CAPSTONE ELL Portfolio

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Abstract

This ELL Portfolio demonstrates my philosophy of teaching and my proficiency in teaching English language learners (ELLs) according to the TESOL standards. In this portfolio, I review the artifacts I have accomplished in the two-year ELL program at Peabody College, and reflect upon them about their effectiveness in serving the increasingly diverse ELL population.

The portfolio consists of three parts: (1) my philosophy of teaching, (2) a review of artifacts with regard to the TESOL standards, and (3) my reflection on challenges and implications for future teaching. In the first part, I discuss my overall teaching philosophy based on the theoretical framework of social constructivism, and how this theory shapes my view of culturally responsive teaching. In the second part, I discuss my interpretation of the TESOL standards, present relevant artifacts created during my program of studies, and explain how these artifacts prove my competency in the following seven domains of the TESOL standards: (1) Planning, (2) Instructing, (3) Assessing, (4) Identity and Context, (5) Learning, (6) Content, and (7) Commitment and Professionalism. Each domain is illustrated with an artifact and analyzed focusing particularly on learners and learning, learning environment, curriculum and assessment. In the third part, I discuss the challenges I am facing or about to face concerning teaching ELLs, and explain how I am going to overcome them. I look back on the time spent at Peabody College and reflect on the most important takeaway in terms of ELL education. More importantly, I envision my identity in the future classroom and the lifelong professional development as a teacher.

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Philosophy of Teaching

Valenzuela (1999) defines a good teacher as one who cares about students' life, and one who demonstrates a more complete understanding of both their social and academic milieu. Before I came to Peabody, I have never realized that the sociocultural aspect of students' life would be an indispensable part of my future teaching. I used to think that their academic success is all I have to work on. Informed and reshaped by Valenzuela's (1999) definition of a good teacher, the overarching theme of my teaching philosophy now focuses on showing an authentic form of caring that emphasizes relations of reciprocity between teachers and students (Valenzuela, 1999).

As a prospective teacher who is mostly likely going to teach in the EFL setting, I believe culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2010) is the cornerstone of being a teacher who cares, especially when the students are culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD). According to Gay (2010), culturally responsive teaching is using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, and performance styles of CLD students to make learning more appropriate and effective for them. In other words, it teaches to and through the strengths of these students (Gay, 2010), and as a result they will be more motivated and thus more committed to learning.

In order to become a culturally responsive teacher, I would create a positive classroom environment where students' sociocultural identities are valued, their prior knowledge and experiences are utilized, and individual differences among them are addressed. As a whole, the learning theory of **social constructivism** developed by Lev Vygotsky serves as the theoretical framework of my teaching philosophy.

Known as a sociocultural theorist, Vygotsky (1986) believes that thinking and learning are dependent on social interactions and reflective of cultural values (as cited in Alexander, 2006). Similarly, second language acquisition derives from sociocultural interactions and the exchange of ideas, and the understanding of that language is deepened in the social context. I love the idea of sharing the knowledge, but, like Vygotsky who is not an extreme socioculturalist, I am not at the far end of the individual-to-social continuum with regard to second language acquisition (see Figure 1). In fact, I believe in social constructivism – that is, learning happens in a social and cultural milieu, but knowledge remains a uniquely personal construction within that milieu (Alexander, 2006).

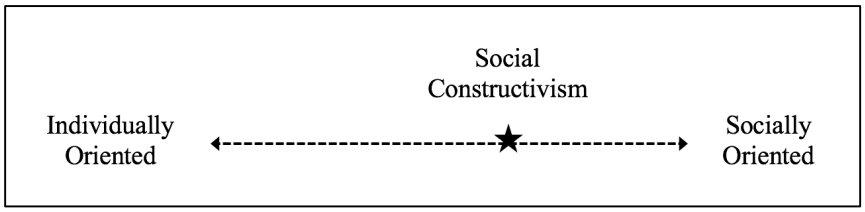

Figure 1. Social constructivism on a continuum of individual-to-social orientation.

In the following section, I am going to specify the teaching implications from a more social perspective to a more individual one along the continuum. Also, I will illustrate how these teaching practices look like in a classroom with examples.

Learning as a Sociocultural Activity

Building a welcoming, enriching yet challenging learning community (Baker, Terry, Bridger, & Winsor, 1997) is beneficial to CLD students. Specifically, students can learn more effectively and efficiently with the support and guidance of a more proficient other. In other words, peers, instructors, family and community members could all provide students with scaffolding

within their zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978) to help them fulfill their potential – both academically and socially.

