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Capstone: English Language Learners Portfolio

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Abstract

This portfolio comprises of my teaching philosophy and is supported by the eight domains of the TESOL standards of English as a Second or Foreign language. My teaching philosophy is a conceptual framework, supported by theory and coursework, that outlines my beliefs about the best teaching practices and strategies that will benefit English Language Learners (ELLs). My philosophy of teaching is represented in each of the TESOL domains, which are planning, instructing, assessing, identity and context, language proficiency, learning, content and commitment and professionalism. Each domain links theory with practice and centers the focus on the learner, the learning context, the curriculum and assessments. Each domain also tries to link content with the context in which I will be teaching in the future. The concluding remarks reflect on my future teaching practice, and how I will continue to think about theory as I build my toolkit of best teaching strategies to support ELLs.

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Philosophy of Teaching: Theory and practice

When I first stepped into the classroom as a Teach for Pakistan fellow, I did not have any formal training as a teacher. As a teacher, prior to obtaining my Master's degree, my actions, beliefs and class curriculum were not supported by pedagogical frameworks, and did not take into account external factors such as the community my students belonged to, their lives at home, their parents' involvement, and the role of the teacher as an advocate for her students. My Master's degree program in English Language Learners provided me with a combination of coursework and practicum experiences that have equipped me to build a philosophy of teaching that is grounded in theory and shaped by best practices.

Students and their communities: Learner and Learning Context

Teachers are "ultimately the bridge between the students' worlds, theirs and their family's funds of knowledge, and the classroom experience" (Moll, Amanti, Neff & Gonzalez, 1992, p.137).

My teaching philosophy began to form on a holistic level with the concept of community literacies. As part of my previous teaching fellowship, I used to conduct community visits to get to know my students, but I did not think to dig deeper in terms of changing my curriculum and style of teaching after having understood the community. The practicum and the readings from the course clarified for me how community literacy is vital in helping teachers understand how "beliefs about students shape the instructional behaviors of teachers" (Gay, 2010, p. 53).

Knowing about my students as "whole people" (Moll, Amanti, Neff & Gonzalez, 1992, p. 133) who are active citizens in their households and communities will help me to understand their behavior in my classroom, as well as their goals and motivations for learning the language. It will also give me insight into the general perception of the community towards learning

English. Given the tricky status that English holds in Pakistan, my previous students and their families did not understand how the language could play an important role in their lives. Some of the families and students understood that literacy in English meant educational mobility and opportunity, but even then, this understanding did not serve any purpose or action in their daily lives. Community visits will help me to think about these perceptions and feelings. I can then accordingly work with my students and their families to provide them with the support they need. Community visits will also give me insight into the out of school literacy practices my students engage in. For instance, I know that my students will not have access to computers and internet, so I cannot use digital technology in the classroom. Being aware of how my students spend their time outside of school will help me to learn more about their interests, and I can use this information for my teaching activities.

Community observations will also give me insight into the identities and cultures students tackle at home and at school. Knowing about their linguistically and culturally diverse funds of knowledge will help me as I plan my lessons and select authentic texts for them to use. My future context will be to teach English in a public school in Karachi, Pakistan. I will have students who will mostly have different first languages; there will be Urdu, Punjabi, Sindhi, Pashto – to name a few of the languages that my students will speak. However, the national language of the country is Urdu, and so a majority of the public schools have Urdu as their medium of instruction, and textbooks for all subjects apart from the languages are in Urdu. Thinking about Urdu as the central language in public schools versus the many different languages my students will bring into the classroom, helped me to think about the language supports they would need. In my previous teaching experience, I made the assumption that all my students will be fluent in Urdu. Community visits and engaging with parents will help me to

understand what languages are spoken by my students. This will allow me to pair up students according to their first language so that they can help each other and use their first language to learn English.

The panel session on Community and Family Engagement greatly informed my teaching philosophy. Through this discussion, I learned that parents do want to get involved, and they always care about their child's progress at school, but most often it is the system that confuses them. In my context, most of the parents would have dropped out of school at a very early age, especially the mothers, and some mothers might not have even received an education. So they really would not know the system; who to approach in the school, how to voice any concerns, how to gauge their child's progress, and how to help their child. Another important lesson I learned was that, in order to have a good relationship with my students' parents, I will have to acknowledge the power dynamics between parents and teachers in the context of the country. In Pakistan and especially in public schools, parents give teachers the utmost respect and they feel that they cannot question teachers about anything. Acknowledging this power dynamic would then allow me to start an open conversation with parents, so that they begin to feel comfortable enough to ask me any questions and address any issues. Given the fact that my students' parents will most likely not be familiar with the school system, and language will be another barrier in their relationship with the school administration and teachers, I will want to have clear, consistent, concise, and contextualized communication with them. I also know from my previous experience that these parents will be extremely busy, most of them are likely to have more than one job, and so I will ensure that there is intentionality behind every conversation I have with them. If I am calling them to school, it has to be important because they will be leaving their kids

at home as well as their jobs. There needs to be a clear purpose and plan of action at these meetings.

Curriculum and Instruction

From thinking holistically about student identities within their communities, my teaching philosophy starts to zoom in to focus on curriculum, language teaching techniques and specific classroom strategies. In the above section, I have elaborated on how I will incorporate my students' funds of knowledge in my curriculum. My teaching will also be embedded in the concept of constructivist learning, which "reexamines the role of teachers, the ways in which students learn best, and even what it means to learn" (Windschitl, 1999, p. 752). It will shift from my previous teacher centered classroom to a more student centered classroom.

Unfortunately, in Pakistan, "teacher centered instruction, fact based subject matter, and a steady diet of drill and practice" (Windschitl, 1999, p. 752) are still very prevalent, and I will challenge these norms by introducing a culture of constructivism, where student center learning takes precedence and students "engage with their peers during learning activities" (Windschitl, 1999, p. 753). My role as a teacher will be to "nurture independent thinkers" (Windschitl, 1999, p. 753), and "respond to the needs of a situation" (Windschitl, 1999, p. 753), depending on what my students require. Rote learning is still a very popular teaching practice in Pakistan, especially in public schools. I will try to challenge this norm in my classroom by adopting practices such as scaffolding, modeling coaching, guiding and advising to support students accordingly (Windschitl, 1999, p. 753). I will incorporate activities such as "problem based learning, inquiry activities, and dialogues with peers" (Windschitl, 1999, p. 752).

Another norm I want to challenge is that the teacher is always correct and the students should trust the information he or she provides. I will create an environment where I will

encourage my students to critically think about the subject matter instead of listen and believe me simply because I am the teacher. I will expose them to multiple sources of information, and I will teach them to challenge the knowledge and information they receive and question the sources and authors. Keeping into account their funds of knowledge and out of school literacies, I will also provide opportunities for students to “demonstrate their understanding in multiple ways” (Windschitl, 1999, p. 752).

Cooperative learning and cooperation among students is what will drive the learning in my classroom. I will plan lessons by centering them around a guiding question, so that students can engage in critical thinking and can walk through the process to get to the desired goal. I will create a culture where students will be expected to interpret the text according to their own comprehension and funds of knowledge, and then provide justifications for their answers. Ownership to learn will be placed on the students; and they will be able to make connections between what they learn and what they observe in their daily lives, and between local, nationwide and global communities. In a nutshell, the vision that constructivism propagates is that the teacher will be a “facilitator of learning who responds to students’ needs with a flexible understanding of subject matter and a sensitivity to how the student is making sense of the world” (Windschitl, 1999, p. 755).

In order to incorporate constructivism and caring in the classroom, I will have to bring some major change to the traditional setting of the classroom. Normally, the desks are always facing the blackboard because the teacher is always standing in the front of the class. Students are expected to work individually and the class is to be silent at all times, unless the teacher is speaking. I will change the way the desks are arranged, and I will make the arrangement flexible

depending on what the students are working on, and what kind of support they need at the time. Participant structures will change according to the activity and the goals of the lessons.

Keeping in mind the features of constructivism and caring, I will try to create my classroom as a welcoming and safe space. This is extremely important to me, because unfortunately in public schools in Pakistan, teachers still engage in corporal punishments to discipline their students. Students, therefore, do not feel safe in their classes, they think that their teachers do not care, and they actually fear their teachers. I witnessed this when I was teaching at the public school, and therefore I will always be extra careful to ensure that students feel comfortable in my class. I plan to do this by keeping desks in groups or pairs so students can collaborate and help each other, by knowing my students enough to be able to cater to their emotional and academic needs, by using culturally responsive textbooks and by creating a sense of community where students encourage and support each other and treat each other as equals.

Along with constructivism, my curriculum and instruction will align with the beliefs and features of Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) and caring. CRT “encompasses a combination of concern, compassion, commitment, responsibility, and action (Gay, 2010, p. 48). I will continuously reflect on my teaching and my curriculum to ensure that my “attitudes, expectations, and behaviors about students’ human value, intellectual capability, and performance responsibilities” (Gay, 2010, p. 48) do not waiver depending on students’ linguistic and cultural diversities. It is extremely important to be cognizant of the “racial biases, ethnic stereotyping, and cultural ethnocentrism” (Gay, 2010, p. 48) that a teacher may be surrounded by, so that they can keep a check of themselves. There are certain linguistic groups that the teachers in my school used to discriminate against; the belief was that this group was cognitively and linguistically deficient, simply because they always communicated in their first language.

When you are working in an environment where this is the popular belief, it takes extra effort to not subject your students to implicit bias.

Another aspect that I will be cautious about is to not expect “all students to behave according to the school’s cultural standards of normality” (Gay, 2010, p. 49). This is an issue that I have been discussing in my other classes as well, where teachers assume that every student will enter the classroom having already been oriented into mainstream schooled literacy through certain practices such as bed-time story reading with their parents. However, families belonging to different socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds will not have the same understanding of literacy, and these parents may also not be able to support and assist their children as teachers would expect. Given the context that I plan to teach in, I am now aware that I should not expect certain standards of normality and school preparedness from every student; something that I was doing in my previous teaching experience. That will help me to not assume certain literacies from my students, and will therefore enable me to think about the supports they would need, as well as the supports their parents would need.

One of the big ideas of culturally responsive caring that I will want to incorporate in my curriculum is to prepare “students to understand and deal realistically with social realities (what is), along with possibilities for transformation (what can be)” (Gay, 2010, p. 54). Students can be prepared for this concept by engaging with critical literacy; where they will analyze texts and approach them with the purpose of offering explanations, strategies and alternatives. Lastly, reflecting and introspecting about my teaching practices will allow me to keep a check on myself and to accordingly deconstruct and reconstruct my instructional methods and curriculum components (Gay, 2010, p. 75).

Theoretical understandings of serving ELLs

My approach to teaching English as a foreign language will be embedded in the belief that being bilingual or multilingual will help children become aware of “how languages work” (Jong, 2011, p. 34). Especially given the context in which my students will be learning English, where English is the second official language of the country next to Urdu, I believe that the “threshold hypothesis” will best serve my students. This hypothesis places great emphasis on “bilingual learning environments that promote high levels of competence in both languages” (Jong, 2011, p. 36). In this context, it is important that I, as an English teacher, understand the “instrumental and symbolic values of language learning” (Jong, 2011, p. 38). Similar to the example presented by De Jong about south African students, some of my students and their families will “value English for its access to economic means and for international communication” and they will value their local languages “as a link to their ethnic culture and history” (Jong, 2011, p. 38). This is true for most post-colonial countries that fall in the outer circle of the “three concentric circles that represent the spread of English” (Jong, 2011, p. 89). English is not the native language of the majority of the population, but it still holds a “high status position (Jong, 2011, p. 89).

Along with this relationship they will have with English, I know that their perceptions of themselves as speakers of English will also play a role. When I was teaching, whenever a student would begin to feel comfortable in speaking entirely in English, their peers would make fun of them for trying to pretend to be a student from a private school. Most of the students also felt that they would never be fluent in English because they attended a public school. Therefore, my teaching pedagogies cannot overlook the perceptions and the relationship my students, their families and the communities will have and hold with English.

I will encourage my students to communicate in their first language with their peers in my English class because “they should be able to use their entire linguistic and cultural repertoire for learning” (Jong, 2011, p. 33). As a language teacher, I will recognize that my students will be fluent in their first language and some may be fluent in more than one language. As mentioned above, I will also be aware that not every student will be fluent in Urdu. Therefore, my teaching pedagogies should take into account the various strengths my students will bring into the classroom by “building on the knowledge (including language and literacy skills) that has been acquired” (Jong, 2011, p. 33) in their first language or “languages other than the school language” (Jong, 2011, p. 33). My teaching pedagogy will therefore adopt the orientation of “language-as-resource”, where every language speaker will be considered as an “important source of expertise” (Jong, 2011, p. 105) with regards to the languages they speak.

In my teaching, I want to incorporate the belief that “language plays an important role in socializing children into linguistic and cultural norms of a community” (Jong, 2011, p. 30). I have now come to realize that as an English teacher, I do not just teach a language but also these norms that come with the language. I will provide my students with activities that will resemble those belonging to the cultural norms of an English community, so that they can actually have meaningful interactions in the language. The students first language plays a crucial part in their “identity construction” (Jong, 2011, p. 30) and I will be cognizant of this as I plan my lessons. Being respectful of their first language, and allowing them to use it to understand English, will play a role in the kind of relationship they develop with their L1 and L2.

Furthermore, “the use of students’ languages in school also influences the relationship between parents and the school” (Jong, 2011, p. 34). Parents will feel comfortable in approaching the school and the teachers if they are able to communicate without feeling

inadequate about their competency in English. Thus, “bilingual services can provide an important bridge for parents as well as children” (Jong, 2011, p. 34). Thinking back to my prior teaching experience, I remember how some of the parents did not speak the official first language of the county, which was Urdu, but spoke their local language. Therefore, there were many parents whom I was unable to communicate with and my students had to become translators when discussing their progress and some issues. As I learned in my practicum, making students serve as translators is not the ideal way to communicate, and that is why I was unable to have relationships with some of the parents. The idea of translators is not common in schools in Pakistan, but instead of using children, I can use the other teachers present in the school building. Amongst all of the teachers at my school, we were fluent in multiple local languages of our students, and so I can use the strengths of the teachers. In the scenario where no teacher in the school is fluent in a student’s local language, I can seek help from their elder siblings or family members who may be fluent in Urdu to serve as translators.

Partnerships and advocacy

In addition to thinking about my students, the community I am teaching in, and the theories which will form my teaching pedagogies, I also want to think about the role of advocacy in my career. As a public school teacher, it is important to disapprove and reject the kinds of classroom management techniques that are currently being used, especially corporal punishment. This is an act of advocacy as well, because it will create the path for positive and encouraging techniques and strategies. I will actively advocate for policies where teachers will have to face consequences if they engage in corporal punishment. I will also advocate for teachers to use culturally relevant textbooks, apart from the national books they have to use. I will also want to advocate for resources in the school, specifically libraries.

Even if I feel that I may not be able to advocate for these issues on a national level, I can definitely advocate for it on a local level, in terms of district as well as on a school level.

Assessments are often created on a school level, and teachers can advocate for better schedules and assessments themselves. As a teacher, I may not have much choice in terms of the textbooks I have to use in my classroom. However, I can use additional texts and resources, and I can advocate for English subject teachers to seek additional resources as well.

Advocating for professional development sessions and also for necessary administrative changes in the school are equally important. Having been a public school teacher, I am aware of how frustrating it is to advocate for your students, but at the same time I am also aware of how it is possible to make changes when a few teachers come together. Therefore, connecting with other teachers in the school is very important. Partnerships with the teachers and parents will be the first step in advocating for the bigger issues mentioned above.

Conclusion

My teaching philosophy is centered on being inclusive of all kinds of linguistic and culturally diverse communities. Recognizing that every student has his or her own strengths within school, as well as outside of the school walls, has enabled me to think about the TESOL domains in light of the above theories. One of the biggest factors that I think about when it comes to my teaching philosophy is the context in which I will be teaching the language, and the students who I will be teaching. Changes in curriculum and assessments will be incorporated automatically once I become informed of who my learners are, and what their learning context is. While I will always refer to these big ideas, I know that some activities will work well in some contexts, and some will work differently in other contexts. Therefore, self-reflection and introspection will only help me to improve my teaching practice.

