New Year's celebration late since we are both fairly busy at work. I am a doctor and my husband is a lawyer, we both knock off work late at around 6 p.m. and will have dinner in the restaurant that we reserved in advance. Before we eat, we will pray and thank god for bring us such an incredible year. The signature dishes for New Year feast for us are Beef Wellington, roast salmon and Paella. And most importantly, cheesecake and chocolate brownie or dessert. The Beef Wellington is my favorite. It is a preparation of filet steak coated with duxelles, which is then wrapped in puff pastry and baked. The crispy puff pastry is the best part, and I can never decide is I love Wellington better, or if Paella is my favorite. I am very excited about this New Year's Eve.

Text C: In my family, we begin the Spring Festival celebration early. Family members come from their homes to attend this family reunion; guests and family usually arrive around 12 p.m. Kids and seniors will watch TV and chat while the rest of us are busy preparing the dishes in the kitchen. When the food are well prepared, we sit down at the dinner table and start to enjoy the feast. Before we eat, we younger generation always propose toasts to the seniors and wish them a better year. The signature dishes for Spring Festival are fish, roast duck, chicken, dumplings, and most importantly, rice cake for dessert. The dumplings are the best. They are consist of small pieces of dough, often wrapped around a filling of fish, meat, or vegetables. They may be cooked by boiling, frying, simmering, or steaming. Dumplings

are really tasty, I can never decide if I like rice cake better, or if dumplings are my favorite. I am very excited about this Spring Festival gathering with my family.

### Appendix C Rubric: ACTFL IPA Interpersonal Mode Rubric: Intermediate Learner

CRITERIA	Exceeds Expectations	Meets Expectations		Does Not Meet Expectations
		Strong	Minimal	
<b>Language Function</b> Language tasks the speaker is able to handle in a consistent, comfortable, sustained, and spontaneous manner	Handles successfully uncomplicated tasks and social situations requiring exchange of basic information related to work, school, recreation, particular interests, and areas of competence. Narrates and describes in all major time frames, although not consistently.	Creates with language by combining and recombining known elements; ability to express own meaning expands in quantity and quality. Handles successfully a variety of uncomplicated communicative tasks in straightforward social situations, primarily in concrete exchanges and topics necessary for survival in target language cultures. These exchanges include personal information related to self, interests, and personal preferences, as well as physical and social needs such as food, shopping, and travel.	Creates with language by combining and recombining known elements; is able to express personal meaning in a basic way. Handles successfully a number of uncomplicated communicative tasks in straightforward social situations, primarily in concrete exchanges and topics necessary for survival in target language cultures.	Has no real functional ability.
<b>Text Type</b> Quantity and organization of language discourse (continuum: word - phrase - sentence - connected sentences - paragraph - extended discourse)	Uses mostly connected sentences and some paragraph-like discourse.	Uses strings of sentences, with some complex sentences (dependent clauses).	Uses simple sentences and some strings of sentences.	Uses some simple sentences and memorized phrases.
<b>Communication Strategies</b> Quality of engagement and interactivity; how one participates in the conversation and advances it; strategies for negotiating meaning in the face of breakdown of communication	Converses with ease and confidence when dealing with routine tasks and social situations. May clarify by paraphrasing.	Responds to direct questions and requests for information. Asks a variety of questions to obtain simple information but tends to function reactively. May clarify by restating.	Responds to direct questions and requests for information. Asks a few appropriate questions, but is primarily reactive. May try to restate in the face of miscommunication.	Responds to basic direct questions and requests for information. Asks a few formulaic questions but is primarily reactive. May clarify by repeating and/or substituting different words.
<b>Comprehensibility</b> Who can understand this person's language? Can this person be understood only by sympathetic listeners used to interacting with non-natives? Can a native speaker unaccustomed to non-native speech understand this speaker?	Is generally understood by those unaccustomed to interacting with non-natives, although interference from another language may be evident and gaps in communication may occur.	Is generally understood by those accustomed to interacting with non-natives.	Is generally understood by those accustomed to interacting with non-natives, although repetition or rephrasing may be required.	Is understood with occasional difficulty by those accustomed to interacting with non-natives, although repetition or rephrasing may be required.
<b>Language Control</b> Grammatical accuracy, appropriate vocabulary, degree of fluency	Demonstrates significant quantity and quality of Intermediate-level language. When attempting to perform Advanced-level tasks, there is breakdown in one or more of the following areas: the ability to narrate and describe, use of paragraph-length discourse, fluency, breadth of vocabulary.	Demonstrates significant quantity and quality of Intermediate-level language. Accuracy and/or fluency decreases when attempting to handle topics at the Advanced level or as language becomes more complex.	Is most accurate when producing simple sentences in present time. Pronunciation, vocabulary, and syntax are strongly influenced by the native language. Accuracy decreases as language becomes more complex.	Is most accurate with memorized language, including phrases. Accuracy decreases when creating and trying to express personal meaning.

