A Case Study of an Adult Chinese Learner of English

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It's the first time for me to study English learners' development of English skills through collecting and analyzing speech and written samples. The three-month investment in this project is rewarding because the one-to-one interactions provide me with hands-on materials, help me gain an in-depth understanding of linguistic theories and teaching methods, and compel me to be reflective and innovative in my future teaching practices. The paper presents my study of an adult Chinese learner of English, my recommendation for a specific instructional plan, reflections from this project, and implications for my future work with ELLs.

Introduction to the leaner

My learner Joe is Chinese. He is 23 years old. He came to the U.S this August and majors in computer science at Vanderbilt. He has been learning English in China for 15 years since the 3rd grade in elementary school. When he studied English in China, he never talked to native speakers in or after class. He has never been to any English-speaking countries. His parents and friends speak Mandarin Chinese to him under all circumstances. So the main context of his English learning is the classroom setting.

Joe's motivations about learning English are mixed. On one hand, he was "forced to learn English by teachers" because English class was mandatory and made up a large proportion of the final exam. He didn't like the way English was taught in China. He said, "The teaching methods in China is not correct. There goes to take the tests, take the examinations. It did not make your English good. It just make you 做对题(have correct answers)"(speech sample 1). On the other hand, he really liked English. He even took SAT in high school in order to study broad. Disappointed by the English teaching practice in China, he had been learning English by himself

since the middle school. His years of self-learning experience made him believe that the best way to learn English was self-study and imitation. He self-described his English reading and listening abilities as good, but he thought he had great room for speaking improvement.

Description of the learner's oral and written language

I've collected three speech samples from my learner Joe: one is my interview; one is his phone call to a landlord and another one is his presentation rehearsal. I have twelve written samples: seven project plans, two email correspondence, one text message, one presentation note, and one writing about his history of learning English. After I analyzed those samples in detail, I found that in general, Joe had a basic foundation for English language knowledge. He had cognitive maturity and metalinguistic awareness about pronunciation, inflection, sentence structure, meaning, and language in use. But he had varying degree of proficiency in phonetics, morphology, syntax, semantics and pragmatics.

For example, in general Joe had a good command of phonetics, semantics and pragmatics. He could pronounce most of the sounds correctly. The stress and intonation were usually correct. But he had problem with place of articulation. The labiodental consonant /v/ was pronounced as bilabial consonant /w/. So when he talked about VOA, the word "voice /vɔɪs/" sounded like "woice /wɔɪs/". Besides, the height of his tongue rising for high front vowel /ɪ/ was low. So he would insert a middle front vowel /e/ before /ɪ/. The monophthong /ɪ/ was pronounced as the diphthong /eɪ/. As demonstrated in Line 29 in speech sample 1, instead of saying "sit /sɪt/", he would say "/seɪt/". In terms of semantics, his semantic knowledge was also very good. His writings showed that he had a large vocabulary. But most of them were passive vocabulary. In other words, when he came across some Tire 3 and Tire 4 words in academic journals, he knew their meanings but he was not able to use them in speaking or writing. For pragmatics, he could

use English appropriately for a variety of purposes: to "seek information" (phone call to a landlord), to "get things done" (scheduling a meeting with professors), and to "express his thoughts" (presentation to the class)(handout). His discourses varied according to contexts. The tone was informal in text messages. The written style in project plans was formal and academic. But occasionally, the usage of some words in a certain context was not correct. For instance, he used "info" for "information" in prototyping plans for many times. The abbreviation was inappropriate in an academic setting. He only knew that "info" was synonymous with "information", but did not have the cognition that these two words differed in contexts of use.

Compared to phonetics and semantics, my learner had a limited proficiency in morphology and syntax. Next, I will describe the state of acquisition in these two areas in detail. For morphology, He could use different inflections to indicate different time frames in simple sentences. For example, in Sentence 4 and Sentence 5 in written sample 1, he sent an email to the landlord indicating his intention to rent the house, "They said they are going to leave in mid July. They introduced to me the house and showed me some pictures of the rooms. My friend and I are satisfied with the rooms and want to rent them." We can see that he used present and past tense correctly in these consecutive two sentences according to the time when things happened. Also, he could form the past tense of regular verb ("introduce" and "show") and irregular verb ("say") correctly.