Professional Knowledge of TESOL Standards

Domain 1: Planning

The standard for planning states that teachers must “plan instruction to promote learning and meet learner goals, and modify plans to assure learner engagement and achievement” (TESOL). Planning for whole units and individual lessons, and creating **curriculum**, should be driven by my teaching philosophy, by my **learners’** identities, by the **learning** context in which I am teaching English, and in which my students are learning the language. Along with these factors, I would want to think about planning with regards to the scaffolds I will have to provide students who are not reading at grade level and struggling with language acquisition and proficiency. There may also be some students in my class who are unable to read on grade level even in their L1. Being cognizant of these supports that I will have to incorporate in my instruction and assessment will be beneficial during the planning stages. Planning also needs to target learner achievement and engagement, and incorporating these theories and beliefs will ensure that student needs are being catered to; so that they can achieve the goals of the lesson and the unit. Lastly, planning needs to incorporate the **assessments** that **learners** will be asked to take to determine that they have achieved the class goals. Planning needs to make these goals explicit, and needs to ensure that students are prepared to take the **assessments**.

Working with the concept of backward design, I will think about **curriculum** with the end goal of achievement in mind, i.e. **assessment**, and will employ instructional strategies that can help **learners** achieve results. Incorporating activities that are “minds-on” (Wiggins 2005 p. 16) and therefore purposefully engaging will help students to achieve the “explicit performance goals” (Wiggins p. 17). Centering lesson planning on “concrete content objectives” (Echevarria, Vogt & Short, 2015, p. 27) along with language objectives that “support students’ academic

language development... and build social language skills” (Echevarria, Vogt & Short, 2015, p. 28) will help teachers to align their activities, and will help **learners** to understand their tasks for the lesson. It will also ensure that students are aware of what to expect in their **assessments** for that particular lesson, as well as for the whole unit.

Artifact No. 1 in at the appendix is a lesson plan that I developed for my course “Teaching Second Language Literacy” and it demonstrates the ideas addressed above as well as the theories discussed in my philosophy of teaching. When planning for this lesson, I also thought carefully about the content I wanted to use, and the activities I wanted my students to engage in. The decision to use certain content, along with the activities were decided by keeping in mind the **learners** and the **learning environment**, i.e. class environment and participant structures.

The lesson is a grammar lesson on prepositions. The rationale behind teaching prepositions was that recognizing prepositions and then isolating them from a sentence will allow students to easily match subjects and verbs. From my previous teaching experience, I know that subject verb agreement and recognition is significantly difficult for ELL students to grasp, especially because sentence structures are different in their L1. Therefore, teaching prepositions will help my students to read, write and speak better. This lesson plan was developed keeping in mind the learners I will be teaching in the future, i.e. middle and high school students, and their learning context, which is a public school in Pakistan.

The **assessment** at the end of the lesson is in the form of an exit ticket, and the questions are in the same format as the class assignment. The students would have already practiced this type of exercise in their table groups and individually, before being asked to complete the exit ticket. This ensures that the **learners** are being assessed on the content, and not on taking

tackling different styles of questions on an assessment.

I created this lesson plan in my first year at Peabody, and now nearly at the end of my degree, I am noticing some recommendations and changes I would make to the plan. For instance, the lesson plan does not activate the **learners'** background knowledge on prepositions in their L1, and neither does the lesson encourage the students or the teacher to discuss prepositions in their L1. The lesson plan mentions briefly that if students struggle, the teacher can use a few words in their L1 so that they are able to participate. As discussed previously in the portfolio, I will share my students L1 in my future teaching context and so while introducing the topic I should use their L1. My teaching philosophy talks about how language needs to be used as a resource and students should be allowed to use their entire linguistic repertoire. I would change my opening activity by first playing the game in their L1. Students may not know the meanings of the prepositions in English and so they may not be able to play the Simon Says game correctly and the purpose of the introductory game will be lost. By playing the game in their L1, the game is not only going to be more accessible to the students, but their prior knowledge will be used as well. If I am faced with a **learning context** where not all my students understand the national language (Urdu), then I will play the game in English, but will provide supports such as visual aids.

My philosophy of teaching mentions that my teaching will align with the features of CLT and therefore I will want to engage students in various activities such as inquiry based activities and peer dialogues, in order to make the lesson more student centered. The next activity in the lesson plan is a group activity where students will read a short story together, find the prepositions, and underline them. However, after having done my practicum at two high schools for the course "Methods and Materials for ELLs" and "Literacy for Special and Diverse Needs

Learners”, I have a better understanding of what group activities should look like. Therefore, I would replace this activity with another activity called Round Robin. The class will be divided into groups, and each group will get a sentence to work on. There can be as many rounds as the teacher wishes, and each round will be timed. Students will work on comprehending the sentence and fitting in the best preposition from their word bank. Once the times goes off, they will pass their sentence to the next group and receive a sentence for another group. That way, they will pass around the sentences so each group gets to work on all the sentences. After the rounds are done, the class will come together to look at their answers which they will fill in their worksheet in each round. This activity will be much more guided and will allow for more peer dialogue than the activity mentioned in the lesson plan. I would leave the independent work as it is, because it is important for students to work separately so that I can gauge how much they have understood from the class. Independent work is also important for the **learners** so that they can be cognizant of their own progress in each standard and topic. I would make the exit ticket smaller because it is important that they finish it for a quick **assessment**, so perhaps three questions would be sufficient.

Since my students will most likely be helping their parents in their shops after school, or looking after their younger siblings. I could have students practice their prepositions by taking part in scenarios which they can relate to and imagine themselves being a part of in reality. Engaging in meaningful interactions will help them to understand the rationale and purpose behind mastering prepositions

The next domain in this section, which is instructing, discusses my mindset towards teaching grammar in isolation in great detail. Therefore, I will not elaborate on this teaching instruction in this domain, but will highlight how I would include this lesson as part of a longer

unit. Instead of having them identify prepositions in random sentences and paragraphs, I can have them identify prepositions from a text they are reading for the unit. It will cover their grammar part of the lesson, and also help the students to understand the text better.

Domain 2: Instructing

The standard for instructing states that teachers need to “create supportive environments that engage all **learners** in purposeful learning and promote respectful classroom interactions”. This statement is reflected in my philosophy of teaching where I discuss the theories of constructivism and communicative language teaching, under the sub heading of “curriculum and instruction. Engaging students in purposeful learning and promoting respectful classroom interactions requires language development teachers to understand the processes through which **learners** learn their L1 as well as their L2 and to be aware of theories and strategies that use the support of the learners L1 to teach them their L2. It is also important for language teachers to be cognizant of their students’ **learning context**, because that will drive their motivation to learn a language.

As a language teacher, I firmly believe that “language skills in bilinguals are interdependent” (Royer & Carlo, 1991, p. 450), because **learners** are already competent in their L1, and so are familiar with how language works, what language entails, and why they would need a particular language. This study conducted by Royer and Carlo, titled ‘Transfer of comprehension skills from native to second language’, concluded with instructional implications that students would benefit from, if, during the acquisition of the L2, they received instruction in their native language (Royer & Carlo, 1991). Their native language will be considered a resource that will support them in learning a new language.

In terms of how students acquire a new language, I want to think about the teaching pedagogies and classroom culture that will support students’ learning. The course “Teaching English as a Foreign Language” helped me to connect each teaching technique and method with a corresponding theory from Krashen’s theories of second language acquisition and enabled me

to ground my **curriculum** and activities in research. After analyzing all the various techniques for language teaching through a theoretical lens, I reached the conclusion that I will implement a combination of several methods, depending on what is being taught and what would be the best suited method to teach it.

First and foremost, I began to think about **curriculum** in terms of teaching traditional grammar and focusing on vocabulary. Having struggled with the question of teaching grammar in isolation, or not teaching it explicitly, and where to find that balance, I discovered that I was a victim of “the mistaken belief that grammar lessons must come before writing, rather than grammar being something that is best learned *through* writing” (Cleary, 2014). I did not let my students just write and learn from their mistakes. It was when I learned about the concept of invented spelling in the course “Literacy Development”, that I realized that “guessing and approximation are acceptable” (Freeman and Anderson, 2011, p. 4). I was also able to settle this grammar debate by recognizing that Krashen’s idea of comprehensible input and natural interaction would help the students to learn a language as opposed to the “traditional stand- alone grammar” (Cleary, 2014) method of instruction.

To tackle this issue of teaching grammar in isolation, I will align my teaching with the features of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). This teaching pedagogy focuses on “linguistic fluency, not just the accuracy” (Brown, 2007, p. 42) and its aim is to “facilitate lifelong language **learners**... not just with the immediate classroom task” (Brown, 2007, p. 43). The objectives and tasks of the class are to be focused on all of the communicative competences, which are grammatical, discourse, functional, sociolinguistic, and strategic (Brown, 2007, p. 43). Effective and meaningful communication lies at the center of CLT (Brown, 2007, p. 45). Therefore, I will teach grammar that is embedded in conteNt, and this will help the **learners** with

meaningful communication. I will create content by thinking about how my students' **learning context**; why do they need to learn English, what kinds of communication and other tasks will they engage in when using their L2, and what purpose will the language continue to serve them once they leave my classroom and even once they graduate from school.

Reflecting on student behaviors in terms of language learning, Krashen's affective filter hypothesis has begun to form a huge part of my teaching principles. I began to understand how motivation, self-confidence and anxiety can play a very important role in language acquisition. Keeping these hypotheses in mind is helpful when I think about planning and creating **curriculum** and **assessments** for my future classes as a teacher. Making sure that my students are aware of their goals and reasons for learning the language, as well as having time, exposure, and frequency when placing expectations from their output will help them to be successful in learning the language.

There are the certain characteristics of the direct method that I would incorporate in my teaching. The intention of this method is for students to learn to communicate in the language – which means that teachers often place learning in real life situations and thus provide the students with authentic input to practice their conversation. This links to Krashen's concept of meaningful interaction and natural communication. The idea of self-correction in this technique is also important, because it encourages the students to think about language and the way they use certain words and grammar rules (so that they have to think about grammar in context of the input they receive and the output they produce). One point of contention is that this method does not allow the use of students' native language in the classroom. In the **learning context** where all the students will have the same first language, I don't think there is harm in allowing them to use their first language occasionally. During my other courses at Vanderbilt, we have been

discussing how using a student's first language to help them learn a second or foreign language is beneficial because it increases their metalinguistic awareness. It also allows for an easy progression of "moving from the known (common language of the students) to the unknown (the language the students are learning)" (Freeman and Anderson, 2011, p. 5). This idea is linked to the technique of community language learning, which will be discussed later on in this paper.

Similar to the way in which I want to implement the direct method, I would not adopt the audio lingual method in its entirety, but extract certain activities because of the theory they are based on. Some of these characteristics are presenting new vocabulary and structures through dialogues (Freeman and Anderson, 2011, p. 45), which supports the idea of learning a language for communication and meaningful interaction. When students are just beginning to learn a language, and they don't have any exposure to the language outside of the classroom, I think it will be beneficial for them to learn through "imitation and repetition" (Freeman and Anderson, 2011, p. 45), and to be rewarded with positive reinforcements. Similar to the direct method, there is student-to-student interaction, and the interaction is also teacher directed. However, I do not think that there is harm in allowing teacher directed interaction because it may prove to be efficient at times. This method does believe in keeping vocabulary to a minimum while the students master the "sound system and the grammatical patterns" (Freeman and Anderson, 2011, p. 45), and I would not follow this component. This method also believes that "the habits of the students' native language are thought to interfere with the students' attempt to master the target language" (Freeman and Anderson, 2011, p. 46), and this is another characteristic that I would not follow when adopting the audio lingual method in my classroom.

While the techniques discussed thus far in the paper are all techniques that I will not implement in their entirety, the technique of community language learning resonated with my

teaching philosophy. This method advises “teachers to consider their students as whole persons” (Freeman and Anderson, 2011, p. 85). This is a concept that is being discussed in my other classes as well, where teachers are encouraged to think about all the strengths and weaknesses their **learners** bring into their classes. This way of thinking assigns teachers the role of a “language counselor” “who is a skillful ‘understander’ of the struggle students face as they attempt to internalize another language” (Freeman and Anderson, 2011, p. 85). This idea is very similar to Krashen’s hypothesis of affective filter – because the teacher will be able to understand students’ fear of learning and communicating in a new language, and will therefore be mindful and address issues of motivation, anxiety and self-confidence. This method also aligns with the social and emotional aspects of learning a new language, as the teacher creates an “accepting environment and helps the students to “lower their defenses” (Freeman and Anderson, 2011, p. 92). The students’ native language is used as a resource to help them learn the new language, and I believe that this is a very important mindset to have as a second language teacher. Unlike the direct method and the audio lingual method, this technique “fosters interaction among students” (Freeman and Anderson, 2011, p.91) instead of interaction that is teacher driven. The classroom begins to function as a community that is working together to learn a new language – the teacher accepts the role as a facilitator and the **learners** are encouraged to learn from each other (Freeman and Anderson, 2011).

Creating an encouraging environment in a classroom is very important because it aligns with Krashen’s affective filter hypothesis, and that is why I would also want to incorporate the technique of total physical response in my teaching. The activities within this technique create an environment that will help students reduce their anxiety and stress, and promote motivation and self-confidence. The students will be given the space and time they need to feel comfortable

before they are expected to speak in their new language. An important point that this technique emphasizes on is that “when students do begin to speak, perfection should not be expected” (Freeman and Anderson, 2011, p. 110). This links to the idea of teachers acting as a “language counselor” as described in the community language learning method. This technique makes language learning an enjoyable process, and that will affect the students’ motivation as well.

The above are all theories and methods that I would want to use to form my instruction. For the domain of instructing, I will comment on my artifact by keeping in mind these theories, as well as the theories mentioned in my philosophy of teaching. The theory on constructivism - **learner** centered and based on interaction – is the rationale behind selecting the activities for this lesson.

For this domain, I have attached a lesson plan in the appendix as Artifact No. 2A and a PowerPoint presentation that is referenced as Artifact No. 2B (attached separately). I created these materials for my practicum for the course “Methods and Materials for ELLs”. For this practicum, I was a student teacher in a 10th grade ELL classroom in a high school in Nashville. My students are all at the 1B level of English proficiency, and among them there are a variety of first languages that they speak. I created this presentation for my mentor teacher in accordance with the unit she was conducting. The theme of her unit was aligned with the theme of the month of February, which is Black History Month. The students were studying the poem “Caged Bird” by Maya Angelou, and this lesson plan starts off with a vocabulary lesson, because students will need to understand the meaning of these words in order to fully grasp the poem. As I have mentioned previously, I do not want to teach grammar in isolation, and therefore this lesson plan allowed me to teach vocabulary within the context of a poem. The rationale and content and language objectives in the lesson plan were not shared with the students because they were

following the objectives created by my mentor teacher. The PowerPoint presentation is what I actually used to teach, and it has the vocabulary words, the definitions, the exemplar sentences and the Heads Together activity.

In accordance with the theories and concepts mentioned above, her classroom culture has a supportive **learning context** and the lesson plan incorporates interactive activities to engage students. The content and language objectives support the concept of purposeful learning. The learning objective for the class was to identify key vocabulary, discuss the vocabulary and take notes, and revise the words with Heads Together. I noticed that my mentor teacher does not have a separate content objective and language objective for the day. She has her essential questions for the unit up on a chart paper, but does not have the unit objectives up the wall either. Thinking back to what we have learned in our Methods and Materials class, I would have a separate content objective and language objective and also help students understand why there are two different objectives, how they are connected to each other, and how they will help them achieve the unit objectives and be able to think about the essential questions of the unit.

This was a thirty-minute lesson which consisted of the definitions, which was mostly explicit teacher instruction with some student interaction, and then a Heads Together activity (which mostly consisted of student interaction). I videotaped my lesson, and was therefore able to reflect on my instructing. I have not attached the video as an artifact, I have only attached the lesson plan and the presentation. However, I will reflect on the lesson and my instruction in this section; what worked and what areas could I improve in.

I did not activate the **learners'** background knowledge in the beginning of the lesson. I asked the students before every word if the word seemed familiar to them and if they could guess the meaning of it. A few of the students responded with guesses about meaning, and some of

them got very close to the actual definitions for some words. In the future, I will try to think of better ways to activate my students' background knowledge. I also did not use any opening activity. However, during the debrief with my professor for the course "Methods and Materials for ELLs", we discussed how I could have shown a picture of a free bird and a caged bird to activate their memory about the poem because they had done a first reading of the poem in their previous class. Then, I could have given organized the words under two columns, one that could have words describing the free bird and one that could have words describing the captivated bird.