In my future classroom, I will definitely include group work, because one thing I love most about collaborative learning is that it fosters empathy, which I believe constitutes a huge part of a student's emotional development. A group is a society in miniature; working together as a group helps students learn how to get along with people from all walks of life in the future.

Discourse-level input. The ultimate goal of learning a language either in the English as a second language (ESL) or English as a foreign language (EFL) context is to communicate. However, being able to communicate requires more than linguistic knowledge; it requires communicative competence – knowing when and how to say what to whom (Hymes, 1971), and discourse competence, defined as the ability to process and create coherent discourse, and work with language at the suprasentential level (Bachman, 1990; Canale & Swain, 1980).

One essential benefit of forming a learning community is the accessibility of discourse-level input, which enables learners to be exposed to repeated use of target forms (Nassaji & Fotos, 2011). Discourse-level input is especially necessary for English language learners (ELLs) in the EFL context, because they are not immersed in an English-speaking environment or exposed to English literacy. Information gap activities and task-based activities in interactive contexts are proved to be helpful in that they make sure that meaningful conversations are going on. Whereas students have to communicate with others to construct and negotiate meaning, they are supported in language production by peers while receiving adequate input.

However, teachers should be very careful about finding authentic spoken and written materials and simulating a native-like, input-rich microclimate in the classroom. As Nassaji and Fotos (2011) suggest, learners should receive a mixture of authentic and simplified material, because both types demonstrate multiple uses of the target grammar structures.

Interactional feedback. When students are required to produce output, teacher and peer feedback is essential, as it pushes them to negotiate and reflect on the accuracy of their language use in communicative contexts (Nassaji & Fotos, 2011). In this case, students are not constructing knowledge about language all by themselves. Rather, they are sharing knowledge as a learning community and their knowledge is informed and shaped by interactional feedback (Alexander, 2006).

Although various types of interactional feedback, including recasts, clarification requests, repetition, and direct elicitation, can be employed in output-based tasks, teachers need to be aware that uptake, which means the immediate response to the feedback, does not occur every time (Nassaji & Fotos, 2011). Even if students provide uptake, this does not necessarily mean that they have acquired the forms. However, it does indicate that they have noticed the feedback, and it is facilitators' responsibility to unlock their potential.

Funds of knowledge. Gaining a more thorough understanding of CLD students, I also came to realize the essential roles that parents and communities play in the teaching process. As teachers, we should take the initiative to involve students' families and communities, making full use of their funds of knowledge (Moll, Amanti, Neff & Gonzalez, 1992). Specifically, teachers can strategically bring their funds of knowledge (i.e. native language, immigration experience,

family history, household knowledge, etc.) into the classroom and design meaningful class activities.

In order to form a learning community that connect homes and schools, CLD students' prior knowledge – including both schooled knowledge and unschooled knowledge – should be identified and utilized. As unschooled knowledge is usually something that students are familiar with, interested in and have hands-on experience about, it lays a solid foundation for future instruction. Therefore, it would be more effective for teachers to construct deeper understanding in the classroom by building on funds of knowledge. In particular, teachers can extend the learning environment beyond the walls of the classroom, help students' make connections between unschooled knowledge and schooled knowledge, and fully develop teachable moments (Alexander, 2006).

On the one hand, I would try to guarantee effective communication with parents apart from regular home visits, thus establishing mutual trust between us. On the other hand, I want to encourage positive dialogues between students and parents. Thus, I will take advantage of activities like home reading journals and creating family keepsakes to engage parents in developing students' literacy skills (Allen, 2007). Plus, I will use tools like transnational and community literacies (Jiménez, Smith & Teague, 2009) and identity books (De Jong, 2011) to strengthen students' sociocultural identities.

Learning as a Personal Construction

Students come to the classroom with a broad range of pre-existing knowledge, skills, beliefs, and attitudes, which are going to influence how they participate in the class and process

the in-coming information. How they process and integrate new information will, in turn, affect how they remember, think, apply, and create new knowledge. Since learning is dependent on students' prior repertoire of knowledge and skills, knowing what students know and are able to do can help teachers craft instructional activities that build off of student strengths and acknowledge and address their weaknesses. Nevertheless, prior knowledge takes different forms. While funds of knowledge can be shared by a collaborative learning community, certain kinds of prior knowledge, such as metalinguistic awareness, exist only in a learner's mind. Thus, it is important for teachers to bridge the gap between shared knowledge and internalized knowledge.