But in pressured situations and complex sentences, Joe made a lot of errors in inflections for number, tense and aspect. On September 20th, when he called to a landlord to rent an apartment for his coming friend, he was nervous because it's the first time that he talked to a foreigner over the phone. In phone calls, he could not get any cues from facial expressions and body language. As the talk went on, he was even more pressured because the landlord had a

heavy Arabic accent and he felt embarrassed to ask the landlord to repeat what he had said again and again. He tried hard to get the landlord's words through revoicing, "You mean we can meet before he arrive" (Sentence 7, speech sample 2). Here, he omitted "-s" for inflection of past tense in "arrive", suggesting that when he was pressured to make himself understood, he would pay less attention to subject-verb agreement. In addition, errors in inflections tended to increase when he wrote down sentences with complex structures. In Sentence 6 of the project plan, he wrote "Compared to the similar applications, the application designed by our team have several unique characteristics." As we can see, when the modifier "designed by our team" was inserted between the subject "the application" and the verb "have", he failed to find out the grammatical relation here and thus made the wrong inflection for number. In his writing about his history of learning English, he described himself in Sentence 3 in written sample 2 as "To be frank, I am a good listener, an excellent reader, a barely qualified writer, but is by no means a good speaker." The verb form for first person singular "I" was correct at the beginning of this sentence. But when he put many parallel phrases within the sentence, the inflection for number was incorrect. I think if the sentence was simplified, he could not make a sentence like "I is by no means a good speaker". This phenomenon shows that even when a learner comes to an advanced stage of English development, he may slip back to an earlier stage due to the conditions of stress or complexity in a communicative interaction (Lightbown & Spada 2013).

Though Joe didn't acquire morphology very well, he made great progress at the end of the study. As showed in Sentence 2 in written sample 3 (November, 28th), when he analyzed data results, he wrote "The corresponding p-value for this z-score is 0.0224 (p<. 05), suggesting that the difference between our hypothesis and results is significant". He knew that be-verb

should be in agreement with "difference" but not "results". In this example, he made correct inflection for number even though the sentence structure was relatively complex.

In terms of syntax, Joe made some basic sentence structures such as SV, SVO correctly and he had no problem in question formations in speech samples. But in his writings, he encountered difficulties in conjunctions. The most commonly seen syntactical error was run-on sentence. For example, in the text message for one of his American friends (written sample 3), he said, "I have to prepared for Saturday's mid-autumn festival celebration, a little busy this week, I can not come tonight." The three sentences were put together without conjunctions linking them. The error in Sentence 1 of the written sample 5 was the same: "The random forest did the best, the bagging did the median, the naïve strategy did the worst". It seemed to me that he did not have the concept that a sentence must end with a full stop and a conjunction must be used to link two complete sentences. Joe was also not familiar with English phrase structure rules. In written sample 7, he said "Tap the pin will lead users to a page with detailed information". He knew that a phrase could act as a subject. But he did not know that only noun phrase structure could act as sudjects and NP rule is NP=(det)+(adj)+N+(PP)/(S) or NP=pronoun (Justice, 2004). So the verb phrase "tap the pin" can never be a subject. In terms of sentence order, the sentences Joe wrote were mixed and disorganized when he wrote down sentences with complex structures. For instance, in written sample 4, the structure of the sentence 12 (see Appendix) was mixed. The present participle "setting up" was functioned as a modifier. But actually, it should be in original form and act as one of the main verbs in this sentence.

Though Joe had lots of room for syntactical improvement, he showed signs of development in syntax during the study. For many of the project plans Joe wrote after November, I see obvious progress in syntax. In Sentence 6 of the written sample 7, he drew a conclusion that

"The statistic results respond to the questionnaire results: users will take no more than 25 seconds to find a restaurant and no more than 45 seconds to recommend a restaurant, which is a little long for a mobile app". Joe used parallel structure and adjectival clause very well. The sentence was well-organized.