Before I taught the lesson, my mentor teacher had some suggestions for me regarding classroom management and providing scaffolding. She wanted me to make sure that I numbered every blank with its corresponding number on the slide so that it is easy for students to follow along. This turned out to be helpful as it ensured that my section of the lesson ran smoothly without any unnecessary confusions. Another suggestion she had given me previously was to have sentence fillers and not have students copy the entire definition. I realized that it was extremely helpful to have sentence fillers in the chart for definitions, because most of the students needed this scaffolding. It was taking time to go over the meaning of each word, and if I asked them to fill out the chart completely, they would have focused on that and not on comprehending the meanings of the words. Through this support, they could focus on the cognitive demands of the exercise more. I would always want to ensure that I present my students with text that is comprehensible input (Schutz, 1998) and lies inside the zone of proximal development (ZPD). ZPD is a form of scaffolding, and the suggestions my mentor teacher gave me align with this theory. I would want to continue thinking about ZPD as I create my **curriculum** in the future. This would ensure that I am challenging the learners with tasks that they can actually accomplish and do not overwhelm them (Vygotsky, 1978).

In terms of instruction, I noticed in the video how I was giving explicit instruction at the beginning about what the students will be doing with the worksheet in front of them. I was pointing to each section on the worksheet and explaining what notes they will need to fill. However, I also noticed that I did not give explicit instructions for the Heads Together activity because I knew that the students had played this game many times before. However, it is always better to give explicit instructions to remind them of the rules. An area of improvement for me would be to walk around and encourage students to participate in group discussions before coming up with the answers. I was walking around to observe that all the students were on task, but I was not passing out words of encouragement to students who were not engaging in the group discussion. It is important to give out positive reinforcements as it helps in fostering a supportive classroom environment. Another area of improvement for me would be to probe the students to think harder toward the actual answer as some of the students were giving me answers that were almost correct. In two or more instances, I replied with the phrase “you’re almost there” or “that’s almost correct”, but I did not push them to think more.

I think the activity itself is strong in that it targets communicative competence and also aligns with the principles of communicative language teaching, which is one of the theories mentioned in my philosophy of teaching. However, while it was **learner** centered and had students work in groups, it did not target higher order thinking – students only had to provide one word answers. I would try to create questions that do not have one word answers and that are higher order thinking questions so that the students are really forced to discuss and negotiate answers with their group. While this activity is definitely not teacher centered and is student centered, student interaction could be increased with higher order thinking questions.

The Heads Together activity served as a formative **assessment**, and it proved to be a

quick method of ensuring that the students were understanding the new vocabulary words.

Whenever any group responded with a different answer, I took that opportunity to let them know how their answer was not the correct one.

Reflecting on the lesson allowed me to understand how instruction can look very different from what is planned in the lesson plan. Even though I incorporated scaffolding in my lesson planning, if some students did not understand the meanings of the words through the definitions I provided them, I would have had to come up with another definition or provided more scaffolds. Trying to be prepared for on the spot scaffolding is equally important.

I was also able to understand how important it is to always think back to your philosophy of teaching so that those theories and concepts are mirrored in the actual instruction of the lesson. There are certain activities that I would want to avoid if they are teacher centered or do not align with communicative language teaching and there will be text that I will want to avoid if it is not culturally relevant

Domain 3: Assessing

Teachers have no choice but to administer state mandated assessments in their classrooms. However, they do have a choice in how they use the data from these assessments to understand the needs of their **learners** and to inform their planning, **curriculum** and instruction. If the state is using WIDA to assess students, teachers should understand what standards this particular assessment focuses on, and what the results can tell them about their students' linguistic strengths and weaknesses. They should consider the validity and reliability of the assessment; the environment in which the assessment was conducted, whether the questions are culturally appropriate or not, whether the questions contain any bias or not, etc. As a future teacher in Pakistan, it will be imperative for me to become aware of and understand the assessments that are conducted in the school, whether they are nation-wide, province-wide, or school specific.

Teachers can also administer assessments in their classroom that will better gauge their **learners'** language proficiency. Such assessments are difficult to conduct for each and every student, but it would be especially helpful to conduct extensive assessments on students who are struggling with class content and language objectives. An example of such an extensive assessment project is Artifact No.3, which consists of all the assessments I conducted on a participant for case study project for the course 'Linguistics and Second Language Acquisition'. The actual linguistic case study on the participant, Yiwei, is not attached in the appendix. However, I will discuss parts of the case study as well as the assessments that I conducted with her, and what I learned from the results.

The purpose of this case study was to analyze the participant's language skills through the four fields of linguistics which are phonology, grammar, semantics and pragmatics. In order

to study her language abilities through these lenses, Yiwei was asked to participate in two casual interviews, and was also asked to submit written samples. Through these assessments, I was able to identify her phonology level by looking at the use of fillers, her grammar level by looking at the number of utterances and morphemes, and look at semantics through her written samples. Her written samples also included an academic sample, so I could study her academic language as well.

The case study discussed in depth how Yiwei has certain weaknesses in her linguistic skills. However, these weaknesses are not very crucial when it comes to understanding her speech. Her American instructors and friends are able to understand her. Yiwei has given thirty minute presentations in English in her classes without any troubles. However, even though her weaknesses are not crucial, there is room for improvement and she can still perfect her English. Therefore, the **learner's** background information and **learning context** played a crucial role in understanding the results from her **assessments**. She learned English in an academic setting and for academic purposes. Her family and friends only communicate in Mandarin, and so she began speaking in English when she moved to America for her Master's degree. Therefore, even though Yiwei has been learning English since she was ten years old, she feels that her true learning began once she become comfortable speaking in English – which was a year and a half ago. It is therefore important to keep this information in mind when understanding and interpreting linguistic skills of any language learner.

In order to understand her language development and proficiency, I conducted assessments and gathered writing, listening and speaking material to assess phonology, grammar, semantics and pragmatics. One of the first assessments I conducted with her was the Student Oral Language Observation Matrix (SOLOM). This tool helped me to assess her in

comprehension, fluency, vocabulary, pronunciation and grammar in her oral language. It was difficult to rate my participant on one level of the SOLOM because they are quite clear cut and I sometimes thought that I wanted to rate her on a spectrum. Occasional lapses in Yiwei's speech appeared when she struggled to find the right words to use, and therefore compensated by using 'umm' and 'ahh' extensively. Yiwei's English language showed grammatical errors because she got confused with tenses. I wanted to rate her somewhere between 3 and 4. However, this **assessment** helped me to understand how a language **learner** may have scored on a level 3 in pronunciation, but can easily score on a level 4 in comprehension and vocabulary. Even though her speech had grammatical errors, Yiwei used extensive vocabulary very confidently. One characteristic of level 4 which clearly applies to Yiwei is that she functions on an academic level, meaning that her speech and writing are largely driven by academic goals. That is why she used linking words such as 'therefore' and 'however' in normal conversation because that was her **learning context** when she was acquiring her second language.

Assessing my participant and then analyzing her results allowed me to connect her linguistic skills to a theory. I was able to understand why she has not achieved native-like proficiency and what areas she can improve on to achieve this fluency. Even though Yiwei began learning English before puberty, she has not attained native-like proficiency. Her second language is not free from her Mandarin accent. Therefore, the Critical Period Hypothesis is problematic in this case, as according to this theory, she did learn English when it was the best time to learn the phonology of a second language, and yet she did not gain native-like proficiency (Baker, 2008). After analyzing Yiwei's oral samples, as well as the contexts in which she engages with English, the Fossilization Theory would most accurately apply in her case. While Yiwei may never acquire English as a native language, her fluency and phonological skills

do not hamper her communication with others. At this point, her interlanguage has ceased to develop and people will not correct her tense and grammar because they can comprehend her speech (Baker, 2008).

The TESOL standard for assessing states that teachers need to “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” and the above linguistic case study helped me achieve this standard. The second part of this standard states that teachers need to be able to “use knowledge of student performance to make decisions about planning and instruction”. The case study helped me to achieve this as well because, by analyzing the results from all the areas of language development, I was able to come up with suggestions for how she can improve her linguistic skills. I provided specific instructional recommendations for each linguistic skill which will help Yiwei to target her areas of improvement in phonology, grammar, semantics and pragmatics.

Conducting this case study and carefully analyzing my participant’s linguistic skills through the lens of phonology, grammar, semantics, and pragmatics gave me a deeper understanding of what each of these four fields entails, and how to identify a **learner’s** areas of improvement within these fields. It also formed my understanding that there several levels on which to judge a speaker’s language acquisition. It is not enough to be able to just gauge that a speaker has not gained native-like proficiency in a language, that is a very superficial manner of accessing anyone’s language skills and can be done by anyone. What is more important is to dig deeper to understand where the speaker is struggling within phonology, grammar, semantics and pragmatics. Therefore, I learned how to apply theory on second language acquisition on a speaker who has learned the language but still not yet gained native like proficiency.

Carrying out this case study and interacting with a second language speaker with a critical lens also made me realize that a speaker can still be coherent in speech despite having problems in phonology, grammar, semantics and pragmatics. The speaker can work on improving their language depending on how critical these problems are. For instance, as I discussed in my case study analysis, my participant is coherent and can be understood and therefore her motivation to improve her language will come from herself and her willingness to work at it. It is not crucial for her to improve her language.

Completing this case study and focusing especially on the instructional recommendations for each linguistic field taught me how theory can help instructional plans to help student with their areas of improvement. Unless specific problems are not identified, it is very difficult to help someone to improve their language skills. Helping speakers with vague generalized instructional plans will not be fruitful. Once I analyzed Yiwei's linguistic skills, I was able to prepare an instructional plan while keeping in mind the sociocultural factors that hindered her language skills. I was familiar with Yiwei's current surrounding and was aware of her own motivation for improving her English. These extra details helped me to prepare instructional recommendations which align with her interests, and are appropriate for her age group as well.

Given my learning experience with this case study, implications involving my future work with English Learners are immense. Firstly, I understand that a student cannot be called a 'poor student' in the language arts: the teacher needs to identify and pinpoint the specific areas of improvement. It is important to analyze every student's language abilities separately. I understand that this is a huge task and cannot be possible for one teacher to undertake for his/her entire class. However, he/she can conduct this analysis for the students who appear to be struggling the most in the class. Secondly, it is just as important to make individualized

instructional plans for students according to their specific needs. Again, this is not possible as a teacher has to teach a class collectively. However, the teacher can keep in mind the strengths and weaknesses of the **learners** and provide scaffolding accordingly to individual needs. While making lesson plans, the teacher needs to be cognizant of which language abilities he/she wants to target, so that an appropriate **curriculum** can be created, relevant activities can be incorporated and accurate **assessments** can be conducted. Once she identifies the linguistic field which needs to be focused on, it will make it easier to create comprehensive lesson plans.

Recognizing which linguistic area a particular student needs help in, incorporating relevant strategies and techniques to cater to these linguistic areas, and then providing constructive feedback are all essential components that are part assessing a learner. I was able to work on and understand all these areas through the linguistic case study that I conducted.

Domain 4: Identity and Context

My philosophy of teaching discusses how it is important to always center the **learner** and the **learning context** when thinking about curriculum, instructing and assessing. To know about the learner and the learning context begins with the larger community of the students and the school and knowledge about learners' identity and contexts.

As part of my Foundations for English Language Learners course, I conducted an in-depth study of the Kurdish community; both online by doing research and offline by visiting the Kurdish Market on Nolensville Road in Nashville. My Community Literacies paper is attached in the appendix as Artifact No. 4A. Having conducted this community literacy project, the theory that "beliefs about students shape the instructional behaviors of teachers" (Gay, 2010, P. 53) played out for me in reality. Understanding the history and trajectory of the Kurdish community in Nashville enabled me to think about the multitudes of journeys and experiences **learners** bring with them into the classroom through their varied histories and life trajectories. This community literacy project not only helped form my philosophy of teaching, but also helped me to think about the ways in which I can incorporate my students' diverse identities and **learning contexts** in my lesson plans. Community literacies, and my understandings from this project, are mentioned earlier in this paper in the section "Philosophy of teaching".

Another aspect of **learning context** is the environment of the school itself; what is the vision of the school in terms of creating a safe learning space and promoting linguistic and cultural diversity. Another assignment that I had to complete for the course 'Foundations of English Language learners' was to conduct a school visit, observe a classroom and interview a teacher to assess its environment on the factors mentioned above. This assignment is attached in the appendix as Artifact No. 4B. I was able to determine that the Principle of Educational Equity

is present in the school. This principle states that a school should “engage in practices that reflect respect, non-discrimination, and fairness for all students” (Jong, 2011, p. 170). I was also able to determine that the school’s attitude towards linguistic diversity was the attitude of viewing language as a resource (Jong, 2011, p. 104). I was able to comment on the school’s attitudes and policies towards their ELL students, and how it supported these students to attain academic excellence. The school also ensured that it provided supports to parents so that they could navigate the school system. The school provides support and bilingual services to families, and these “can provide an important bridge for parents as well as children” (Jong, 2011, p. 34).

The classroom observation and interview also shed light on the perceptions that teachers hold toward their culturally and linguistically diverse students. The “interactions that occur between teachers and students... are major determinants of the quality of education children receive” (Gay, 2010, p. 48), and the interactions observed were positive and encouraging. During my classroom observation, I noticed how the teacher’s instructional practice aligned with CLT and constructivism, which are two theories that I have mentioned in my philosophy of teaching.

By visiting this school, I therefore realized how there are so many external factors outside of a classroom that help students in their learning. Such external factors also support teachers in creating culturally relevant **curriculum** and **assessments** that are appropriate for ELLs. This experience allowed me to understand how important it is to be cognizant of the school environment, and to think about how I can support these students if the school does not.

Understanding the context of learning English as a foreign language is extremely important, and this context will drive learner goals, as well as planning, instructing, and assessing. As an EFL teacher, I need to acknowledge the power and importance the English language has in Pakistan. In Pakistan, language plays an important role, with English having

“linguistic supremacy” (Paris and Alim). Fluency in English is embedded in a “culture of power” in the country; where socio-economic backgrounds, white-collar jobs, and prestige are determined by your expertise in the English language. The British system of education is still very much prevalent, and the medium of instruction is one of the factors that separates private schools from public schools (private schools are entirely in English whereas the public schools are struggling with the two languages). It is therefore imperative that my students become fluent in English, if they wish to acquire a decent undergraduate degree and a traditional white collar jobs; if they wish to have a greater hope of success, they need to be able to speak, listen, read, and write in English.

The examples discussed in the Planning section of this capstone integrate with my view that I need to help these students see the importance and value of being able to communicate in English – because learning a foreign language is mostly led by the external motivations of the students. This is a major factor that we discussed in my other course “Teaching English as a Foreign Language”, and it is helping me to think about motivation and purpose of learning English in light of my community literacy investigation and what I learned from that experience. The community literacy paper also highlighted the importance of including parents in their child’s education. I discussed a video in the paper that I saw where the Kurdish community had gathered in their community center to meet with Metro Nashville Public School officials. In the session, they discussed how they wanted to be informed about what goes on in the schools, how the schools function, and what role they can play as active parents in their child’s academic life.

In order to explain the importance of learning English, and to show them the opportunities that this language will bring for them, it will be important to understand the perception parents have of the language and the power it holds. If parents do not deem it

important to learn the language, they will not insist that their child practice and communicate in the language. From my past teaching experience, I can assume that most of the parents will not be proficient in English, but if they understand why their children need to learn the language, they will support and encourage their children as much as they can.

Keeping in mind the **learner** and the **learning context**, I will create **curriculum** and activities by leveraging on my students' funds of knowledge. From my previous experience, I can assume that some students will look after their younger siblings after school, while some will help their fathers in their shops. Almost all of them will attend religious classes after school. Thinking about how my students may be helping their younger siblings to read in English, how they may be selling products that are packaged with English labels and information, and how they may be interacting with customers who speak in English, will allow me to contextualize my classroom curriculum. I will incorporate their funds of knowledge in my teaching materials by creating simulated situations where they have to use the language, or by giving them homework that they can complete by involving their younger siblings. Teaching English and reading to their siblings will give them confidence in their own linguistic skills. The students spending time in their father's shops can practice reading information of the products, and can do a show and tell of their favorite products.

My philosophy of teaching discussed culturally responsive teaching, and therefore incorporating culturally relevant books in my classroom will be play a major role in acknowledging and respecting the communities of my students and their **learning contexts**. Being cognizant of religious beliefs and certain gender and cultural norms will allow me to select books that do not make my students and their families uncomfortable. It will also help me to gauge whether my students will be able to comprehend the content and context of the books I

select. I created a presentation for my class “Learning with Print and New Media” which discussed the importance and benefits of using culturally relevant books at school and at home. I have discussed this video in Domain No. 7: Content, and it is attached in the appendix as Artifact No. 7B, where it has been discussed in greater detail.