Connections and transfer. When it comes to a language classroom, CLD students' prior knowledge becomes increasingly essential. In order to fully comprehend a text, students must do much more than simply decode the words in the class. They have to interact with the text and connect the information with their prior knowledge. In this case, students are engaging in conscious learning rather than rote memorization. However, we as teachers cannot assume that students automatically make these links on their own. Instead, we need to explicitly teach them strategies about building connections.

According to Keene and Zimmerman (1997), form-meaning connections can be viewed from three aspects: text-to-self, text-to-text and text-to-world connections (as cited in Herrera, Perez, & Escamilla, 2014). In my opinion, these three types of connections can serve as a guideline for teachers to activate students' prior knowledge and experience. Specifically, teachers can make use of students' academic, sociocultural, linguistic and cognitive knowledge to facilitate the construction of connections (Harvey & Goudvis, 2000).

Metalinguistic awareness. CLD students' native language is also part and parcel of prior knowledge, especially in language learning. While the languages might be shared within different immigrant communities, bilingual students' metalinguistic awareness remains a personal and internalized asset. Utilizing the bilingual or even multilingual strengths of CLD students increases their awareness of language diversity and promote a deeper understanding of the structural elements of different languages (Goodwin & Jiménez, 2015).

As a non-native English speaker, I will definitely tap into my bilingual competence and use both English and Chinese in my EFL teaching. In fact, bilingual instruction benefits students in various ways. The common underlying proficiency (Cummins, 1984) helps ELLs transfer their subject matter knowledge, reading strategies, writing composition skills and higher-order thinking skills from L1 to L2. Students who frequently code-switch are more likely to develop metalinguistic awareness, because actively thinking about the relationships between two languages promotes the development of biliteracy. Additionally, when ELLs engage in "languaging", defined as discussions or self-reflection in the L1 about the L2, they become more conscious of target forms, thus enhancing processing (Nassaji & Fotos, 2011). For bilingual students to promote their metalinguistic understandings, I will integrate meaningful translation tasks in my teaching. Building on that, I will engage students in a discussion in English that relates the translation to larger understandings about the text, relationships between their two languages, and strategies used during the activity (Goodwin & Jiménez, 2015).

Individual differences. Because no two people have the same life experiences or perceive, interpret, or remember the same event in the same way, personal prior knowledge, especially

unschooled knowledge, is as unique as fingerprints. Therefore, it is teachers' obligation to recognize and address students' different learning styles and multiple intelligence to help them perform at a higher level (Gardner, 2006). As a teacher who cares, I want to make sure that every single student – regardless of individual differences in learning styles, modes of thinking, or personalities – feel welcomed, comfortable and confident in my classroom. Because students learn best in an easy and pleasant classroom environment in which their affective filter is lowered and psychological barriers are removed (Krashen, 1985). In other words, students feel more free to produce language when their affective filter is low, with anxiety reduced and self-confidence boosted (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011).

Admittedly, careful grouping can benefit bilingual learners by providing an enriching environment where their learning can be scaffolded (De Jong, 2011). However, I will consciously set aside some time for students to do independent work. The TED Talk "the Power of the Introverts" given by Susan Cain (2012) has changed my viewpoint on group mentality. In her talk, she appealed for stopping the madness for constant group work, because it is not fair for introverts. It is much better for introverted people to go off by themselves and generate their unique ideas freed from the distortions of group dynamics (Cain, 2012). When it comes to school where continuous interactions are going on, solitude still needs to be emphasized. It does not mean we should abandon teamwork strategies, but it does mean we should also give students more autonomy and flexibility at work to encourage habitual reflection and contemplation. Therefore, allowing individuality within group work has now become my teaching philosophy with regard to grouping.

Conclusion

We are future teachers, but more importantly we are lifelong learners. Learning to be a culturally responsive teacher is an ongoing process and takes endless efforts. There are certain educational elements that I cannot change on my own, but what I can do is to provide a caring and meaningful classroom environment where CLD students' language learning is optimized – that is, their different types of prior knowledge are effectively tapped, their sociocultural identities are truly respected, and at the same time their individual differences are carefully addressed. I hope that I, together with my students, could make contributions to the community in return. Having students apply what they have learned in my classroom to the real world would nurture an awareness of community leadership and global citizenship. In this case, everyone is able to get the most out of education.