Assessment of the learner's current stage

In general, my learner was at the intermediate stage of learning English. Most of his pronunciations were correct. The stress and intonation were correct in different words and sentences. People had no difficulty understanding him. He could discuss the coding process with the program director. He found himself easily understood when he negotiated the price for a used car with a dealer. But some minor mistakes existed in several sounds. Apart from the /v/ sound I mentioned earlier, he pronounced /s/ as /ts/ very often when /s/ was at the end of a word. So when I listened to his presentation rehearsal about social network, I heard a lot of sizzling voices.

He had the cognition to use different verb tenses to locate a specific time and inflect the verb's number to agree with the subject. But most of the time, he could not make the correct inflections for number, case and aspect. He had a good command of bound morphemes. He used affixes correctly to make an antonym and shift the word class. But occasionally, he made wrong transformations. For example, in written sample 2, he mentioned his feeling of talking with Americans and said, "It is always a pleasure time to talk to them". He failed to change the noun "pleasure" into its adjective form "pleasant" in order to modify the following noun "time". Though morphological errors will not affect communication very much, they lower the quality of Joe's English writing and demonstrate very limited English proficiency.

In his utterances, as demonstrated in his phone call to an Arabic landlord, the question formations were usually right: "Should he pay the deposit now?"; "When should we meet";

"Five o'clock in the afternoon?" The sentence structures he generated were varied. In his writings, I can see simple sentences, coordinate sentences, complex sentences and complex-coordinate sentences. But his use of conjunctions was not developed. Most of the time, he combined two complete sentences without conjunctions.

Discussion of an SLA theoretical framework

In this session, I will analyze the linguistic, cognitive and sociolinguistic variables that inform my analysis. Some of Joe's syntactical errors ascribed to negative first language transfer. For example, in Sentence 15 and Sentence 18 in written sample 4, my learner used singular nouns ("user") or the definite article ("the user") to talk about a categorical group of people ("users"). This usage was due to Chinese language influence. Instead of having plural nouns to refer to an unspecified group, Chinese language uses singular nouns for generic reference. That explains why Joe used "user" or "the user" to express "users". The behaviorist perspective provides an in-depth explanation of this phenomenon: language production is viewed as a formation of habits (handout). A person learning a second language would apply what he learned in his first language to his second language acquisition (Lightbown & Spada 2013). Sometimes, we can see the transitional stage when a learner is trying to get rid of the disadvantageous habit from first language and form correct forms in second language. As demonstrated in italicized words in written sample 8, Joe had not well-developed understanding of referring to a categorical group. He used the wrong form "the user" in one sentence and used the right form "users" in another context. It suggests that the influence of the learner's first language may not simply a matter of habits, but a more subtle and complex process of identifying "whether a certain features seems to belong to the target language" (Lightbown & Spada 2013).

For the phonetic errors my learner Joe made, almost all of them resulted from first language influence. That is, as he acquired a second language, the patterns he learned have impact on the way he used and understood the second language (Lightbown & Spada 2013). For example, /θ/ was usually pronounced as /s/ because the Chinese language does not have the dental sound /θ/. The most similar sound in place of articulation with /θ/ is the alveolar sound /s/. So, "think /θɪŋk/" was pronounced as "sink /sɪŋk/". The similar transfer also occurred in the voiced pair /ð/ and /z/. The word "that /ðæt/" sounded like "zat /zæt/". Though the production of English sounds may not necessarily result from first language transfer, it showed that due to years' practice of pronouncing Chinese sounds, Joe's vocal organs have formed a set pronunciation habit for speaking Chinese. Thus, it entails conscious efforts and persistent practice for him to train tongues to adjust to uttering English sounds.