Domain 5: Language Proficiency

I started learning English in elementary school, alongside my first language. My entire education has been in English, including my undergraduate degree. In school, all subjects except for Urdu (my first language) were taught in English, and the same goes for my undergraduate degree. My undergraduate degree was a Humanities degree, with a major in English literature and a minor in History. Therefore, I had to engage with difficult texts in English, write extensive papers and also participate in class in English. I took the GRE and the TOFL exams to apply for graduate school in America and was given admission based on those scores.

After my undergraduate degree, I taught English in a public school for two years as part of the Teach for Pakistan Fellowship. I taught grades 3,4,5,6 and 7.

Domain 6: Learning

As I have mentioned in my philosophy of teaching, my planning, **curriculum** and instruction will always be focused and centered on the **learners**, how best they learn and what facilitation and supports they need in order to learn, as well their **learning contexts** – what is their purpose of learning the language and where does their motivation come from. The TESOL standard for learning states that teachers need to “draw on their knowledge of language... to understand the processes by which learners acquire a new language in and out of classroom settings”. I will discuss theories of language learning in the next standard, which is Domain No. 7. In this section, I will reflect on my journey of learning a new tool, and will connect my learning process and experience to the process and experience my students might face as they set out to learn a new language. In the role of the teacher, it is sometimes easy to forget how a student feels when they are learning something new and different, and this experience put me in the shoes of a student.

I took a course called Social and Psychological Foundations of Adolescent Literacies in which we discussed out of school literacies, external factors that encourage and/or hinder a student’s literacy development, and how factors such as culture, language and socioeconomic backgrounds determine how and in what ways these students learn. In order to understand the learning process in its truest sense, we had to undertake a project where we had to learn something new – whether it was a language, or a new software, or a new social media site. I decided to learn how to use the social media site called Tumblr, and during the four weeks that I engaged with the site, I took notes on how I was learning to use it, what support I was seeking, and what background information and prior knowledge I was bringing into my learning. This

paper is attached as Artifact No. 6, and I will discuss some key learnings and conclusions from the paper in this section.

My learning process with Tumblr was what Gee called “horizontal learning”, where I was “getting my feet wet” and “mucking around” the site before I was finally ready to “jump in” and create my first post (Gee, 2007, p. 307). It was easier for me to play around because there was nothing that really stood out to me as being alien. I had an email address, and I was used to signing up on various websites with an email address, a username, and a password. I was already familiar with gifs and hashtags and had used them on Facebook and Instagram before. Even though Tumblr made me feel inadequate about my popular culture knowledge, I knew enough to be able to follow a few blogs and to catch on to some of the fanfiction. Going back and forth between my own blog and the home page, and poking a few buttons here and there helped me to get comfortable with using the site. It was a process of “testing, trialing, checking, confirming, changing, and playing with the tools” (Thomas, 2007, p. 270) that Tumblr presented me with. It also involved going back to my blog to see if it looked the way I wanted it to, in case I wanted to modify my blog title, the pictures, the layout, or the privacy settings. I also had the facility of speaking to a friend whenever I felt I got stuck – so I did eventually seek out explicit instructions. I would have perhaps been frustrated if I was made to sit and listen to explicit instructions of how to use my email address to log in, and so understanding how my students learn will allow me to give them the exact instruction they need, and to accordingly plan for instruction time in my lessons. If I can assume and anticipate that they will not bring any background knowledge to a particular lesson, I can ensure that I have enough time for instruction.

Thinking about the process of learning Tumblr and my own experience makes me think

about how some learners may be comfortable getting their feet wet with regards to assignments and projects, but others may need more context to tackle the task. Students who have no experience using social media may feel that they need a more ‘horizontal’ learning process, as Gee described (Gee, 2007). There will also always be differences in the background knowledge that students bring to any topic, and it is so important to figure out how to cater to students who lack this background knowledge. If this was the first social media platform I engaged with, my learning would look a lot different.

Learning a new tool and reflecting on it also allowed me to understand some of the emotions and struggles that **learners** go through when they begin to learn a new language. This process has therefore enabled me to become cognizant of these factors as a language teacher, especially when placing expectations on the learners to complete an assignment in a particular time and in a specific manner, and to achieve certain scores in their **assessments**.

Domain 7: Content

The TESOL standard for content states that teachers need to understand that “language learning is most likely to occur when learners are trying to use the language for genuine communicative purposes.” My teaching philosophy, as well as my section on the standard of instructing, discusses how **learners** acquire a new language through meaningful interaction.

When thinking about the **curriculum** that would help me create my lesson plans, and the content that I will have the **learners** engage with to successfully acquire their L2, I think about Krashen’s theories of second language acquisition. Recognizing the difference between an “acquired system” and a “learned system” complements the idea of how important it is for learners to be exposed to comprehensible input in order to produce output. There is a strong emphasis on “meaningful interaction” and “natural communication” (Schutz, 1998). Along with incorporating my students L1 in my curriculum, knowing the **learning context**, along with their socioeconomic background, cultural capital and community norms will help me to ensure that my activities can consist of interaction that my students will most likely engage with in their lives – dialogues, scenarios, and situations. I mentioned such activities in my teaching philosophy as well as in the standard of planning.

I created a lesson plan for the course “Teaching of English as a Foreign Language”, and this is attached in the appendix as Artifact No. 7A. It was created keeping in mind the **learners** and the **learning context**, and that is why this particular text was chosen, because it’s reading level is that of fifth grade and my students would most likely not be reading on grade level. The book was selected because its topic – about displaced people, conditions of refugee camps, and lack of water - is a universal issue.

The lesson plan includes after thoughts that were added after I received feedback from my peers in class. This lesson plan was created in the Fall semester of 2017, and as I look back at it in my last semester, I realize that there are still some more changes that I would make to it. While the text is relatively easy for students ranging from grades 5-8, the anticipation guide that I created tackles some difficult themes and concepts that I know my future students will not be able to comprehend. The vocabulary activity is similar to the vocabulary activity in the lesson plan attached in the appendix as Artifact No. 2 in the standard of instructing. It is an interactive activity, but I would provide similar scaffolds as I have in Artifact No. 2.

Since this lesson plan was for a micro teaching assignment for the course, it is not a complete lesson plan, but is part of a larger **curriculum**. However, I now have the knowledge of what a solid lesson plan comprises of. It would include a rationale for the text as well as the activities, essential questions to guide the discussion, content objectives and separate language objectives to support the content objectives, activities to activate the students' background knowledge, comprehensible input, and activities that are conducive for teacher-student and student-student interaction. Activities in each lesson plan for the day will cater to each of the four language areas – reading, writing, listening and speaking for communicative purposes as well as to communicate in content areas.

My philosophy of teaching also discusses using culturally relevant texts in my classroom. My students need to be able to reads texts, characters, situations and environments that they can relate to, or understand. For my course “Reading with Print and New Media”, I created a video that is catered to parents in order to explain to them why they should engage their children in culturally relevant books at home. The video is referenced in the appendix as Artifact No. 7B and is attached separately. Considering the **learning context**, my student's parents may not be able to

read English books with their children. However, I can also use the video to inform teachers about using culturally relevant books in the classroom, and this ties in with the next domain of commitment and professionalism, with regards to holding professional development sessions.

Domain 8: Commitment and professionalism

As a second language teacher, it will be important for me to be up to date with new strategies that will help my **learners** to read, write, listen and speak in their L2 and in their specific **learning contexts**. Reading journals and papers in order to grow my knowledge base will allow me to ensure that my **curriculum** is always suitable to my **learners** and their **learning contexts**, and that my strategies do not become stagnant. I may need different strategies depending on the demographics of my learners, and their context. Moreover, reading journals and papers will also allow me to be updated on new **assessments** that are introduced in the field of language teaching

As part of a broader teaching community of language acquisition, it would be beneficial to engage with other language teachers in the school building, in the community, and within my own network. It is always helpful to be reflective of one's own practices, and to also be aware of the changing needs of the **learners**. Holding and attending professional development sessions with teachers, within the school building as well as outside, will allow us to engage with new strategies, to be reflective of current practices, and to ensure that the learners are always at the center of all concerns. Asking the learners to complete surveys and anonymous reflections can ensure that their needs are at the center of the support and pedagogies that teachers work towards.

As part of my course "Learning with Print and New Media", I had to create material that could potentially be used for professional development sessions with teachers in a school. Artifact No. 8A in the appendix is an infographic that has summarized a reading on how to teach students to read graphic novels. The rationale is that teachers will not normally have the time to read extensive articles, and so presenting the most important information to them in the form of

an infographic that will also be useful for them. My degree at Peabody has equipped me with knowledge that I can use for such professional development sessions. This infographic gave me a clear idea on what these sessions looks like.

Another deliverable I created for the course “Literacy for Special and Diverse Needs Learners” is the presentation on Literacy Centers. It is referenced as Artifact No. 8B in the appendix and is attached separately. This presentation was created for the ELL teachers and their students at my practicum site, and so it was created for a specific **learning context** and **learners** with their proficiency levels in mind. Their students’ background, assessment scores, and the curriculum the teachers were following were all kept in mind. It allowed me to understand how professional development centers should be created by keeping the students and teachers in mind, and how material should be presented to the teachers in a manner that is ready for immediate use in their next lesson.

Gaining this exposure and practice has helped me to think about how I will continue to play a teacher leader role in any capacity that I can in my future school. Having also attended a few of these professional development sessions at my practicum schools, I realize their importance in expanding knowledge and seeking out alternate activities for students.

Conclusion: A bridge between theory and practice

As an ELL teacher, I will not think of my job in isolation as merely one of teaching English as a foreign language to the students who enter my classroom. I will be a language teacher, but my classroom environment, my **curriculum** and lesson plans, my instruction, and my **assessments** will always keep my **learners** and their **learning contexts** in the center. The three main factors that will always be rooted in theoretical understandings of how best to serve the ELL population are my understanding of my Students' communities, my relationship with their parents, and my role as a teacher leader in terms of partnerships and advocacy. I mentioned in my philosophy of teaching that my prior teaching experience was one where I simply took practices that I understood best, or that I thought I could teach well them. My practice of teaching was not embedded in theory and pedagogical frameworks and that is what I wanted to do; I wanted to be able to connect my practice with sound theory. This portfolio has discussed the main theories that resonated with me as a future ELL teacher, and the TESOL domains include examples of practice that are supported by these theories. My curriculum, lesson plans, instructional pedagogies and choice of assessments will always be supported with theories and rationale of why I teach a certain topic, what texts and resources I use, and what activities I incorporate.

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Artifact No.1: Planning – Lesson Plan

Topic: Prepositions	Class: English 6	Date: 8 th February 2017
<p>Content Objectives:</p> <p>SWBAT to learn to identify preposition and to use them correctly.</p> <p>Above, over, under/below/beneath, beside, between, in back of/behind, in front of, in, out, inside, outside, on, off, up, down, around, into, near, with.</p>	<p>Language Objectives:</p> <p>Students will listen to the prepositions during the Simon Says game and respond to them by doing the actions.</p> <p>Students will read the story on their own and then discuss them with their partner to determine the prepositions.</p> <p>Students will read the sentences and try to figure out the missing preposition.</p> <p>They will need to be able to understand the sentences they are reading.</p> <p>Students will understand the difference between prepositions by selecting them correctly in sentences.</p>	
Key Vocabulary:	Materials (including supplementary and adapted):	

<p>Above, over, under/below/beneath, beside, between, in back of/behind, in front of, in, out, inside, outside, on, off, up, down, around, into, near, with.</p>	<p>PowerPoint presentation Worksheets for the students</p>
<p>Introductory Activity (Explain, convince, demonstrate to students why this material, skill, activity is worth learning. Make a connection to students' experience. Includes building background. Should be only 3-5 minutes)</p> <p>Play the Simon Says game with the class.</p> <p>Today we are going to play the Simon Says game!</p> <p>Who here has played the game before or knows how it is played? (when I conducted this lesson, we had played the game a few times before with various other grammar topics).</p> <p>Expect a few hands and ask someone to explain the rules of the game to the rest of the class.</p> <p>Let the students know that if they do not know the meaning of a word, they can try to guess or look at their peers and see what they are doing.</p> <p>Once everyone knows the rules, begin the game.</p> <p>Examples of the actions would be: Simon says stand behind the chair, Simon says put your pen in your backpack, Simon says stand on the chair, etc.</p> <p>After a few actions, end the game.</p> <p>Ask the students to recall some of the actions Simon made them do. Write these on the board.</p> <p>Ask them if they know what branch these words would fall under – hint: parts of speech.</p> <p>Then introduce the word prepositions to them.</p>	

Depending on how the game goes, you can say a few actions in Urdu so that the struggling students can understand the concept.

Why are prepositions important? If you go to a grocery store and you need a medicine that's behind the counter and placed above another medicine, how will you explain it to the cashier if you don't have the words such as behind, and above? Your hand gestures will make it a very confusing situation. There are many such instances where you need to use these words which are called prepositions.

So today we are going to start learning about prepositions and we will come to realize how often we use these words in our daily speech.

Time: 10 mins

What steps, procedures, components of your objectives do you need to identify or explicitly teach? (analysis)

Explain what prepositions are and how people use them on a daily basis.

Show students' slides with a preposition and a picture to depict the meaning and provide visual representation.

Model an activity where the teacher underlines the prepositions in sentences so that students know what is expected of them.

Model an activity where the teacher reads a sentence and fills in the blanks with the correct preposition so that students know what is expected

	<p>of them.</p> <p>The meanings of the preposition words will have to be explicitly taught through the steps above.</p> <p>Explain to students that if they do not understand a particular word in the sentence, they should try to guess what the sentence is talking about so that they can select the correct preposition and also be able to insert the correct preposition.</p>
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Practice/application

Group Practice (15 min)

Instruction: This story will be presented with scaffolds for the students depending on their reading level. Some students will be given the story with pictures of certain difficult words (including some prepositions). The higher level students will get the story as it is displayed below without visual representation. The students will be made to sit in groups that will consist of stronger and struggling readers so that the strong readers can be the group leaders and assist the rest of the members.

QA) Find the prepositions in the story and underline them. You may work with your table groups.

During English class, my teacher gave me a small can of play dough for a story. I removed my fresh, new play dough chunk from the can. Squishing the chunk in my hand, I

flattened the play dough into a pancake. Then I reformed my play dough rolling it against the table. After a few seconds, the play dough became a ball. I rolled the play dough ball down my desk, around the pencil cup, between two books, past my binder, and near the edge. Oops! My play dough ball fell off the desk, onto the floor, and under my chair beyond my grasp.

Beneath my chair, my play dough remained trapped hidden among the dirt, dust, and debris. With my pencil, I searched underneath my desk without much luck. Using a ruler, I probed and poked my ruler through the play dough. I removed my play dough within seconds despite puncturing it. After careful removal of dirt, I rolled my play dough across my desk until the end of class. By the end of class, the play dough had become a stretchy, soft substance. Smashing the play dough, I placed it inside the can and returned it to the teacher.

Independent Practice (10 min)

QB) Insert the correct preposition. Look at the word bank on the slide to select the prepositions.

- 1) I live ___ Fairfax Avenue ____ Nashville.
- 2) My teacher tells me not to look ___ ____ during class.
- 3) She put the doll _____ the box and wrapped it ___ a ribbon.
- 4) The ball flew _____ the catcher's head and fell _____ the tree.
- 5) I can't see from the _____ of the class, so the teacher moved me to the _____ of the class _____ Alice and Mary.

Exit Ticket (6 min)

QC) Insert the correct preposition. There is no word bank for this, but you can refer to all the prepositions we have used so far to fill in the blanks. Please complete this work independently.

- 1) Every morning, I come to school ___ a bus.

- 2) Sally and I are neighbors, we live ___ each other.
 - 3) Every night, I put the books ___ my bag and keep it ___ my desk.
 - 4) We go _____ for gym class. and run _____ the playground.
 - 5) Alice is _____ you but she is hiding _____ the blanket.
-

Special challenges ELLS will face in this lesson?

They may struggle with the words in the sentences – they may not know the meanings and therefore it would be difficult to figure out the correct preposition. The assumption is that most of the vocabulary used in the story and sentences have already been taught and so the students are familiar with them. That way, they can concentrate on the preposition words and not spend the majority of their time struggling with other words.

As far as prepositions go, most of these words might be new to the students, which is why visual representation of the prepositions is very important. Along with visual representation, they will need lots of examples of how different prepositions are used in different contexts. Where possible, the prepositions can be acted out to help the students understand (similar to the Simon Says game). For instance, explaining that we are in High School XYZ but the High School is on Antioch Pike can be a way of explaining the difference between in and on.