TESOL Standards for ESL/EFL Teachers

The TESOL standards serve as the guidelines for ESL/EFL teachers to evaluate and adjust their teaching preparation and professional development in order to best serve the ELL population in the United States. In this section, I am going to present artifacts from my program of studies to demonstrate my understanding in the following seven domains of the TESOL standards: (1) Planning, (2) Instructing, (3) Assessing, (4) Identity and Context, (5) Learning, (6) Content, and (7) Commitment and Professionalism. For each domain, I will first discuss my interpretation of the standard and provide a supportive artifact that is highly relevant to this domain. Then, I will give a brief description of the artifact and explain how it proves my competency in this domain by focusing particularly on learners and learning, learning environment, curriculum, and assessment.

Domain 1: Planning

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

Lesson planning is critical to both a student's and a teacher's success. A lesson plan serves as a road map for teachers, as it details what students need to learn and how the objectives can be achieved during the class time. However, lesson planning should not be viewed in isolation, but integrated with learning objectives and learners' individual differences. Before planning a lesson, an effective ELL teacher should identify the standards students need to meet, specify concrete content and language objectives, and determine the kinds of activities to be used in class accordingly. Also, the lesson should be followed by valid assessments to check whether the goals set at the beginning of the class have been met. Specifically, teachers can employ Backward

Design, defined as a method of designing educational curriculum by setting goals before choosing instructional methods and forms of assessment, as a model of lesson planning (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005).

For this standard, I am presenting a creative **lesson plan based on *Humans of New York*** (see Artifact A), a blog and bestselling book featuring street portraits and interviews collected on the streets of New York City. Generally, students learned descriptive expressions with the help of pictures and other visual tools, which benefited visual **learners** in particular. By linking descriptive words and phrases to specific visuals, students would be able to use these expressions more accurately and actively, thus facilitating their language **learning**.

As *Humans of New York* reflects lives of different people living in the melting pot, students were immersed in a multicultural **learning environment** in which they felt more related to the content. From this book, **learners** learned to accept and appreciate their identities, knowing their roles in the world and the cultures they represent. To acknowledge CLD students' identities, I carefully selected pictures that are culturally relevant to them, with which they can always have something to talk about. Also, the **learning environment** was cooperative and supportive, as students were grouped according to their sociocultural and linguistic background.

In this class, I asked students to interpret the assigned pictures using their own words and justify their inference to develop a higher level of cognitive thinking. Meanwhile, I provided a list of English expressions that are frequently used to describe a person's appearance and personality. By doing so, vocabulary **learning** was naturally woven into the whole **curriculum**. Then, after

modeling, I had students name the pictures and add subtitles or write short paragraphs based on what they inferred from the pictures.

Apart from language **learning**, culture **learning** is also part and parcel of my planned **curriculum**. Since the project *Human of New York* started from a photo blog and spread out through Facebook, I introduced the culture of social media in the United States. Then, I asked students to talk about the impacts of social media on their daily life and elaborate on their points. They were also encouraged to discuss the social media in their home cultures with their group members.

For the **assessment**, I encouraged students to develop their own "Humans of ____" albums or photo blogs after class. I gave students suggestions on how to conduct an interview in English and, like what the author of Humans of New York did, they would get to explore their communities, interview their family members, neighbors, classmates, teachers, etc., and take photos of them. They would also describe those people using the expressions they learned in class, and eventually share their works with the class via social media. With careful planning, I tried to make **learning** meaningful and relevant to **learners** by including appropriate and motivating materials and activities that foster real-life application of concepts introduced in class (Echevarría, Vogt, & Short, 2012).

Domain 2: Instructing

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

CLD students learn best in a supportive yet challenging learning community where their affective filter is lowered. To create such an environment, teachers need to know about their students both academically and socioculturally, and therefore acknowledge students' identities and view them as a whole. In particular, teachers should have a good knowledge of students' cultural and linguistic background, which is especially true for ELL teachers who are going to deal with a diverse student population. Besides, teachers should provide plentiful opportunities for peer interactions and teacher-student interactions, because the process of language learning is not one-way but bi-directional. Receiving interactional feedback from more proficient others benefits learners in that they are pushed to negotiate meaning and reflect on the accuracy of their language use in communicative contexts (Nassaji & Fotos, 2011, p. 71, 103).