But first language transfer is not the sole reason for errors. Sometimes, the productions of English language are the interplay between first language influence and learners' consciousness. For instance, Chinese language "has a substantial different way of forming relative clauses" and usually the relative clauses precede the noun they modify (Lightbown & Spada 2013). But never did Joe put a relative clause before the noun the clause modified. I think the reason why he did not make this kind of mistake is related to his consciousness and formation of habits. I learned from our conversations that Joe's high-school English teacher drilled a lot in the relative clause. The teacher asked students to do a lot of exercises on the relative clause both in and after class. Joe has formed the English way of thinking when he writes and speaks sentences with a relative clause. The structure has been acquired and integrated into his English language. When students have fixed certain language structures due to pattern drills, sometimes their English production for these structures will free from the negative transfer from their first language.

Besides, the teaching methods also have impact on learners' English production. For my learner Joe, he got structured English instruction all the way down when he learned English. He was taught standard and academic language. The grammar translation teaching method and focus on large vocabulary made him have the misconception that a good writing is one that has complex sentence structures and include a lot of technical and difficult vocabulary. Thus, in his written samples, I see a lot of abstruse sentences. He tried to integrate as many structures as possible. His English productions were very formal and complex.

I also observed the influence of ethnic group affiliation on my learner's English production. On Thanksgiving, he came to his advisor's home for a party. Several American students and a couple of Chinese friends were invited to the party. During the communication, Joe suppressed his use of English and consciously avoided speaking English to his American friends in front of his Chinese friends. But when he came to a church where a lot of Americans went for a prayer, he was more open to express himself in English to the priest of the church. His choice of how much he would speak English depended on the audience he spoke to and his Chinese peers' possible judgment on him. If he tried to indicate his Chinese community identity and loyalty, he would avoid speaking English with the presence of his Chinese peers. It reminded me of my personal experience. When I was in elementary school, I felt pressured not to speak English in tones like an American because my classmates would judge me pro-western and not patriotic. So I suppressed practicing native-like English in public and intentionally mispronounced [θ] as [s], a mistake commonly made by Chinese learners of English. So what I observed from Joe and what I experienced makes me realize that sociocultural considerations can also exert great influence on learners' English performance, especially speech production.

Description of a specific instructional plan

As I identified earlier in the paper, Joe has problems in phonetics, morphology and syntax. But his proficiency levels in the above three language components vary and thus entail specific instructions on each component. My recommendation of an appropriate teaching plan for Joe combines SLA theories and Joe' learning characteristics.

First, to address the phonetic issue, I think we can provide targeted instruction on several sounds where he makes persistent errors, such as /v/. Since Joe listened to VOA very often and thought imitation was effective in improving English pronunciation (see speech sample 1), we can retrieve audio teaching materials from VOA broadcastings. For example, we can find audio clips containing the articulation of "voice" and let Joe consciously pay attention to how the announcers pronounce the /v/ sound. Later, we can demonstrate the correct place of articulation for /v/ sound and encourage Joe to practice it.

As to the morphological errors, I think sometimes Joe made a lot of morphological errors due to his inattention. He knew some inflection rules well. But he was not bothered by those morphological errors since they did not seem to cause any problem for communication. In order to attract his attention to morphology issue, we can talk to him from the perspective of his academic ambition. Joe said that he came to U.S. for academic professionalism and excellence. We can make him aware that usually a high academic achievement is accompanied by demonstration of high English proficiency. A lot of morphological errors reduce the potential to achieve a high level of academic excellence. I think when he weighs the benefit and the cost, he will choose to consciously use inflections correctly in all contexts.

Since many syntactical errors Joe made resulted from his lack of knowledge in grammatical relations between constituents, we can teach Joe to draw a tree diagram to interpret complex sentence structures. Joe said that he trusted his linguistic intuitions to examine a

sentence's grammaticality. But as demonstrated in Joe's written samples, sometimes, intuitions of grammaticality can be misleading. I think we can distill a right "intuitive understanding of English" into Joe's mind through conscious analysis of constituent structures (handout, syntax chapter). Based on my personal experience, I think analyzing hierarchical structures will be helpful. When I prepared for GRE test, I was trained to analyze the so-called "long difficult sentences" (a nicknamed created by GRE training specialists in China). After a sixteen-day intensive training, I developed the ability of immediately and correctly analyzing constituents in a sentence no matter how complex the sentence is. The systematic application of rules and the "seeing the connections among syntactic components" make learners more sensible of syntax"(handout).