Artifact No. 2A: Instructing

Poem: Caged Bird

Poet: Maya Angelou

Theme of the Unit:

Students will explore the notion of being imprisoned, and consider how freedom is a fundamental human right regardless of one's race or nationality.

Rationale:

This lesson plan is designed for a 10th grade ELL class at John Overton High School. The class is a level 1-B ELL classroom, which means that they are just above the basic level of language proficiency. The unit will be connected to the theme of the month of February, which is Black History Month, and therefore students will read various African American authors and focus on the theme of slavery in America's history.

The theme of the unit also ties in with the current socio-political situation of the country, and towards the end of the unit, students will read news articles that discuss ideas of discrimination and freedom that is prevalent in the country today.

This lesson plan is the second lesson of this unit, and the students will read Caged Bird by Maya Angelou. The first lesson plan would be an introduction to poetry; the features characteristics of poetry such as form, sound and imagery. This lesson will specifically focus on specific words in the poem.

Essential Question:

1. How do others actions affect people?
2. What does freedom mean to you?

Content Objectives:

1. Students will be able to identify the theme of the poem, with relation to the theme of the unit and the essential question.
2. Students will be able to determine how symbols and metaphors increase the effect and meaning of the poem.
3. Students will be able to draw conclusions about the meaning and message of the poem.

Language Objectives:

1. Students will be able to define selected words from the poem.
2. Students will be able to identify imagery, symbols and metaphors.
3. Students will be able to find the main idea of the poem after defining the selected words.

Background knowledge:

Students will have a basic understanding of poetic forms. They will also have background knowledge of slavery and the African-American experience of racial segregation. There is possible cross-curricular integration as well if students are learning about the civil rights movement in their history classes.

Before giving them the meaning of each word, ask the students “have you ever heard this word before? What do you think it means? Can anyone take a guess?”

After giving them the definition, ask them “do you know a synonym for this word?”.

After they fill out the worksheet, they will be asked to discuss the words in their groups and talk about whether they know any word in their L1 that matches the definition of the word they just learned.

They will also be asked to circle any word that they think they still do not understand. I will ask students to help each other in their table groups, and they can use their L1 to explain the definitions. I will walk around and listen in on the groups, and provide further explanations if needed.

Opening:

We did a first reading of the poem in the last class. Now let's discuss what the poem is talking about, and how the poet is portraying the message of the poem. In order to do that, we will first learn some new vocabulary words.

Instructional strategies and learning tasks**Activity 1:**

These are the words that students will learn, along with the definitions and an exemplar sentence.

1) Leaps

Definition: jump a long way

sentence: He leaps over the gate.

2) Dares to claim the sky

Definition: brave enough to take control of

Sentence: There was a thunderstorm but the bird still dared to claim the sky.

3) Stalks

Definition: walk in an angry manner

Sentence: without another word, she turned and stalked out.

4) Rage

Definition: anger

Sentence: I had never seen him in such a rage before.

5) Wings are Clipped

Definition: fasten with a clip

Sentence: she clipped on a pair of diamond earrings

6) Distant

Definition: far away in space or time

Sentence: As he started driving away, his home seemed even more distant.

7) Breeze

Definition: a gentle breeze

Sentence: We enjoyed our picnic so much because of the gentle breeze.

8) Grave

Definition: place of burial for a dead body

Sentence: The coffin was lowered into the grave.

9) Nightmare

Definition: a frightening or unpleasant dream

Sentence: I had nightmares after watching the horror movie.

10) Tune

Definition: a melody, characterizes a certain piece of music.

Sentence: She left the theatre humming a cheerful tune.

Explicit definitions of the vocabulary words: 15 minutes

Students will fill out a worksheet while I go through the definitions of each word.

The worksheet will have the word, definition, and exemplar sentence. The worksheet will be half filled, and students will be asked to fill in the remaining one as we go along.

Vocabulary	Definition	Sentence
1. Leaps	A) _____ very far.	B) He _____ over the gate.
2. Dares to claim the sky	A) _____ enough to take _____	B) There is a thunderstorm, but the bird still _____
3. Stalks	A) _____ in an _____ manner	B) Without another word, she _____ out of the room.
4. Rage	A) To be _____ angry	B) I have never seen him in such _____ before
5. Wings are clipped	A) _____ the wings so that they cannot _____.	B) My parrot's wings are _____ so that he does not fly away.
6. Distant	A) Very _____ away	B) As he started driving away, his home seemed even more _____.

<p>7. Breeze</p>	<p>A) A _____ wind</p>	<p>B) We enjoyed our picnic so much because of the _____.</p>
<p>8. Trade winds</p>	<p>A) A _____ that goes _____ the equator.</p>	<p>B) Ships used _____ to guide their way.</p>
<p>9. Grave</p>	<p>A) A _____ to bury the _____.</p>	<p>B) The coffin was lowered into the _____.</p>
<p>10. Nightmare</p>	<p>A) A very _____ dream.</p>	<p>B) I had a _____ after watching the horror movie.</p>
<p>11. Tune</p>	<p>A) A _____ to a piece of _____</p>	<p>B) She left the theatre humming a cheerful _____.</p>

Activity: Heads Together (the PowerPoint presentation is uploaded separately and that was used when conducting the actual lesson).

Artifact No. 2B: PowerPoint Presentation – Lesson

Uploaded separately

Artifact No. 3: Assessing – Assessments for Linguistics Report**Phonology Table No. 1: Use of fillers from Oral Sample No.1**

The word	No. of times
Umm	30
Ahh	15

Phonology Table No.2: Repetition of the word/phrase together (back to back)

The phrase or word	No. of times
I was (when she repeated this phrase together)	5
Very (when she repeated this word together)	3

Grammar Table No.3: No. of utterances and morphemes in Oral Sample No.1

Utterances	No. of morphemes
I started when I was eleven	7
I have been learning English for more than ten years	11
But I have to say that teachers in public schools	10
they are not very...very much qualified for really... for actual language teaching	15
it's thriving so its businessing French and	9

German	
I learn entire story in Chinese	6
because you know language is the key to open the new culture and new world	15

Grammar Table No.4: No. of utterances and morphemes in Written Transcriptions

Utterances	No. of morphemes
He dresses himself up in a hurry, and searching for something important but I don't know what it is	21
Having missed the bus, the man thumbs up to a hitchhike. There comes a cab or a car with a driver inside.	27
The black man brushes the snow away from the front windows of the car	15

Oral Sample No.1: 23rd September 2016

Case study Participant name: Eva

Bilingual student from China

Language 1: Chinese

Language 2: English

When did you start learning English?

I started when I was eleven, and umm umm yea I... ah... I learned... I have been learning English for more than ten years so that's a very long time.

Did you learn it in school or at home?

Umm, In fact, we have English courses in public schools in China. But I have to say that teachers in public schools... ah... they are not very...very much qualified for really... for actual language teaching. They were focused on tense and examination so actually I learned... I umm... give credits to ah private school... the... it's called New Oriental. It's the most famous language learning school in China. But it is not a public one, it is like an institution.

Does the school just teach English?

Umm... it... it used to be famous for English but now because it's thriving so its businessing French and German and most importantly, they have courses for math and Chinese too.

I...umm...I did learn a lot from the school.

Did you go to this school specially to learn English?

Specially to learn English.

So you were studying in a different school?

Umm, that school is actually so umm like Owens has summer camp its like an intensive training period where you practice your English.

Oh so you learned English in summer camp?

Yea.

What was your motivation or reason for learning English?

Umm... the motivation... ok... I have to say. Let me think. Well I guess one thing when I was very young I was obsessed with the pronunciation of English. I was...I was...I was very very...ah...much...how to say...um...attracted by the...you know...the different system of

language, sounds like music to my ear because I can understand it. But I found it to be rather...um...yeah entertaining so I repeated every single syllabus, I follow the text... the audio text and read again and again. Its...umm... I know it sounds tedious to others but umm... it was one of the joy in my childhood. And...umm...and at that time I was also very interested in ah... American literature because Harry Potter and so I was thinking about if I learn English good enough maybe someday I can read ah... I can read in English... and um...I can, you know when I grow up a little bit later I realize that...ah... when I learn English very well I can...I can play the English games. I mean the games in English without translation. I have to wait for the translation which really take very long time.

So did you read Harry Potter in English? (repeated question twice)

Oh...umm... I learn entire story in Chinese but um... when I was in my ninth grade my mother bought me the ...the last book... the last book in the series. And I tried to read it but my pronunciation was not good enough... not good enough to read through. Now I have problem reading most of the literature.

So when you do your course readings, is it easier for you to do them?

Umm... I constantly... I, I mean, ah... I miss some unfamiliar words but I will try to guess them in context so I have no problem grasping the main idea but if I want to appreciate the language style or like the crafts in the texts umm... I will say... I'll try to... in the first time of reading I'll just get the main idea, in the second time I will try to pay more attention to the details, and the third time I'll read between the... between the lines try to find what's behind.

At home, do you speak English with your friends and family?

Unfortunately, in my home you mean uh my current home in university?

No, I mean back home in China.

Oh, umm, in China the dominant language is Chinese. We hardly have... even if we have the English language corner where English language learners gather to practice English, it's like it's not actual communication.

Was it difficult to learn English when you weren't speaking it in your daily life?

Let me paraphrase your question, you mean is it very difficult to learn English in a... ah... in a country where English is not the dominant language?

Yes

Umm... I practice it...ah... I don't know it depends on your desire to communicate. For example, when I... in my first year in America, I was too scared to speak to people at first. I didn't even dare to, you know, umm... buy food in the restaurant because I didn't know what what are the food...umm... it's like I... I used to stop myself down and realized that language can only be improved when you communicate. So even if you are in a English speaking country if you do not have the desire to communicate your language skills will not improve.

So back in China, I... I would say in China how they teach English...umm...is like for example, the grammar, I think. It's not it's not language acquisition it's language learning. So I would say in a... in a not English speaking country I guess...ah... language learning is going very well and um...but...you hardly have chance to actually use the language. But um... with a facilitation of internet, you can use the language. But it varies from person to person.

So I'm curious to know, do watch movies, listen to music and read books in English back in China? (repeated question with different phrasing)

I would say, because you know language is the key to open the new culture and new world so it's like...umm..I...I can, you know, I can explore two kinds of cultures so that's why I read both in Chinese and in English even writing in English, it's rather different than writing in Chinese.

When you write in English, do you feel that you can communicate as well as you can when you write in Chinese?

Ah... I would say... well, in general my Chinese proficiency is much much higher than in English – that's the truth. But on the other hand, I think, umm, each language has its str... strengths. And some things you can only perceive in English and some you can only perceive in Chinese. So when I write in a different language, which is like I'm thinking in a different way, in a... how the words are assembled together and how you...how I connect each sentence is very different. That's why I love translation.

How many of your friends very interested in learning English like you were?

My friends?

(question repeated)

I have to say... you know...English language in china is highly battered... because the big policies to hide globalization and you can't imagine how many... how upset people were with English in China. They were... you can't believe it... some grandmas were eager to learn English too. Because it's like kind of pop culture where everyone wants to catch the train. So

everyone, almost everyone, was learning English. But umm I guess the trend doesn't last very long and umm, the current situation is that umm, most Chinese people, especially the educated students they can understand English. But they aren't highly proficient and they learn English mostly for tests and examinations, to pass the standard tests. So for them, English is something, it's like a dead language. They don't use them.

Does the standardized test have an oral component to it? (explained the word oral)

It's only in written form. Reading, and umm reading, reading, reading and grammar and multiple choices and... what else... and grammar correction. I hate that part. They have written... they have writing test too but I'm afraid it's very very superficial and umm, it's not actual writing. They highly value reading. Listening and speaking. But yeah they don't have, they have tests for oral English but its not as popular or as common as reading tests.

When did you start becoming comfortable speaking English in America?

Umm... I was like a contrast. I used to be very confidence in my English proficiency but umm, it's like I... I think I get very high scores in TOEFL and i...I thought that I would have no problem communicating with ah...American people. But then the first time I walk into a bread store I realize that there are more than ten kinds of bread. But the only vocabulary I have for bread is bread. And they have lobaugh and wheat that's the texture of the bread. So I think, you know, it's not a big deal. I.. I'll just try to ask people what is this. I was... I was afraid to do it. What if I make mistakes doesn't matter.

I speak English when it is necessary. So the people I talk to don't speak Chinese. When I spend time with my Chinese friends we sometimes speak in English. It's very interesting. Let me tell

you some reasons behind it. Sometimes we want to talk about something that they feel is very shameful so they want to keep some distance between them and so they try to speak in a different language.

It's very natural for Chinese to speak in Chinese with each other. It's very natural. Umm... but sometimes when suddenly we make jokes about English too. Sometimes and we switch back from English to Chinese and switch coding – we may speak a Chinese sentence with a few English words in it.

It is not confusing. Let me give you an example. When we say you want to go to trader joes. I mean trader joes is a supermarket in America. It doesn't exist in china. So it is very natural for us to say the entire sentence in Chinese and trader joes in English. Or sometimes we try to make fun of the language and English sentence structure and... it's a very popular joke in China every time there is a foreign language words in a Chinese sentence it looks very funny.

Oral Sample No.2: 5th October 2016

Well, I think the four pictures.. ah.. are about a story of a mischevilious child and ok, in the first picture there is a senior mam (sounds like man) who is pushing a ... a shopping cart with her black. Oh look at this picture, its black and white so I assume the bag to be black or some dark color. With her dark handbag and... ah... um... she's looking for something. She's doing the shopping things and then she met (sounds like mat) another lady who seem to be a ...a new mother. Ya. She has a child with her and the child is sitting in the shopping cart. And.. ah while they talk with each other, the child ... um... stretch her body out of the cart and trying to fetch something. Ok so the third picture....um... it shows that the child ... the chi... the child fetch the a glass bottle of wine perhaps and then ya here is the trick. She put ... she secretly put the bottle

into the senior mam's handbag. So I personally assume the ending of the story to be ah ah a very funny one.

I wonder why the child didn't put the bottle in her own cart?

My personal theory is that this child is very young but also very evil and mischevilious. Its like a ... like a joke or like ah... it's more like a ...umm... (asks her friend in Chinese, who gives her the word: prank).

Oral Sample No.3: 5th October 2016

Umm... I'm not very sure that I grasp the actual story but here is my personal interpretation.

Ah... a person who wake up... wakes up very late and he dress himself up in a hurry but he's looking for something and I don't know if he find it or not. And then, he walks out of the house and try to catch a bus or something, I'm not sure. But he missed it. So, ah... he's stand... he's standing there and trying to ah.... Hitchhike a... a car or a cab or something, I'm not sure. And then there comes a ...there comes a ... there comes a car. The person in the car... ah... this is the confusing part because I ... I don't think this and this is the same person (pointing to pictures) because I... I don't think it has this strange things at his hands in this picture. So I'm not sure that connection between picture 4 and picture 5. And then the person inside the car im sure he and he is the same (pointing to figures) in person. The person ah... step out ... climb out of the car and...yea and then he's inside again. I... I don't know. I think the picture 4,5 and 6 are very confusing and he and he seems to be the same person but what's his relationship with this one. Ah... it's confusing to me.

Writing Sample No.1:

Annotated Bibliography: Aljaafreh, A., & Lantolf, J. P. (1994). Negative feedback as regulation and second language learning in the zone of proximal development. *The Modern Language Journal*, 78(4), 465-483.

This paper, published in 1994, is not outdated in 2016. Aljaafreh and Lantolf are pioneers who initially apply ZPD (zone of proximal development) in error correction in L2 writing feedback. They present an comprehensive literature review on L2 writing feedback, link L2 writing teaching practice with L2 writing feedback theories/researches, and argue that feedback is supposed to be negotiation between the novice and the expert, being "graduate" and "contingent".

For L2 writing instructors/teachers, this paper can be fundamental to their teaching methodologies. Detailed description for this case study serves as a classroom close-up for teachers to follow: Such as how to give implicit/explicit feedback; how to optimize their feedback; how to tailor their tutoring to the special needs of their students. More importantly, this study provides quantified regulatory scale for Implicit-Explicit feedback that can be directly applied in L2 writing tutoring by teachers; and Developmental Criteria for teachers to assess L2 writers and decide what is the next "nudge" for them, which is called ZPD-tuned feedback.

For L2 writing researchers, the paper serves as encyclopedia for major attitudes towards feedback in L2 writing. And it points the directions for future researches: teacher-reliance and self-awareness in L2 writing development. While ZPD-tuned assistance proves to be efficient by another case study (Nassaji & Swain, 2000), its universal applicability remains to be examined in broader context.

As for my paper writing, the findings can be cited as evidence for the innovative L2 feedback mechanism. And it is also a framework for L2 writing feedback.