For this domain, I am presenting a **grammar lesson plan on negative questions** (see Artifact B) designed for 5th-grade ELLs in China. The reason I chose this topic is that negative questions in English can be really confusing for Chinese ELLs due to the huge differences between two cultures and two languages. As negative questions are frequently used in spoken English, it is necessary to discuss this topic in the grammar **curriculum** and explicitly introduce some strategies for non-native speakers to avoid misunderstandings.

For maximum learning to occur, instructing must enable students to make connections between their own knowledge and experiences and the new information being taught (Echevarría, Vogt, & Short, 2012). The first thing I did in this lesson is to lower **learners'** affective filter by sharing with them my own embarrassed experience of answering negative questions. Once a friendly **learning environment** was established, students felt more comfortable talking about their

feelings about negative questions. In order to engage CLD students in meaningful grammar **learning**, we together tried to figure out the underlying cultural reasons that would explain why it is so hard for non-native speakers – Chinese ELLs in this case – to answer negative questions. This warm-up chat in turn helped build up connections between language objectives and **learners'** prior knowledge of their native language.

After introducing the two different types of negative questions, students generalized the patterns of contracted and uncontracted negative questions. As a follow-up **assessment**, I asked them to do a transformation drill, transforming the sentences from negative statements into two types of negative questions.

For the whole group **assessment**, I posed some negative questions, which were carefully designed according to **learners'** background and characteristics. I asked them to give a clear-cut answer in a complete sentence as fast as they can – either affirmative or negative. As the exercise went on, I asked faster and faster so that students had to answer without hesitation. And then I initiated a chain drill with a negative question so that everyone got a chance to practice. As the ultimate purpose of this **curriculum** was to develop **learners'** communicative competence, I did not correct students' grammatical mistakes if they gave baffling answers. Rather, I gave them opportunities to clarify their answers or self-correct.

Domain 3: Assessing

Standard: Teachers recognize the importance of and are able to gather and interpret information about learning and performance to promote the continuous intellectual and linguistic development of each learner. Teachers use knowledge of student performance to make decisions

about planning and instruction "on the spot" and for the future. Teachers involve learners in determining what will be assessed and provide constructive feedback to learners, based on assessments of their learning.

It is important for ELL teachers to utilize various forms of assessment – both standardized assessment and classroom-based observation protocol – in order to gain a more thorough understanding of a learner's language proficiency. When administrating a language assessment, teachers need to think critically about the five critical principles of it: practicality, reliability, validity, authenticity, and washback (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2010). They should do their best to rule out potential bias, and make consistent and objective judgments according to the rubrics. In addition to that, ELL teachers should integrate authentic assessment practices in their everyday instruction as a routine and ongoing process, because they are more sensitive to the natural growth of students acquiring English (Tinajero & Hurley, 2000; O'Malley & Pierce, 1992). More importantly, teachers need to create moments for positive washback in the form of specific feedback on students' performance or useful diagnoses of their strengths and weaknesses (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2010). Of course, the information obtained from all types of assessments should be employed to inform future teaching, which is the ultimate purpose of all assessments (Herrera, Cabral, & Murry, 2012).

For this domain, I am presenting a **case study of a non-native English speaker** (see Artifact C), Tristania (pseudonym). In the case study, I gave a brief introduction of Tristania's linguistic, cognitive, and sociocultural background. I collected both her speech and written samples and analyzed her second language acquisition based on these materials. In particular, I gave an

elaborate account of her English language proficiency in terms of phonology, phonetics, morphology, syntax, semantics and pragmatics. In response to Tristania's current stage of development in language acquisition, I also offered an instructional plan for future improvement.

For Tristania to produce language and perform tasks in a stress-free environment, the **assessments** I conducted in this case study were mostly informal observations. The speaking samples were mainly collected during the interview and the narrative tasks. In order to have a sound understanding of Tristania's writing abilities, I collected samples from a wide range of writing activities, including informal emails, short letter, academic paper, etc.