Critical reflection on what I have learned from this project

Analyzing speech and written samples with regard to different language components is conducive to my holistic and systemic understanding of learners' English abilities and development. Those samples are informative. They tell me a lot about to what degree learners has acquired English and where their struggles are. A developmental analysis of learners' productions avoids hasty assumptions. For example, if in a learner' writings the verb in complex sentences does not agree with the subject in number, it does not necessarily demonstrate that he is still in the beginning stage of English proficiency. Chances are that he is trying to integrate more structures such as dependent clauses into the sentence and actually he is now at a higher English proficiency level. From this, I have a better understanding of the statement that "an increase in error may be an indicator of progress" (Lightbown & Spada 2013). If we only analyze errors in a single context, the conclusions may be not reliable.

I learn from the project that students may vary in learning abilities and beliefs. Teacher should not impose their own beliefs into students but create space and offer help for students, in a way that they want. If we were to teach some English learners who have the ability of achieving better performance when they learn by themselves, we can recommend high-quality materials for them to learn after class. Also, we need to keep track of their stage of development so that they won't go to a wrong direction and lag behind. On the other hand, the case of Joe makes me ponder over the effectiveness of teachers' teaching plan. Joe learned English by himself partly due to the disappointing instruction in his English class. I think in-service teachers need to have informal conversations with individual students and ask their opinions about how they like their class be and what they want to learn. Those talks are conducive to designing focused and responsive teaching plans and curriculum.

In addition, according to what my classmates presented about their learners, I know that errors can be cross-cultural and cross language. Arabic and Spanish learners of English have the same problem in pronouncing the "th" sound. They tend to pronounce /θ/ or /ð/ as /d/. Also, Grace said that her learner overused "of" in subordinate relations. That coincides with my learner's mistakes. In speech sample 2, instead of saying "I'm ZG's friend", my learner Joe said "I'm a friend of ZG". Though the sentence was grammatical, but it's not the usual way native speakers say. Those similar error patterns reveal the universals of language acquisition to some degree (Lightbown & Spada 2013). Students with different cultural and linguistic backgrounds may make similar mistakes.

Last, I reflected a lot on my way of talking to my learner after Cherry and Catherine's presentations. Both of them mentioned that their learners were really excited when they could talk about things they are interested in, such as computer games and soap operas. The talk I had

with my learner was a question-and-answer style. It's like an interview. My learner was led to answer my questions. I took the initiate to glean the information I wanted. He was passive producing English. I learned that when we have conversations with students, we can choose topics that learners are interested in. This kind of conversations can engage students a lot and build meaningful relationships with our students during the process. I will avoid the authoritative style of conversations, but find out what my students are interested in and choose topics that they like to talk about. Also, I was impressive about Grace's adopting different discourse moves when she interacted with her young learner. When I interact with my learners, I will probe more, revoice often and press mildly to create a dynamic and lively communicative environment (class readings).

Implications for my future work with ELLs

The project makes me realize that teachers' care can open the floodgate for students' learning (Molly, class instruction). When Joe knew that I was concerned about his English improvement, he trusted me and was greatly motivated to redress those persistent errors I pointed out. It seems to me that after so many years' self-study, he was in desperate need of a tutor to help him achieve better English. He demonstrated resolution to improve his English. He sent his writings to me for suggestions (that one of the reasons why I got so many written samples from him). Also, he did his presentation rehearsals again and again in front of me. He sought my advice on eye contact, gestures and slide layout when he prepared to do presentations. What I learn is that students are affective of teachers' care and attention. They will open to teachers when they feel that their teachers really care about them. Also, they will be motivated to pursue higher level of performance when we offer help targeting their specific needs. In my future

teaching, I will build trusting relationships with my students and make them realize that I care for them and I am always there to help.