Writing Sample No. 2

1. The white man wakes up later than he expects, and he gives a glimpse of the watch in drowsy manner.
2. He dresses himself up in a hurry, and searching for something important but I don't know what it is.
3. The man rushes out to catch a bus but missed it. It is snowing outside but the man seems to keep himself warm.
4. Having missed the bus, the man thumbs up to hitchhike. There comes a cab or a car with a driver inside.
5. The white man climbs inside the car and another black man is standing next to the other side of the car, a certain kind of tool in his hand.
6. The black man brushes the snow away form the front windows of the car, and he seems to recognize the white man as a friend of his.

Artifact No. 4A: Identity and Context – Community Literacy

Little Kurdistan, Nashville: Adjusting in a home away from home

My first interaction with the Kurdish population in Nashville was just three days after my own arrival in the city. In search for halal meat, I headed to Nolensville Pike, and after speaking with several people, I found my way to the Azadi International Food Market on Elysian Fields Court. I remember speaking to the man who was preparing the meat for me, and being fascinated and surprised by the fact that Nashville was home to a huge Kurdish population (the conversation started off on a funny note because he thought I knew how to speak Arabic). My next interaction with the Kurdish population was when I started my practicum at Glenclyff High School last fall. The school has a huge Kurdish population and my classroom had two Kurdish students. Though I had little interaction with them, I found myself getting more interested in how this population came to settle in Nashville and what their experiences have been like.

Nashville is home to the largest Kurdish population in North America, and Kurdish students make up the third largest immigrant population in Metro Nashville Public Schools (YouTube, 2017). Due to the city's booming economy and lower cost of living, Nashville became a popular destination for immigrants in the 1970s. The first Kurdish refugees arrived in Nashville in 1976 and soon after, it started becoming known as the "center of Kurds" in America ("Little Kurdistan USA | Next Door Neighbors | NPT", 2017). Starting in 1976, there have been four waves of Kurdish immigrants entering Nashville, all from "different geographical areas, with diverse social backgrounds, tribal connections and religious beliefs" ("Little Kurdistan USA | Next Door Neighbors | NPT", 2017). They came from Iraq, Iran, Turkey and Syria, and had no land that they could call their own - the Kurds are the largest ethnic group in the world without their own land. Most of the Kurdish immigrants in Nashville came from Iraqi Kurdistan, and

they fled from there to neighboring countries because of genocide and persecution. Not having a land of their own, and being scattered before coming to America, gives these Kurdish families an experience different from other immigrants and refugees. This would make it a challenge for teachers; interacting with one Kurdish student and family will not give them a true picture of the cultures and religious beliefs of the entire Kurdish population.

This vibrant community started thriving, gaining the title of “Little Kurdistan”, and today they sometimes feel as if they are not in a different country – “it’s a piece of home, yet here in America” (“Little Kurdistan USA | Next Door Neighbors | NPT”, 2017). But the process of building Little Kurdistan took the Kurdish population around 30 years. It was easier for the children to grasp the language, but because of that, the children felt they had to grow up fast. They felt the pressures of acting as translators for their parents at school meetings, when paying bills and when going to the grocery store. Families helped each other with driving and other necessary skills needed to survive in the country. In the late 90s, Nashville’s Kurdish population took a turning point – new Kurdish immigrants arrived in the city, but they had substantial organizational skills and were civic leaders. They fled to Nashville because they were being attacked by the government for their international ties. By this time, the Kurdish population already settled in Nashville had been able to establish themselves, and along with these civic leaders, they were able to create businesses for their community. In 1998, they opened the Salahadeen Center, the first Kurdish mosque in North America (“Little Kurdistan USA | Next Door Neighbors | NPT”, 2017). It started serving as the focal point for the Kurdish population in Southeast Nashville. It provides “religious, cultural, and educational services to over 10,000 individuals living in the greater Nashville area” (Miller, 2017).

Due to this focal point, Kurdish businesses started opening up near the Mosque. There are now three bakeries and grocery stores around the Mosque, one of them being the Azadi international Food Market. It is most known for its bakery, as it bakes traditional Kurdish bread, called “naan”. Another bakery in the vicinity is called Baklava Café, which is known for its traditional Kurdish sweets and pastries. Kurdish food is a very important part of their identity, and being able to purchase Kurdish bread and other ingredients and items from these Kurdish stores makes it feel like home. Being able to still hold on to their food and style of cooking is a form of pride for the community. There is a jewelry store nearby and people buy gold for weddings, anniversaries, and also for investment purposes. They have a Kurdish car dealer as well, and being able to conduct day to day activities in their neighborhoods and in their language helps them adjust in Nashville (“Little Kurdistan USA | Next Door Neighbors | NPT”, 2017).

Despite the strong sense of community that the Kurdish population has developed for itself in Nashville, their children are still struggling to adjust to new country and culture. In 2001, Kurdish gangs started appearing, and parents were of the opinion that this was a strongly American influence, because they did not have the concept of gangs back in their countries and traditions. Generational as well as language gaps limits the parents to understand their children’s lives (“Little Kurdistan USA | Next Door Neighbors | NPT”, 2017). The parents also have a different understanding of the role of teachers back in their countries versus the role of teachers in America. MNPS held an event at the Salahadeen center so that teachers and school administration could understand the Kurdish population better, and the parents could understand what to expect of the teachers and what role to play in their children’s education. One of the students at the Salahadeen center acknowledged that “you know you’re different when you go to school”, and the parents expressed their concerns that their kids will always feel in between –

they are neither truly American and neither truly Kurdish (YouTube, 2017). One of the parents spoke about how important it is for families to create a common ground for the children between the school and the home, because their children tackle different identities in both spheres (YouTube, 2017). Yet, they also acknowledged that their Kurdish identity will always remain, and they need to help their children find a balance between traditional values and the day to day realities.

Having conducted this community literacy research offline and online, the theory that “beliefs about students shape the instructional behaviors of teachers” (Gay, 2010, P. 53) played out for me in reality. Understanding the history and trajectory of the Kurdish community in Nashville has allowed me to gain a deep understanding of Kurdish students as “whole people” (Moll, Amanti, Neff & Gonzalez, 1992, p. 133). I now have knowledge about “multiple spheres of activity” within which these Kurdish students are immersed in on a daily basis (Moll, Amanti, Neff & Gonzalez, 1992, p. 133). This allows me insight into the general lives of immigrant and refugee students, in terms of the different identities and cultures they tackle with at school and at home.

Having this knowledge and understanding of community literacies has helped me to think about the diversity I had in my classroom when I was teaching, and how I can now cater to this diversity. After I graduate from this program, I plan to teach in a similar context and setting to my previous teaching experience – which is a public high school in Pakistan, where I will be teaching English as a foreign language. When I was last teaching, I did not cater to the diversity of my students because all my students were inherently Pakistani – they were from the same country and more or less understood the national language. However, all my students came from different parts of the country, and so they spoke different languages (dialects and variations

which did not overlap) at home. They associated with different cultures, family backgrounds and socio-economic statuses – meaning that their funds of knowledge and their home literacies varied from each other's.

Keeping in mind my students and the community, I will leverage my learnings from the community literacy investigation by thinking about how I can incorporate their many dialects and languages in the classroom. One idea I might use is to put my students in categories of their dialects and then think about strong readers versus struggling readers. It would be helpful to then pair one strong reader with one struggling reader and have both students share the same dialect – so that the strong reader can help the struggling reader by sometimes using the dialect instead of English to explain and clarify difficult words and tasks. They could be asked to work in pairs for the whole class period, or for a particular task – depending on the lesson of the day.

Another possible way I can leverage my understanding of community literacies is to tackle the issue of speaking in English confidently – because my students did not get enough practice as they were learning it as a foreign language. I can think about the different backgrounds and socioeconomic status my students come from in terms of their funds of knowledge. My students often helped their parents run grocery stores and so I can simulate a grocery store setting to help them practice English in a setting that they are very familiar with. I can have my students explain the various traditions in their villages to each other in English.

One major similarity among all my students was that they often looked after their younger siblings after school while their parents worked – or they were left in the care of an elder sibling. I could assign homework activities that my students could do with the help of their siblings. My students also lived very close to each other in terms of neighborhoods and they met every evening at the local mosque – I can use this information to my advantage by giving them

projects they can collaborate on since I know it is not an issue for them to meet up and work. I could ask them to translate the lecture they hear at the mosque in English – and each pair could give the class their versions.

In terms of my own classroom planning, I would take into account their multiple identities and spheres that they exist in, and adjust my own expectations of their success. Understanding their community, their home dynamics and social networks will allow me to combine my version of success with what they may need according to their societal views and norms. The above examples integrate my view that I need to help these students see the importance and value of being able to communicate in English – because learning a foreign language is mostly led by the external motivations of the students. This is a major factor that we discuss in my other course “Teaching English as a Foreign Language”, and it is helping me to think about motivation and purpose of learning English in light of my recent community literacy investigation and what I learned from that experience.

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Appendix

Figure 1.1: Azadi International Food Market and Bakery



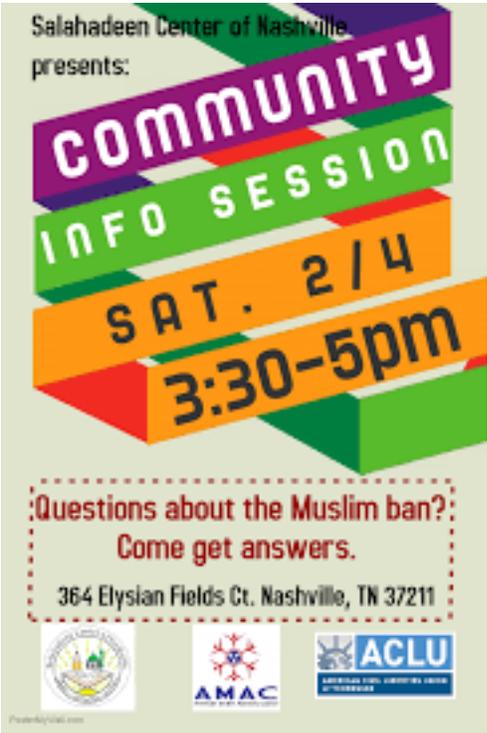
Figure 1.2



Figure 1.3: Salahadeen Center



Figure 1.4



Artifact No. 4B: Identity and Context – Local practices of a School

Wright Middle School is located in the Glencliff Neighborhood, where the population is generally “lower middle class, largely comprised of young professionals who are moderately educated” (Startclass). The school has a vastly diverse student population, with over 26 languages spoken within the building (Wright Middle Prep). Their minority enrollment is 79% of the student body; the “school’s diversity score of 0.66 is more than the state’s average of 0.27” (Startclass), and the majority of this minority population is Hispanic. Image A in the appendix shows the representation of each ethnic group. The school takes pride in celebrating its “multi-cultural population” (Wright Middle Prep), and this attitude reflected through the teachers I interacted with.

Due to its diverse student population, the school has a lot of English Language Learners (ELLs). “20% of all students at Wright Middle are considered to have limited English proficiency, which is much higher than the median across all reported middle schools in Tennessee (3%)” (Startclass). The students in the ELL department are divided into levels of their English proficiency. However, due to the shortage of ELL teachers, there are students from different levels in one class. From students who can communicate fluently in English, to students who just entered the country in August, most of the classes are a combination of different English levels. The ELL teachers provide appropriate support to each student, bearing in mind factors such as when they came to the US, their prior engagement with the language, and their proficiency level in English.

These students are only divided into their proficiency levels for their English block, and for all other subject classes they are integrated with students from their grade level. Once the students exit the ELL classrooms, their progress is monitored for four years in the

general/mainstream classes and they can get pulled back into ELL classes if they need more support. This system of integration enables the school to keep their policies and beliefs aligned with the principle of structuring for integration. It “helps to break down stereotypes and develop positive attitudes among the students toward both languages and language groups” (Jong, 2011, p. 179). Apart from functioning as a system of integration, it also follows the research on ability grouping which suggests that “for specific subjects such as reading or math, ability grouping for periods during the day is an effective practice” (August, 2010, p. 149).

The school’s vision is to create “a positive, safe and supportive learning environment that fosters empowerment, achievement and growth for all” (Wright Middle Prep). It follows the overarching Principle of Educational Equity as it “engages in practices that reflect respect, non-discrimination, and fairness for all students” (Jong, 2011, p. 170), as was evident through the brief classroom observations and interview I was able to conduct. Keeping in mind the diverse student population, the school’s vision is one that is inclusive, and this reflects in the language policies and practices the school follows. The school’s language policies and teaching pedagogies align with its framework of “language-as-resource” (Jong, 2011, p. 104), and it considers “language minority communities as important sources of expertise” (Jong, 2011, p. 104). The school recognizes that their ELLs come with knowledge and skills in their native languages, and the teachers give importance to the students’ native language. The teaching practices for ELLs in the school reflect the belief that students “should be able to use their entire linguistic and cultural repertoire for learning” (Jong, 2011, p. 33). Therefore, the school follows the core principle of affirming identities, because it “respects students’ linguistic and cultural identities” (Jong, 2011, p. 170) and also “validates students’ cultural experiences in school policies and classroom practices” (Jong, 2011, p. 170).

In order to better understand the school's attitude and policies towards their ELLs, I was able to observe Ms. Taylor's 5th grade ELL classroom and also had the opportunity to interview Ms. Nelson, who is a 6th grade ELL teacher. Ms. Taylor's classroom had fifteen students, who were all from different countries, and so there were several native languages in the classroom. Ms. Taylor herself is not bilingual, and was therefore only communicating in English. However, it was her teaching practices and behavior that highlighted her beliefs about teaching ELLs. On one wall, she had pasted student work – they had written about their home countries and drawn the flags of their countries. Students had used some words in their native languages, and Ms. Taylor had translated the words on sticky notes so that the students could read each other's work. There were several pairs of students who spoke the same language, and Ms. Taylor encouraged them to speak to each other to discuss the topic being studied. This is a classroom routine that her students are in a habit of following – she says that it ensures that every student understands the concept. However, when answering aloud, they have to speak in English so that everyone understands. Ms. Taylor used a lot of gestures, physical movements, illustrations and pictures to assist in her teaching because she understands that ELLs need scaffolding while reading.

After observing Ms. Taylor's classroom, I was able to talk with Ms. Nelson about some of her own teaching practices, as well as the school wide policies, perceptions and support for ELLs. Talking about some of her own teaching practices, she discussed using the Frayer Model when teaching her students new vocabulary words. One of the boxes in the model is definitions and she provides the definition in English, but students might get the opportunity to use google translator or a bilingual dictionary to find the definition in their native language. In my observations of both the classrooms, I noticed how the teachers were incorporating the principle of promoting additive bilingualism in their teaching practices. Both the teachers were ensuring

that they “build on all students’ existing linguistic repertoires” (Jong, 2011, p. 170). Ms. Taylor’s activity of allowing children to write some words in their native language in the example above also demonstrates how she “creates opportunities for using, developing, displaying and engaging in multiple languages” (Jong, 2011, p. 170).

Ms. Nelson spoke about the challenge of teaching English while also teaching grade level content. She holds the opinion that’s ELLs sitting in the 8th grade do not need to be reading *Cat in the Hat* and other 3 letter word stories. They need to be taught science and math and other subject content areas of their appropriate grade level. The teachers “build on the knowledge (including language and literacy skills) that has been acquired in languages other than the school language” (Jong, 2011, p. 33). The teachers therefore recognize that their students are capable of comprehending content on their grade level, because they may have relevant knowledge in other languages (their native languages). The way that the ELL team at Wright Middle School tackles this challenge is by taking the approach that if their ELLs can comprehend a topic in their native language, then it makes the switch back to English easier for them, and then it is just a matter of picking up the correct academic vocabulary. Ms. Nelson explained that in the past, the school did not use grade level texts for their ELLs and they relied on the reading level of each student. However, this was not pushing the students to improve their reading level and English development. In order to ensure that the ELLs were understanding the content at their grade level, the ELL teachers provide support to teachers of other content area subjects. These content area teachers are not certified in ELL, and therefore the ELL teachers provide support and help the teachers scaffold their materials and assessments. Ms. Nelson co-teaches the 6th grade social studies classroom, and when need be, she pulls out the ELL students and teaches them separately for that day. Another advantage the ELL team has is that the principle of Wright Middle School

is a formal ELL teacher. She therefore understands the challenging task the ELL teachers face every day, and is extremely supportive of their needs and requests. Discussing the practices of the school's ELL team as a whole, Ms. Nelson mentioned how they attend professional development sessions together to brainstorm about best teaching practices and best resources with the limited funding available to them.