## Artifact I: Term Paper:

### *Using American Situational Comedy to Develop Students' Literacy Skills*

Question: Will American situational comedy helps junior high students in China to develop their literacy skills?

#### **I. Introduction**

Most consider watching situational comedy to be merely a form of relaxation and entertainment. Unlike the documentaries on *Discovery.com* or *TED Talk* speeches, which are more likely to provide audiences with knowledge and inspiration and help them to learn, the linkage between watching situational comedy and learning does not seem to be obvious.

The significance of utilizing situational comedy is barely recognized, especially in Chinese classrooms. Since the long-followed Confucian Heritage guides students to revere authority and maintain harmony in the classroom, a strictly prescribed hierarchical structure of schools and approved curriculum are currently in place. Consequently, China's "top-down, facts-based" approach to education is entrenched (Huang, 2013). As a result, the students do not get many opportunities to practice their communication skills, especially with regard to reading and writing when they learn English (Dai, 2013). What is more, most parents do not think of school as a place for amusement, nor do they think that entertaining and learning are compatible. Therefore, they view utilizing situational comedy in the classroom and serious teaching as dichotomous and do not widely believe that learning occurs through watching television.

#### **II. Rationales**

As an ELL teacher, however, I think the implementation of authentic video clips, like situational comedy is beneficial, especially to Chinese ELLs who have very limited exposure to English speaking environments. The rationales are elaborated as follows.

## 1. *New Literacy* framework

I give situational comedy more credit because I evaluate it as a form of *New Literacy*. *New Literacy*, as its name indicates, is a new type of literacy beyond print literacy, with emphasis on “digital literacies” and literacy practices embedded in popular culture. From the perspective of New Literacy Studies, different digital tools act as technologies for giving and getting meaning, just like language (Coiro, Knobel, Lankshear, & Leu, 2008). Specifically, situational comedy is considered as a tool of *New Literacy* because it allows a people to give meaning to and get meaning from images, sounds, and “multimodal texts” (texts that mix images and/or sounds with words), just like language (Gee, 2000).

## 2. Why American situational comedy?

Literacy is a social and cultural achievement (Gee, 2000). We, as readers and writers are now engaged in social and cultural practices. Thus, literacy needs to be understood and studied in its full range of contexts—not just cognitive—but social and cultural (Gee, 1992). Written language is used differently in different practices by different social and cultural groups. And in these practices, written language is never exclusive from oral language and action. Rather, it is integrated with different ways of using oral language, different ways of acting and interacting, and different ways of using various tools and technologies (Gee, 2015). As a tool of *New Literacy*, American situational comedy to some extent reflects people’s lives in America in a more comprehensive way because its multiple subjects cover all walks of life. For example, there are science-fiction shows, crime shows, medical shows, adventure shows, fantasy shows etc. Different types of shows use different types of language to fit different contexts and plots. They provide Chinese ELLs access to various language types that fit different social practices. Plus, the introduction to American people’s lives brings Chinese ELLs knowledge and vast exposure to American culture, which is valuable in their literacy development.

### 3. Why junior high students?

The reasons for choosing junior high students as my target students are twofold: firstly, junior high students are already equipped with a considerable vocabulary and basic communication and comprehension skills, thanks to the foundational English classes they had in Pre-K and elementary school classrooms. Therefore, without too many language restrictions, the range of suitable materials for junior high students is much wider. Secondly, compared to senior high students, junior high students have freer class schedules. It is hard to devote senior high students' precious time to situational comedy due to the fact that they are facing intense pressure from the Chinese standardized testing system. Therefore, junior high students are my target population.