In addition, the persistent errors Joe made such as run-on sentences compel me to think the role of "getting it right from the beginning". Though nowadays we value communicative language teaching. Proponents of this teaching method hold the view that "errors are a natural and valuable part of the language learning process" (Lightbown & Spada 2013). Teachers should allow students to speak freely and make mistakes. But from the case of Joe, I think sometimes the development of fluency in the spoken language is at the cost of accuracy. If teachers do not correct the errors at the early stage of development, some errors can become habits. Ignoring them at the beginning leads to early fossilization of errors (Lightbown & Spada 2013). So I think teachers should strike a balance between "fluency" and "accuracy". It's not about whether we should correct the errors or not, but when and how we should correct them.

Further, though my learner had a good mastery of academic language, he had big problems in social languages. For example, it took him a lot of time to order a topping in a restaurant. Since learners will surely get into contact with other people in a social context, the ability of using social language in daily life is required and necessary. I think teachers should not only focus on teaching academic language, but also spare some time creating social settings in class for students to hone their social language ability.

Last, most of my learner' vocabulary are passive vocabulary. He recited many words in Tire 3 and Tire 4 in preparation for the GRE test but forgot most of them because he had few chances to encounter them again in other contexts. In contrast, Joe could actively use a lot of technical terms in computer science. I think it's because he has so many meaningful encounters with those words in academic journals or textbooks that they becomes firmly established in his

memory (Lightbown & Spada, 2013). That informs me that vocabulary depth is useful, especially for technical language used in content areas, such as biology, earth science, geography, and history (Schickedanz & Collins, 2013). I think teachers should adopt various reading materials to let students exposed to different contexts to get familiar with words not frequently seen. Or we can encourage students to read English materials in different genres so that they can encounter Tire 3 and Tire 4 words in different and foster a solid memory of these words.

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Appendix

Speech Sample 1

Setting: **on campus**
Background: On September 10th, Q (me) conducted an interview to J (the learner) and asked him about his history of learning English. Before that, Q explained the project and specified the intention of this interview.

1. Q: How long have you been learning English?
2. J: Since third year in primary school.
3. Q: Your Reasons for learning English?
4. J: I'm forced to learn English by teachers. I like English. I want to study abroad. I don't think   teachers' instruction helps a lot; I think the most helpful learning method is self-learning.
5. Q: Why did you learn German?
6. J: I like Switzerland. Maybe someday I will go there, to travel, to do something.
The best textbook I've learned is family album of USA. I think it's great. I had a textbook and a VCD.
7. Q: When did you start to learn the family album of USA?
8. J: The first year in junior high school. Learned it for about two years. It helps me a lot. Online movies from Hollywood. Friends is my favorite American shows. I tried it last semester within forth year, college. Only in classes (speak English).
9. Q: How often did you have English classes?
10. J: Every day, before college. Take the English classes for college students for one year. Once or twice a week. I can't remember. I think the class sucks. It teaches me nothing. (50 minutes for one class.) We often have two class together..one time.(favorite courses: New Concept and Family Album) From primary school to high school(learn New Concept English). I learn it from Book one to Book three. I take classes at weekends and I tried to recite it all through.
10. Q: How do you rate your level of English proficiency?
11. J: I think my reading and listening is OK, but speaking has a lot to improve.
12. Q. Do you practice your spoken English during college?
13. J: I don't have too many to practice it (speaking English).
Sometimes I read China Daily.
14. Q: Which column do you read in newspapers?
15. J: Technology. Top news. It's easy to understand the main idea but hard to understand everything.
16. Q: What kinds of English writing do you read?
17. J: Web pages and news.
18. Q: Do you read English academic writings?
19. J: Not too much. Mostly in Chinese.
20. Q: Have you ever read English novels?
21. J: Read bookworm from 10 to 15. The world is flat.
22. Q: What is your reading strategy?
23. J: I think that doesn't matters. The only matters is..is whether you learn it everyday.