Ms. Nelson was also able to elaborate on the relationship the school has with the families of their ELL student population. Keeping in mind the neighborhood the school is situated in, the students belong to a low socioeconomic status. Their parents work hard for financial stability and helping their children with school is not their first priority. Ms. Nelson explained that the teachers at the school understood and tried their best to be motivators and parent figures for their students. She said that because of the importance the school placed on social emotional learning, the students felt comfortable in sharing their immigration and documentation status, and other issues affecting their personal lives. Every morning, classes have their own morning meetings, where they sit in a circle and talk about various topics; whether something significant happened in the news or any personal feelings and events the students' would like to discuss. Often times, some students feel comfortable speaking in their native language, and they have a friend translate for them. The classroom observation and interview also shed light on the perceptions that teachers hold toward their culturally and linguistically diverse students. The "interactions that occur between teachers and students... are major determinants of the quality of education children receive" (Gay, 2010, p. 48), and the interactions observed were positive and encouraging, as discussed above. The teachers were supportive and facilitative in their instruction and interaction (Gay, 2010). These examples also demonstrate that the teachers align their teaching practices with the characteristics of culturally responsive teaching. They not only

care about their students' well-being, but they also care for their students'. Their classroom interactions and their teaching is a combination of "concern, compassion, commitment, responsibility, and action" (Gay, 2010, p. 48). Wright Middle School teachers hold high expectations from their students, which is why they ensure that ELLs receive content instruction appropriate for their grade level, and are not reading three letter word books, as mentioned above. High expectations from teachers holds the teachers accountable to their own teaching, and holds students accountable to put in the effort – and there are no biases toward ELL students. "Race, ethnicity, social class, and culture" are not used as an excuse to teach less and to expect less from certain groups of students (Gay, 2010, p. 65).

Along with the supportive role the teachers play, the school also ensures that it assists the parents to navigate the school system. It provides support and bilingual services to families, and these "can provide an important bridge for parents as well as children" (Jong, 2011, p. 34). "The use of the students' languages in school also influence the relationship between parents and the school" (Jong, 2011, p. 34), and this is very evident from the school's website. The school hosts Family Night "to inform families about academic programs, state testing and other student information" (Wright Middle Prep). The school also runs a community program called "Parents as Partners for parents and families new to the United States" (Wright Middle Prep). This program aims to connect families so that they may be able to help each other with regards to academic queries. The school also has a family portal on their website, where "families can see real-time class and assignment grades, homework, test scores, upcoming due dates, attendance information, discipline incidents and more" (Wright Middle Prep). This portal also "allows for better communication between teachers and families through emails and mobile alerts. Teachers can send messages to parents and they can post important news and announcements for families

to see” (Wright Middle Prep). The family portal and information about the school website are available in many different languages, from Kurdish, Arabic, Spanish, etc. Image B and Image C in the appendix show examples of information regarding the family portal and family night. It is therefore evident that the school incorporates the principle of structuring for integration in its policies and practices, as it helps the parents “participate fully in the school community and to contribute meaningfully to all its activities” (Jong, 2011, p. 178).

One of the main issues concerning teaching ELLs that Ms. Nelson brought up was that the state assessments are not catered to ELLs. The students who entered the country in August will have to take the TN Ready assessments in March, even though they will not be ready to read on English on their grade level. These students perform well in their classes at school because they receive scaffolds in instruction and modified assessments - they quickly pick up ‘the ELL survival skills’ as Ms. Nelson termed it. However, they cannot be expected to perform well on the TN Ready assessments just after several months. According to Ms. Nelson, this is a major point of contention between ELL teachers, school administration and the state, and as an ELL teacher Ms. Nelson feels frustrated.

One specific recommendation I would give the ELL team of Wright Middle School is related to the frustration these teachers feel regarding state assessments. Ms. Nelson mentioned that the ELL team did not have time for advocacy outside of the school, and given their relationship with the school principle, who was also an ELL teacher, the team does not need to engage with advocacy within their own school. However, given how strongly the ELL team feels strongly about how these state tests do not cater to ELLs, the teachers should advocate for this on the state level. I understand that teachers do not have a lot of time after school, but if they work together as a team, they may not need to commit so much time to the cause. It would also add to

their job satisfaction and motivation as they might feel that they are making changes in the policies regarding state assessments.

Spending just a couple of hours at Wright Middle School are not enough to be truly able to gauge the efforts that the school and teachers are putting in to provide their ELL students with an equitable education. However, speaking with Ms. Nelson did give me a broad overview of some of practices the teachers engage with. Considering this broad overview, I left Wright Middle School with some lingering questions. I was wondering what the ELL teachers thought about a critical pedagogy of ESL teaching. The students are not as young as it is middle school, and so the teachers could begin to think about their language teaching pedagogy could try to “change the ways students understand their lives and the possibilities with which they are presented” (Valdez, 1998, p. 16). In another course I am taking this semester, we have been discussing how certain languages and certain language practices are associated with power and access. Therefore, I have begun to think about how students would benefit from being aware of these “power relations and ideological processes” (Valdez, 1998, p. 16) in order to understand the barriers they will face as ELL students. Teacher in Wright Middle School could perhaps start thinking about this strategy for their 7th and 8th graders, as they prepare to make the transition to high school – where they will be faced with greater responsibility and expectations. By helping students become aware of these challenges and barriers, teachers will be able to “help students’ develop their own voices... that are tied to a vision of possibilities” (Valdez, 1998, p. 16).

Another question I had after I left Wright Middle School was why the school did not hold professional development sessions for all their teachers so that every teacher could have some ideas on how to support their ELL students. Considering the huge ELL population at the school, it would not be surprising for the school to ask their content area teachers to attend such

professional development sessions as well. While the ELL teachers do co-teach with the content area teachers, such professional development sessions would help them in their planning and instruction.

Apart from these few recommendations and questions, Wright Middle School seems to modeling all the principles and techniques that are most suited to teach ELLs.

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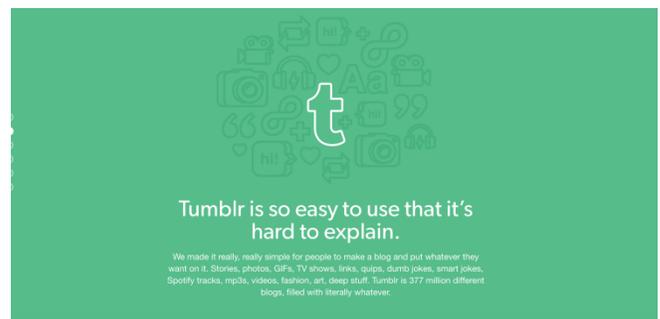
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Artifact No. 6: Learning - Literacy Learning Analysis Paper

Life of a Grad Student: The Tumblr Version

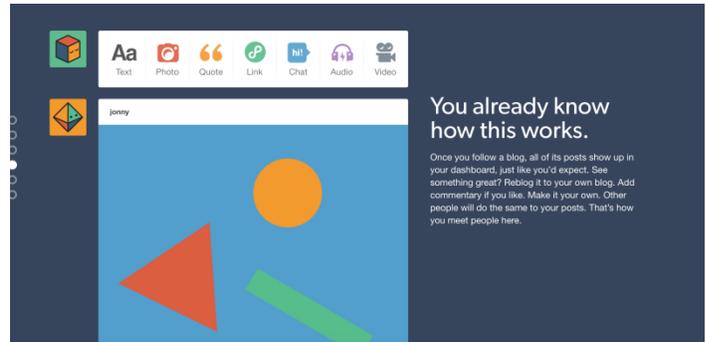
As a millennial I should be able to maneuver any and every social media site that I wish to use. So I think it's safe to say that I am a disappointment for my generation. Up until this year, my social media usage started at Facebook and ended there. When I started graduate school and made some very tech savvy friends, I was convinced to join Instagram, and with that came the hashtags. Soon after Instagram, I was made to create a twitter account for another class I took last semester, and so found myself on yet another social media site (where hashtags were even more important). Having dabbled in two social media platforms in the past year, and finally acting like the tech savvy millennial that I should be, I decided to engage with a third social media site that I had heard a lot about: Tumblr.

I remembered my experience of starting a blog a few years ago and then deleting it because I was unable to navigate through the instructions, the layout details and the options of customization. I was therefore apprehensive when I pulled up the Tumblr website. According to the social media platform, "Tumblr is so easy to use that it's hard to explain." I was not entirely sure what that meant, but I went ahead and started the process of creating my account. The initial steps were the standard steps that I had used for Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter – you sign up with your email address, create a password, and a username. This repetition of steps put me at ease a little. I remember how this process was so difficult when I helped my mom set up her Facebook profile because there was pre-work she needed to do (she didn't have an email address). The platform describes itself as "377 million



blogs, filled with literally whatever”. I therefore decided to go with a name that would allow me to fill it “with literally whatever”, and so came the name: Life of a Grad Student – a title broad enough for me to put anything up on my newly created blog.

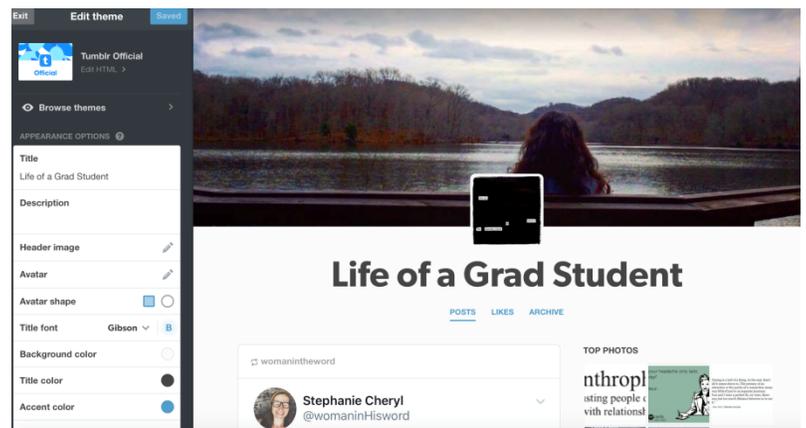
Since it is “hard to explain” how to use Tumblr, the next set of instructions that I received from the site was not much because apparently I “already know how this works”.



The description under this tagline gave me some clues on what to expect and on what I should be doing once I get onto the site – follow blogs I like, re-blog a post that I really like, add a comment, and “make it my own”. None of these activities seemed very different from the ones other social media platforms have introduced me to, and this allowed my progression of engaging with the site to remain easy and free of confusions. The site went on to say that this is “how you meet people here”. I

understood that as interacting and engaging with people, but I was not sure if that’s what I really wanted to do.

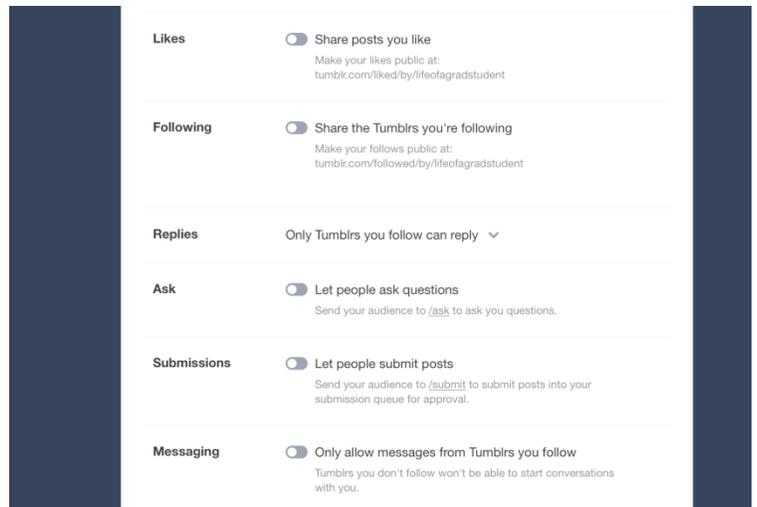
Once I created my account, I could customize my blog to look as I wanted. I could add a description and



the pick the shape of the picture (what Tumblr calls Avatar). Then there was the header picture and the font of the title. So far these options to customize did not look complicated, they were right there in the dashboard for me to select. This customization allowed my blog to look

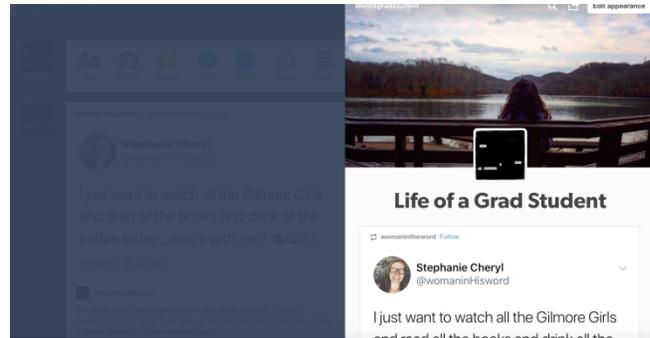
different from others’, it is not like Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram where you cannot play around with the layout and look of your space on the platform. I picked a theme that seemed the least complicated and cluttered to me, because I did not want to get ahead of my technological skills and get stuck at some later point (I realized that I am quite the cautionary learner).

Once my blog was set up and customized the way I wanted, the question of whether to keep it public or private arose. Since I was not really sure what the ‘purpose’ of Tumblr is, and what my goal was with regards to using this platform, I decided to speak to a friend, who is a huge Tumblr user and fan. She explained that



she uses Tumblr for her personal use; she blogs and re-blogs and writes for herself and does not feel the need to share with others. I wondered whether there were various levels of ‘going public’ similar to Facebook, or there was just one option of either going entirely public or private like on Instagram. I went on my blog and under the heading of ‘edit appearance’ I found the various options I was looking for. I decided to keep in entirely private –it was probably a decision that was influenced after speaking to my friend. I was also curious to use it as a social experiment and the idea of an “achieved identity” came to mind (Black, 2008, p. 244). I wanted to see what I would post knowing that the blog was only visible to me. I wondered how my identity would take shape; would I post certain things wishing they were a part of my identity, or would I post certain things that were a part of my private identity and did not surface on my Facebook and Instagram?

It was when I was trying to fix the visibility settings that I realized that my blog does not only have a dashboard, but also has a layout similar to a traditional blog that pops up on the right side of the screen. It took me a



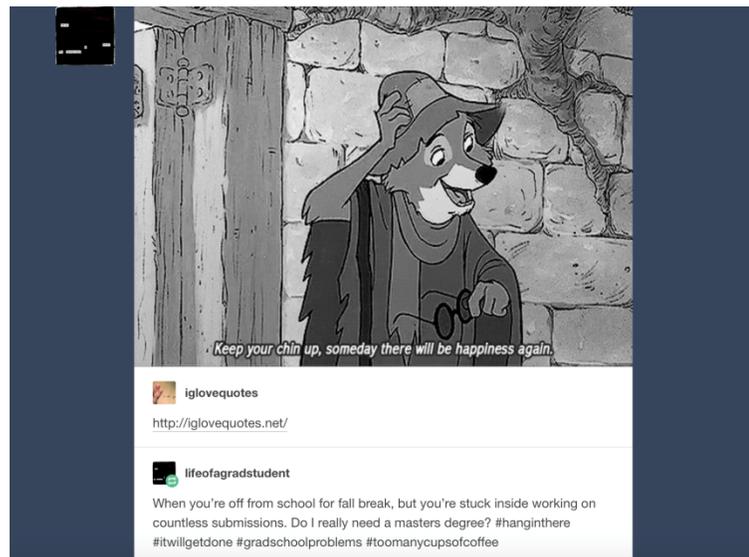
while to realize that this is what other people would see if they could see my blog, and this is how other peoples' blogs appear to me when I go on their links. There was something new I was learning every time I played around on Tumblr.

Now that I had customized my blog and had answered the question of privacy, it was time to create my first post. There were so many options to pick from – I could upload a photo, write a quote, or my own text, or attach a link, audio or video. Twitter allows users to adopt “identities mediated through text, image, and sound” (Thomas, 2007, p. 268). What was my online identity going to be? Now, I had to think beyond the username I had picked, and the pictures I had chosen to represent my blog.

At this point, I was still unsure about the purposes of Tumblr, and of my goals of using it. That is why I just did not know what to post. Since I was feeling directionless, I delayed the task of creating my own post. My Tumblr was feeling very empty because I had not started following any blogs yet – which is a major part of using the site. So I went to the homepage where the site has the blogs that are most popular and trending. When I looked through them, I recognized a few blogs that I follow on Instagram, and so I immediately followed these familiar names. Once I reached a roadblock with the blogs I recognized, I thought I would use the title of my blog to start following others. In the search section on the top, I started writing key words such as school, grad school and coffee to find blogs that may interest me. I started getting an idea of

what people post, and how their blog names may not necessarily restrict the variety of their posts.