## III. Implementation

When utilizing American situational comedy in the classroom, teachers need to carefully prepare, monitor, and ensure an effective pre-, in-, and post-class engagement. Here, I will use a literature class as an example to explain the implementation of my teaching idea.

### 1. Pre-class stage

During the pre-class stage, it is the teacher's obligation to do the careful preparation. Although there are a lot of American situational comedy out there, not all of them are appropriate for language teaching and learning. For example, there is situational comedy like *Two Broke Girls* that are not suitable for junior high students because they either use a lot of slang/swear words or the talking speed is too fast. Students would not comprehend the meaning of the video clips and understand the plots of the shows. Consequently, the class wastes time and fails to achieve the set goals. As a result, during the pre-class stage, I will choose video clips in which the characters' speaking speed is normal, and the story is not crude or difficult to follow.

### 2. In-class stage

Before watching the video clips, I will distribute handout sheets with comprehension questions about the clips' plots and structures for my students to answer. Instead of letting the students watch freely, I will take advantage of the characteristics of situational comedy to assist students' learning. Take a literature class for example. When introducing a new genre of literature—e.g. *play* to my students, structural concepts like exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution will be carefully introduced. Fortunately, these concepts can be easily observed from the situational comedy. Situational comedy, by its definition means a serial drama on television or radio which features related story lines about the lives of many characters (Merriam-Webster, 2015). The story lines that are clearly presented in the video clips are good examples for students to learn the structure of dramatic work such as *play*. Consequently, before playing the video, I will briefly teach the students the important terms, go through the plot/structure-related questions about the clip, and ask them to pay special attention when watching the video. In addition, I will also ask them to take note of authentic idioms that sound novel to them.

While watching the video clips, I will carefully monitor my students and make sure that they are fully concentrated and engaged with the clips. For junior high students, most of them are still in their process of becoming mature, both physically and psychologically. They are easily distracted by other students or trivial things that happen in class. Therefore, it is necessary to make sure that the students concentrate on the video clips. If I notice that any student is drifting away, I would give them a signal.

After watching the video clips, follow-up activities are important too. I will ask students to work in groups with the handouts, finish the assigned questions together, and share with the whole class. Afterwards, I will re-analyze the main plot of the story that is told in the video and connect it with previous class discussions of the structural components of the literature that I have been teaching in class.

### 3. Post-class stage

At the end of the class, I will assign students another video clip. After watching the clip, they will answer similar video-related questions at home to make sure that they understand the video clip. For more advanced students, I will design activities, like asking them to work in groups, use what they have learned in class to write a sequel of the video clip that is played in class, and shoot the script into a short video. Such activities allow students to come up with ideas collaboratively, practice the writing strategies that they learn in class, hear feedback from peers, and improve their performance in organizing ideas and acting while in the classroom.

## IV. Conclusion

However, when implementing this teaching method, some potential problems that are embedded need special attention from teachers. For example, potential confusion about accents. America, as we all know, has traditionally been described as a “melting pot”. The waves of immigration not only bring America people with different looks, but also diverse cultures, traditions, and of course, different accents. And this cultural diversity is vividly reflected in American situational comedy. Take the TV series *The Big Bang Theory* for example; there is more than one accent in the show: Indian English accents, northern American accents, southern American accents etc. Without the knowledge of standardized pronunciation, students might even consider these accents as standard and imitate them. Therefore, as teachers, we need to provide our students with related knowledge of American immigration culture in advance and guide them to follow the most standardized accent while watching the video.

In a nutshell, *New Literacy* tools like American situational comedy will definitely be beneficial for Chinese junior high students’ literacy development based on the above mentioned rationales. However, in order to use them as assets instead of distractions in class,

teachers need to carefully select appropriate materials, design plot/structure-related questions for students to answer, monitor students while they are watching the video clips, and assign them follow-up activities to make sure that they practice what they have learned in class.

In order to support teachers' practice, parents and administrators should also show their support by gradually changing their traditional ideas about using situational comedy in the classroom.

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