When I was a beginner of English, I often refer to the dictionaries. But now I just 忽略(ignore) the new words.

24. Q: Which do you think is effective to learn English?
25. J: Choose a good textbook. Learn it. Repeat it. Read the same article and recite them.
26. Q: Do you think it's good to start to learn English at an early age?
27. J: The early you learn it, the more privilege you will take. The early birds get more worms.
28. Q: What are the strengths and weaknesses of self-study?
29. J: Self-study you have to be hard in your mind. Discipline. You have to do it all by yourself. You have to make yourself like the learning. You don't have a leader and you don't have a teacher. Sometimes the video is the best teacher.

The proes are that you have the environment. You just go to classes and you don't have to plan the study yourself. Teacher will point your mistakes. Sometimes you don't see it yourself. Lack of exercises. There are too many classmates in the class. *The most students just sit and listen.*

30. Q: Do you have assignments in college English class?
31. J: I don't often have that.

I think my English is just based on the study that in high school and junior high school.
I don't need to recite the grammar rules. I don't want to and I don't need to.

32. Q: You are not required to recite?
33. J: *I can do the practice correctly by* 语感 *(intuitions of grammaticality).*
34. Q: How do your classmates learn English?
35. J: They do the exercises. They recite grammar rules.

The teaching methods in China is not correct. There goes to take the tests, take the examinations. It did not make your English good. It just make you 做题做对*(have the correct answers).*

Speech Sample 2

Setting: on campus
Background: On September 20th, Joe talked to an Arabic landlord over the phone in order to schedule a meeting time. (The phone's speaker was off. I could not hear what the landlord said)

I'm a friend of GZ. He has contacted you. He wants me to ask you what should he do now. He will arrive at America until September 18th. His friend will be arrive at September 18th. Maybe he will sign for a year, I think. *Should he pay the deposit now? You mean we can meet before he arrive. When should we meet?* We can pay the deposit. 那个(filler)You say, we can meet this Sunday. You can send them a e-mail about your account number. So how can he pay the deposit? When should we meet this Sunday. You mean in the apartment? *Five o'clock in the afternoon?* What about six? SO we will meet at six p m this Sunday at that apartment. I don't know. He didn't told me. How much is the deposit? The deposit is the same as the rent. Pardon? I know the family that lives in it now. I think we can discuss it at this Sunday. What?.Ok, Sunday morning I will call you to confirm it. OK. Great. Thank you. Bye.

Written Sample 1
Backgound: Joe sent this email to a landlord indicating his intention to rent the apartment.

Dear GL,

①My friend and I are going to start our graduate study at Vanderbilt this August, and we post an ad to rent a apartment or a house on the VUCSSA maillist.②A couple find me.

③They currently live on SECOND FLOOR(2B/1B) of a house located at XXXX, and they said they are going to leave in mid July.④*They introduced to me about the house and showed me some pictures of the rooms.* ⑤*My friend and I are satisfied with the rooms and want to rent them.* ⑥We are going to arrived at Nashville on August 6th.

⑦What is the rent rate? ⑧Are electricity and water included?

Thanks and best regards,
Joe

Written Sample 2
Background: In this writing, Joe talked about the history of his learning English.

①I am Joe, 23 years old, a graduate student from China.② Since third grade of elementary school, I have studied English for 15 years. ③*To be frank, I am a good listener, an excellent reader, a barely qualified writer, but is by no means a good speaker.* In China, most students attend English classes both in and out of schools. Typical English classes of China teach grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation, however, they are not an effective way to learn English. After years of English education, many students still make a lot of mistakes speaking English. There are several reasons. First, English teaching in China is exam-oriented, but very little speaking test is set. Secondly, there are usually too many students in English classes. Students do not have sufficient time to practice in the very limited class time. Third, listening and reading are easy to do alone, but you need a partner to practice speaking. There are not too many opportunities. Fourth, no matter what their interest is, most students in China are struggling with the math, physics and chemicals, and have little time for English study.