I still had not created my first post. I'm not sure if it was my laziness or my confusion about what to post, but for my first post, I re-blogged a post because it resonated with me a lot. When I clicked to re-blog it, I got instructions that I could add my own text, and so without much thought, I quickly wrote a few lines and added some hashtags.

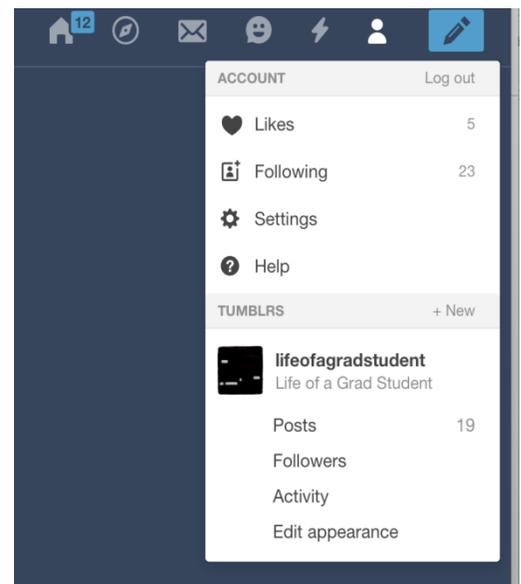


I was “appropriating” the post by “refashioning the preexisting media” and making it my own (Black, 2008, p. 232). According to Bakhtin’s concept of language learning, “individuals appropriate an array of available dialogic resources... to assist them in constructing meaning and in projecting certain identities and social affiliations” (Black, 2008, p. 233). One of the comments Black makes about such a practice struck out to me as an ELL teacher – students struggling with the language will not struggle with the language on Tumblr. They will be able to leave their ELL identity at school, and on Tumblr, they can adopt the identity “as learners and users of multiple social languages and discourses” (Black, 2008, p. 232).

As my browsing on Tumblr became my regular evening activity, I started following more blogs that weren't necessarily linked to the blog's title of being a grad student. The key words I started putting in the search bar varied from feminism and migraines to Gilmore Girls and The Office. I tried to find communities and people who shared the same interests and life problems because I figured I would be able to connect to their posts and also enjoy them. I quickly picked up the habit of re-blogging posts that resonated with me. I found that I barely uploaded my own posts, and was mostly engaging with a lot of gifs – I was aware that this was one of the main reasons that people use Tumblr, and once I found gifs from my favorite TV shows, I got a little hooked.

I mentioned earlier how I was curious to see my identity play out given that the blog was completely private and no one else could view it. Now that I go back and look at the posts I re-blogged, I'm noticing that I did share some feelings and thoughts that are very personal to me. I do not share such type of things on Facebook and Instagram. I wanted to re-blog these not only because I knew my blog was not visible to anyone, but also because I wanted to be able to

go back and re-read the posts I shared. They were a way for me to process whatever I was going through. What I did not realize though is that I could simply 'like' the post and they would get collected under the likes tab. I could pull up all the posts I liked. I made a presumption about how Tumblr is similar to other social media sites that I use, because those sites do not collect your likes in one place. When I clicked on the account icon, I noticed a tab that said likes and it had 5 likes. I knew these likes could not be on the posts I shared since my blog is private, and so



I clicked on the tab to realize that it stored all the posts that I ‘loved’. Halfway through my timeline of learning to use Tumblr, I was still discovering new things. This was also partially because I had jumped right in and started following blogs and re-blogging, without spending a lot of time looking at all the tabs and going through them. I was discovering things as and when I needed those functions and features.

I had started ‘liking’ the posts initially, but when I realized that I could share as many posts as I wanted in an hour and in the day, without judgement from fellow spectators, I stopped clicking ‘like’ on the posts, and instead just went and re-blogged every post. There was no one on my tumblelog (what blogs are called in the world of Tumblr) to judge the frequency or content of my posts, and I found myself being able to freely express my dramatic self, something that I consciously do not do on Facebook and Instagram. Tumblr was just the place to explore this part of my identity and to run freely with it because it gave me the privacy to do just that. For me, Tumblr then became “an outlet for expressing powerful emotions in a cathartic or therapeutic way” (Williams, 2010, p. 287). Had I created a different identity, it would still not have been detached from my “offline life” (Williams, 2010, p. 287). My “desires and anxieties” and my “emotional responses” would still be a part of my “embodied identity” (Williams, 2010, p. 287).

Reflecting on my own experience of how my identity formed on Tumblr, as well as the strong sense of community that my friend educated me about, I thought about how this is an important social media platform for students and how it plays out in their social lives. This platform provides “opportunities for youth to fashion linguistic and cultural identities for themselves—in essence, multi-literate and transcultural identities” (Black, 2008, p. 23). Choosing to represent certain musicians, bands, TV shows, movies, and anime “illustrate fans’

strong allegiance to popular culture” (Black, 2008, p. 232), and this, as I learned from my friend, is one of the main purposes of using Tumblr. I understand Tumblr as a “meeting place for... the dialogic relations of multiple worlds stemming from popular culture, school and academic practices, fans’ home and friendship groups, online communities, as well as fans’ varied ethnic and cultural affiliations” (Black, 2008, p. 238). Popular culture becomes the “element of identity construction” and in “creating community in contemporary society” (Williams, 2010, p. 285).

Before I began to blog on Tumblr, I was faced with the “possibilities (of) performing different identities at the same time” (Williams, 2010, p. 286). My sense of identity that I chose to display on my blog was shaped by Tumblr because of the blogs I decided to follow. As I dug deeper in every blog, I learned something new. Therefore, my sense of identity also drove my learning of the social media site. I learned how there were entire dialogues happening in the comments sections and I learned how the posts you liked collected in one space under the tab labeled ‘like’. This platform is such where “a sense of identity is important because it determines how an individual directs his or her attention...[t]herefore identity shapes the learning process” (Thomas, 2007, p. 269). But even before users begin to start following blogs, when they make choices about audience, about the images they select, and the words they use to describe their block, they are “making choices that both emerge from and shape identity” (Williams, 2010, p. 283).

This platform also provides users with feedback, because if they make their blog public, the number of likes, comments, re-blogs, and comments with the re-blogs helps the users to “affirm their identity”, to “improve their composing skills”, and to also discuss their “adolescent thoughts and feelings” (Black, 2008, p. 231). I clicked on the comment tab a few times, and

sometimes Tumblr told me to “say my heart out, and at other times it told me to “say my thing” – which was encouraging and actually got me to leave a comment here and there on various blogs.

“One of the most important aspects in shaping online identity is related to the sense of community and belonging to that community” (Thomas, 2007, p. 267). Even though I have been engaging with Tumblr for the past month, I still feel that I haven’t fully realized and utilized the ‘community’ aspect of this social media platform. I had heard my friend mention this aspect of Tumblr, and so once again I found myself calling her for details. She explained the Tumblr was used mostly for popular culture and social justice. She said that she found her feminist community on this site, and there are shows that she would not have heard about had she not followed the ‘right blogs’. As a user of Tumblr, she found both it to be both a platform for “identity construction and community building” (Williams, 2010, p. 286).

The way I learned how to use Tumblr and navigate my way around it was similar to how Elianna created her community. She said “it’s easy...you just mess around for a bit and you get it” (Thomas, 2007, p. 270). Going back and forth between my own blog and the home page, and poking a few buttons here and there helped me to get comfortable with using the site. It was a process of “testing, trialing, checking, confirming, changing, and playing with the tools” (Thomas, 2007, p. 270) that Tumblr presented me with. It also involved going back to my blog to see if it looked the way I wanted it to, in case I wanted to modify my blog title, the pictures, the layout, or the privacy settings. I also had the facility of speaking to a friend whenever I felt I got stuck – so I did seek out explicit instructions. My learning process was what Gee called “horizontal learning”, where I was “getting my feet wet” and “mucking around” the site before I was finally ready to “jump in” and create my first post (Gee, 2007, p. 307). It was easier for me to play around because there was nothing that really stood out to me as being alien. I had an

email address, and I was used to signing up on various websites with an email address, a username, and a password. I was already familiar with gifs and hashtags and had used them on Facebook and Instagram before. Even though Tumblr made me feel inadequate about my popular culture knowledge, I knew enough to be able to follow a few blogs and to catch on to some of the fanfiction.

Thinking about the process of learning Tumblr and my own experience makes me think about how some students may be comfortable getting their feet wet with regards to assignments and projects, but others may need more context to tackle the task. Students who have no experience using social media may feel that they need a more ‘horizontal’ learning process, as Gee described (Gee, 2007). There will also always be differences in the background knowledge that students bring to any topic, and it is so important to figure out how to cater to students who lack this background knowledge. If this was the first social media platform I engaged with, my learning would look a lot different.

In thinking about the concept of identity and community that Tumblr brings out, I think it is important for students to engage with this topic of identity, to think about who they are, what their views are, and how they engage with views different from their own. I find myself making connections between the use of Tumblr and the concept of cosmopolitanism. I know that students may not want to share their Tumblrs with class, and in connection to that, I thought about what a professor said to me when I told her how frustrated I feel not being able to use technology and digital sites in my classroom. She said, “the task is not the technology”. I really like this way of thinking because I can think about how the ideas of identity, cosmopolitanism, and Tumblr can be incorporated into the classroom without needing technology. As an ELL teacher I am also thinking about how this form of literacy practice can help my students because

this will not require them to write paragraphs and so they can participate confidently. They can also be a part of many cultures and engage in “cross-cultural, cross-linguistic, and cross-national” dialogues (Hull, Stornaiuolo & Sahni, 2010, p. 344).

Now that the assignment is over, I find myself going back to browsing on Facebook to unwind in the evenings. I may not have gotten hooked to Tumblr, but I understand the charm it presents people. It also ended up giving me a complex, because the site is filled with so many popular culture references that I did not understand, I feel a little ancient.

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Artifact No. 7A: Content

Micro-teaching Lesson Plan

Unit: A long Walk to Water

Time span: month long unit

Context:

- 8th grade classroom in a public school in Pakistan
- 13/14 year olds
- Proficiency level:
 - ranging from basic plus to intermediate
 - have been learning English since primary school, but some are more proficient than others.
- Class size: 35 students approx

This text is appropriate for grades 5-8, which will support my students because they will not be reading texts that are too easy for them or too hard for them – considering that they are 8th graders but various reading levels in the class, and all of them being behind grade level. So there is an achievement gap that needs to be catered too.

Medium of instruction: may be Urdu sometimes if needed – especially for students with a basic proficiency level.

Objective:

- They will get an overview of the book by watching the trailer
- Students will discuss some main themes of the novel through the anticipation guide.
- They will discuss some difficult words that relate to these major themes.
- Then they will get into the reading of the text.

Introductory Hook:

Ask students if they have seen movie trailers and if these trailers got them excited to watch the movie. Then bring in the idea of book trailers and make them watch the trailer of the book to introduce them to the main themes. <http://bookunitteacher.com/wp/?p=4184>

Ask students to think about what they saw in the trailer and what they are now curious about when they read the book.

Instruction: they can discuss in their L1, but will need to speak out in L2 when they discuss their views with the whole class.

Afterthought:

- Could have maybe connected it to their background knowledge or ideas, because for instance, dealing with a lack of water is an issue they will be familiar with in their community.

Activity 1: Anticipation guide: to be completed individually.

Directions: Read each statement and write Agree in the blank if you believe the statement and could support it or put Disagree in the blank if you do not believe the statement and could not support it.

Before

After

- _____ 1. Man is basically good. _____
- _____ 2. Government should solve its people's problems. _____
- _____ 3. Government's most important job is to protect its people. _____
- _____ 4. A government's job is to help its people when they can't help themselves. _____

- _____ 5. Man must care for himself first before he can help others. _____
- _____ 6. Government's job is to make laws, & make people obey them. _____
- _____ 7. The differences between right and wrong are very clear. _____
- _____ 8. Character is born of hardship. _____
- _____ 9. Water is our most precious resource. _____
- _____ 10. Hope is our most precious resource. _____

Think-pair-share with your shoulder partner about your answers. Try to give them reasons behind your answers.

Also discuss any confusions – mark the sentences that did not make sense to you. We will discuss those sentences as a class.

Scaffolds:

Some students may need extra support during the anticipation guide activity.

They can work in pairs and use their first language to discuss the sentences and figure out their stance.

- Should have provided illustrations/visual support.

Activity 2: Vocabulary discussion as a whole class.

First ask students to discuss words which they did not understand in pairs and write them down.

Expect the possible words:

1. Government: group of people in an office at a particular time, who run the country.
Synonyms: administration, authority
2. Laws: the system of rules that a particular country or community recognizes, which the people have to follow

Synonyms: rule, order, command

3. Obey: follow the direction, or request of a person or a law

Synonyms: do what someone says

4. Differences: a point or way in which people or things are not the same.

Synonyms: not the same

5. Character: the quality of the individual

Synonyms: personality, reputation

6. Hardship: going through a hard time

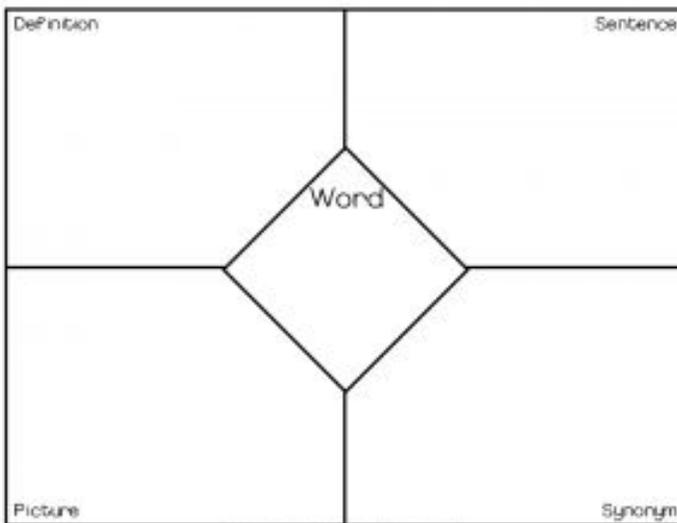
Synonyms: trouble

7. Precious: having great value, not to be wasted

Synonyms: expensive

8. Resource: supply of money and materials needed by a person, or people or countries.

Synonyms: money, supplies, materials, things



Exit ticket: Pick two new words you learned today and write a sentence for each.

Notes:

afterthought: should activity 2 be conducted before activity 1?

- So that students can fully understand the words before they start doing the anticipation guide?

Reasoning behind this lesson: did not want to teach grammar in isolation, wanted there to be authentic material.

- The end of the unit will lead towards critical literacy with regards to the water problem, thinking about the water problems among others in the local context and how can we as students help.

Aspect of social emotional learning with the sensitivity of the book topic

- Potential triggers

Artifact No. 7B: Content

Video on Importance of Culturally Relevant Books and how to use them

Video uploaded separately

Artifact No. 8A: Commitment and professionalism – Infographic for professional development session

Teaching Graphic Novels

Using the Expanded Four Resources Model

Laura Jimenez, Carla Meyer and Frank Serafini

Readers navigate multiple frameworks to read graphic novels

Semiotics: the ways visual, linguistic and spatial sign symbols work together to communicate meaning.

Expanded Four Resources Model: categorizes reader as navigator, interpreter, designer and interrogator.

Reading graphic novels requires readers to navigate and interpret: visual images, design elements and graphic structures (Serafini, pg. 30)

When reading graphic novels, a reader's cognitive processes are at play. The reader has to:

1. approach the text
2. utilize his background knowledge and available semiotic resources.
3. synthesize the written text and illustrations.

Four Resources Model

+
+
+

As navigators, students must use their knowledge and understanding of both traditional print and visual components of a text to determine when and why they must attend to various resources. As navigators, readers need to focus on the grammar and structure of the linguistic and visual resources.

As interpreters, students have to make meaning of the text using the 3 semiotic resources, which are linguistic, visual and spatial. A reader can lose meaning if adequate attention is not paid to one of the cues, particularly visual cues.

As interrogators, readers have to be aware of the meaning of the text and their own bias, so that they can question the authors and illustrators accordingly. They have to read the text with a focus on critical and sociopolitical analysis of power and privilege.

As designers, readers create their own reading path by using the available semiotic resources and their own background knowledge to make sense of the text. As designers, readers adopt the role of approaching the text.

Artifact No. 8B: Commitment and professionalism – Literacy Centers for professional development sessions

Presentation uploaded separately