From this study, I realized that a **learner's** linguistic, cognitive, and sociocultural background all have a huge influence on his/her language **learning**. As for Tristania, the languages she speaks and uses on different occasions, the curriculum she has gone through, the **learning environment** she has been exposed to, the **learning** styles she has formed, the way she perceives the world, and the way she sees the cultural differences, more or less, shape different aspects of her language proficiency. For example, Tristania's tends to prolong the last syllable in an English word because of the unique Wuhan accent of her L1 Chinese, while her L3 German would also affect her pronunciation in English from time to time. Her belief in that language **learning** is optimized with real-life experiences contributed to her active participation in all sorts of social activities in which she could receive discourse-level input in an authentic **learning environment**. Her experience of studying abroad in Europe increased her motivation to become a multilingual person. These examples reveal that information about a language **learner's** background and previous experiences is extremely helpful for knowing him/her as a whole person and designing

language **curriculum** correspondingly. Therefore, it is legitimate for ELL teachers to carry out both formal and informal **assessments** of students' biopsychosocial history, education history and language history (Herrera, Cabral, & Murry, 2012). Effective teachers should make full use of the information to help structure their culturally responsive teaching, make wise decisions about teaching strategies and techniques, and eventually become "teachers who care" (Valenzuela, 1999).

According to the language proficiency levels suggested by American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Language (2012), I characterized Tristania's speaking skills as "advanced" while her writing skills as "superior". Based on analysis of her current stage of English language acquisition using a variety of theoretical frameworks, I provided her with constructive feedback and possible solutions. Considering her linguistic repertoire, prior schooling experiences, cognitive maturity, metalinguistic sophistication and sociocultural background, I developed a specific instructional plan to help Tristania fulfill her potential for language **learning**. Generally, I focused my **curriculum** on improving her sociolinguistic competence. I would tailor a socially constructed and culturally enriched **learning environment** in which she could interact with proficient interlocutors within her zone of proximal development and thus perform at a higher level (Vygotsky, 1978; Lightbown & Spada, 2006). Meanwhile, I would take advantage of Tristania's L1 and L3 as facilitators of English **learning**, because experiences with these two languages promote the development of the proficiency underlying all three languages given adequate exposure (Cummins, 1984).

Domain 4: Identity and Context

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

Culturally responsive ELL teachers should be ready to embrace diversity among students. A prerequisite for improving CLD students' English proficiency is to identify and utilize their linguistic, academic, cognitive and sociocultural assets (Herrera, Perez, & Escamilla, 2014). Only if their identity is acknowledged and positively strengthened in the classroom will they be more committed to learning. Also, teachers should tap CLD students' funds of knowledge, bring their native languages, family heritages, household and community knowledge to the foreground.

For this domain, I am presenting a **community literacies investigation** (see Artifact D). In that fieldtrip, I explored a South Asian immigrant community in Nashville, and collected multilingual printed and written materials from Central Market and Patel Brothers along Nolensville Pike. Based on these materials, I planed a **curriculum** on transnational and community literacies that helps bilingual and multilingual **learners** get fully involved in their literacy **learning**.

As I found a lot of printed advertisements with imperfect English during the fieldtrip, I tried to create **learning** opportunities by having students identify and correct the errors in groups. This **assessment** activity engages students in a meaningful task that is closely related to their real-life experiences. Taking a close look at the texts, students will be able to reconsider word choice,

idiomatic expression and the cultural values involved in translation and presentation. Multilingual **learners** would be a great helper in this activity, because it may involve some translation work. By code-switching back and forth between two languages, students unconsciously engage in "languaging", defined as self-reflection in the L1 about the L2 (Nassaji & Fotos, 2011). In other words, this activity has the potential to increase students' awareness of language diversity as well as promote their metalinguistic understandings and critical thinking ability (Jimenez, Smith & Teague, 2009). Further, it encourages the open exchange of ideas and reciprocal interactions between students from different linguistic background in a collaborative **learning environment**. Translation activities like this are rich sites of "teachable moments", especially for CLD students who speak different varieties of a language (Goodman, 2003).