Still, compared to other Chinese students, I am better in English. Two books have to be mentioned. The first one is the Family Album, U.S.A., a book that teaches English on an example of American everyday life. During spare time of junior high school, I learned it all by myself. I like listening and repeating the same sentences over and over again, until I could imitate the pronunciation and tone vividly. The book really helps me a lot. The other one is the New Concept English by L. G. Alexander, which consists of four levels, covering all need from beginner to veteran. I began to read it since I was a young boy. The articles in it are carefully selected and most of them are very interesting. I have studied the first three parts, and I still plan to finish it later on.

America is a great place. People are very kind and always ready to help. *It is always a pleasure time to talk to them.* I am sure I will make much progress in English.

Written Sample 3
Background: A text message to one of his American friends (September 18th)

Hi Jerry, *I have to prepare for Saturday's mid-autumn festival celebration, a little busy this week, I can not come tonight.*

Written Sample 4
Background: Excerpt from the prototyping plan

1.1 Potential Users
①As we all know, Nashville is a center for the music and other entertainment and is home to a large number of colleges and universities. ②These young people are our app's potential users. ③They are enthusiastic about trying new mobile applications, and most of them have social hearts that fit well with our app.④Actually Users' social circle can be very wide because human has nature to enjoy delicious food and in the period of meals, *it is a great time for people to relax themselves, taking an enjoyable talk and making friends with each other.* ⑤The followings are main initial potential users.
……

2 Project Characteristic
⑥*Compared to the similar applications, the application designed by our team have several unique characteristics.* ⑦Users are designed to be the source of information, not the dealers or businessman. ⑧They can post words full of likes and dislikes in various forms. ⑨In other words, multimedia is involved. ⑩We focus a lot on interface design. ⑪Users will find the app very easy to use. In fact, we mainly implement marking costume events on the map with different flag colors, setting up database connected with remote server, notification and providing routes search. ……

Written Sample 5
Background: Extracted from a project report

a. What do these findings show?

   ①*The random forest did the best, the bagging did the median, and the naive strategy did the worst.* Bagging has a single parameter – number of trees. Random forest has 2 parameters – number of trees and how many features to search over to find the best feature. The differences in parameters means that when building each tree, bagging use all features and randomly select rows to train; on the contrary, random forest uses all rows, but randomly selects features to train. The original IBM train dataset has over 230000 rows, we thought it will cost a lot of time to use random forest, which would use all rows each time. So we decided to use the Bagging method.

Written Sample 6
Background: Extracted from Final Project Documentation

Time to search 5 specific restaurants

①Using the mean time of 87.083s and standard deviation of 16.599, we calculated that the z-score of hypotheses 125s is 2.284. ②*The corresponding p-value for this z-score is 0.0224 (p< .05), suggesting that the difference between our hypothesis and results is significant.* ③ According to the statistical result, we can conclude that participants take less than 125 seconds on average (the average time for each restaurant is 25 seconds) to finish the task of searching 5 specific restaurants. ④According to the questionnaire results, most participants are generally satisfied with our app. ⑤ But we still need to improve the touch experience and decrease the time delay between operations. ⑥ The statistic results respond to the questionnaire results: users will take no more than 25 seconds to find a restaurant and no more than 45 seconds to recommend a restaurant, which is a little long for a mobile app.

Written Sample 7
Background: Extracted from a project report

Interface design

①The Home menu presents the map of Nashville.②There is a search bar at top, where users can type in the key words and search for restaurants, bars, shops, etc. ③The search results are shown in pins on the map. ④*Tap the pin will lead users to a page with detailed information*, like phone numbers and address.

Written Sample 8
Background: Extracted from a project plan
Once the user log in the QQ client, our application will automatically upload the user's Qq ID and clientkey to our server……
The web page shows all the QQ accounts that users have logged in……