In addition, I found a website called Sandhira (www.sandhira.com), which was established with a vision to bring the South Asian community together on a platform globally. Likewise, I would like to use this type of platform to create a nurturing **curriculum** that strengthens **learners'** ethnic identities as well as their literacy skills. Firstly, I would ask students to read South Asian news on Sandhira to their monolingual parents or exchange ideas on recent events in South Asia with parents who have a basic understanding of English. I would recommend students to keep a reflective journal of what they have read to or discussed with their parents so as to ensure frequent and positive communication between generations. Secondly, I would have students, together with their parents, design an electronic advertisement for family business or a poster based on their funds of knowledge as the business listings on Sandhira. This type of activity encourages **learners** to include consideration of which language(s) to write in, whether or not to include images and, if

so, what kinds and where to place them in relation to the written text (Department of Education, n.d.). Additionally, it is a great opportunity for immigrant families to find authentic South Asian services within the community and promote their own business at the same time. They can reconnect their cultural roots and more importantly discover future possibilities in the United States. By doing so, I am trying to create a **learning environment** that is welcoming not only to my CLD students, but also to their families and communities.

Domain 5: Learning

Standard: Teachers draw on their knowledge of language and language learning to understand the processes by which learners acquire a new language in and out of classroom settings.

For ELLs to achieve literacy in English and other content areas, teachers need to understand the systematic nature of language, and have a good knowledge of its structural components: phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics. More importantly, ELL teachers should apply their theoretical knowledge in second language acquisition (SLA) into practice to promote students' development of biliteracy. It is also teachers' responsibility to bridge the gap between students' mother tongue and target language by encouraging code-switching and translanguaging (Nassaji & Fotos, 2011). As a non-native English speaker, I share similar learning experiences with ELLs: I know what kind of learning strategies might be helpful to them; I understand what challenges they would face; and I can foresee what mistakes they are likely to make. These experiences contribute to my strengths in teaching English in the EFL context and fostering ELLs' metalinguistic awareness.

I will demonstrate my competency in this domain by, again, presenting the **case study of a non-native speaker** (see Artifact C), but analyzing from a different perspective. In this case study, I analyzed Tristania's strengths and challenges across all aspects of language, from phonetics to pragmatics, identified her stage of SLA in terms of speaking and writing abilities, discussed a variety of theoretical frameworks, and designed an instructional plan that would best meet her needs and thus fulfill her potential.

By transcribing and analyzing Tristania's speech and written materials, I found out typical challenges in English **learning** that are common among native Chinese speakers as well as nuances that are specific to her, such as the impact of her L3 German on her English pronunciation.

According to my observation, Tristania's prior schooling has a huge impact on her SLA. Most of the English **curriculum** she has gone through employed the Grammar Translation Method, with the belief that language development is based on the formation of habits (Lightbown & Spada, 2006), which is aligned with the theory of behaviorism. She has been immersed in a **learning environment** where receptive skills and accuracy were prioritized over productive skills and fluency. It is assumed that a person **learning** a second language would start off with the habits formed in the first language (Lightbown & Spada, 2006). This assumption is similar to Cummin's theory of common underlying proficiency (CUP) (Cummins, 1984). In Tristania's case, however, the overlapping triangle in Cummin's iceberg model not only includes her L1 Chinese and L2 English, but also her L3 German. From my observation, she often does code switching back and forth between Chinese and English, and between English and German. The influences of her L1 and L3, including both positive and negative ones, are particularly obvious in her phonology.

Besides, the sociocultural theoretical framework can also account for Tristania's SLA. Her earlier experience as an exchange student in Europe has shaped her **learning** patterns as an ELL. Exposed to a pure foreign-language-speaking **learning environment**, she had plentiful opportunities to practice English and German in authentic contexts. As a highly motivated **learner**, she actively participated in social activities in which she could use multiple forms and functions of language with the goal of understanding and using new discourse appropriately (Pray, 2014). When it comes to the classroom **learning environment**, Tristania is frequently engaged in **learner-learner** interactions where her language production is supported by peers in output-based activities. At the same time, she is able to receive feedback on the correctness of her language use, which works well as a means of self-**assessment** for her (Nassaji & Fotos, 2011). In other words, Tristania enjoys **learning** by talking.

Knowing how Tristania's educational history affects her English **learning**, I now realize the significance of **assessments** of ELLs with regard to their linguistic, cognitive, and sociocultural background. Therefore, as a future ELL teacher, I will continually assess **learners'** language proficiency and monitor their progress, thus adjusting my techniques, strategies and **curriculum** to most effectively benefit their **learning**.

Domain 6: Content

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

help learners acquire the language they need to successfully communicate in the subject or content areas they want/need to learn about.

Effective ELL teachers should focus more on developing students' communicative and sociocultural competence rather than teaching the structural knowledge of a language, because communication is the ultimate goal of learning a language. For well-rounded communicative competence to be developed, ELLs need instruction on both Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) (Cummins, 1984). Despite the distinction between BICS and CALP, both of them equip students with the ability to communicate, conversationally and academically – in other words, the ability to succeed in school. Therefore, communication, as the overarching theme of language learning, ought to be the content objective as well as the language objective in a language-focused lesson. Nevertheless, the content should never be watered down because of the learning gap between native English speakers and ELLs, or divorced from authentic communicative purposes (Echevarría, Vogt, & Short, 2012). The content is supposed to make the linguistic structures meaningful and reveal how they might be deployed communicatively (Wong Fillmore, 2014).

For this domain, I am presenting a **conversation lesson plan about making a phone call** (see Artifact E). Target **learners** in this class are adult ELLs who have been learning English for 2 years or so in the United States, and their English proficiency is at level 2. Since the content of an adult English course is often the language that will help adults participate in their immediate life situation, I decided to teach telephone English, which is highly relevant to adult language **learners**.

Living in the United States, students will have to make phone calls in English from time to time in order to get certain services. However, non-native speakers may unintentionally sound impolite on the phone. Thus, the **learning** goal of my conversation lesson is for adult ELLs to develop communicative and sociocultural competence, namely, knowing what to say on different occasions and how to say it appropriately, politely and naturally. Having this goal in mind, I focused my **curriculum** on giving students tips on telephone etiquette, equipping them with communication strategies, and providing them with useful English expressions in telephoning.

In this lesson, I started with a question to see whether students like making phone calls or not and how they feel about it. Then I shared my embarrassed telephone experiences and explained the reason why non-native speakers have difficulties making phone calls in English. By making connections to their real-life experiences, I wished to lower their affective filter and thus create a friendly **learning environment**. The **curriculum** of this lesson is based on four different situations in telephoning that adults would frequently encounter in their everyday life. Useful expressions were introduced and woven into each situation. Meanwhile, I provided a list of corresponding sentence starters in different situations in order to reduce **learners'** cognitive load and facilitate their **learning**.

As for the **assessment**, I designed a phone-call activity that would provide a variety of ways for students to practice and apply what they were **learning**. This activity assesses their understanding of the four telephone situations and their mastery of the expressions in telephone English. Also, this **assessment** is based on the task-based approach that would engage students in communication and social interaction when solving meaningful tasks (Nassaji & Fotos, 2011). To

simulate an authentic phone-call environment, students were paired up and assigned different phone-call tasks, but they were not allowed to see their partners or practice with them in advance. Yet they had opportunities to prepare on their own using the strategies, expressions and sentence starters they just learned. This addition to the activity creates a **learning environment** as authentic as possible so that students are engaged in **learning** for genuine communicative purposes. While receiving discourse-level input, adult **learners** were also encouraged to produce oral output in a meaningful sociocultural content.

Domain 7: Commitment and Professionalism

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

Teaching is indeed a dynamic job and calls for continual learning and updating. Effective teachers not only need to have a good command of content knowledge and instructional techniques, but also need to constantly evaluate and reflect on their teaching practices and pay close attention to education policy issues in the larger society. Specifically, ELL teachers should keep current with the latest research results and advances in the ESL/EFL field, and apply them to inform future teaching and learning. Technology, for example, is one thing that teachers should always keep themselves at the cutting edge of, because it has influenced the educational climate worldwide and changed the way people teach and learn. Additionally, the English language itself is evolving.

Thus, open-mindedness and readiness for unexpected changes have become two critical features of a responsive ELL teacher.

As a student teacher who is most likely going to teach English in China, I feel obliged to apply the knowledge I have learned here in the United States to English education in China. Therefore, I will demonstrate my competency in this domain by presenting a **term paper *Making the Syllabus a Two-Way Communication between Teachers and Students in China*** (see Artifact F) I wrote about the possibilities of using syllabi in China. With this research question in mind, I reviewed and analyzed relevant literature regarding the communicative function of the syllabus.

The syllabus is widely used as an instructional tool in higher education institutions in the United States. Along with providing information about the **curriculum** of the course, the syllabus can be a means to communicate expectations to **learners** (McKeachie, 1999). As a contract between teachers and students, it greatly enhances the accountability and commitment of both teaching and **learning**, and it provides details about the roles of both instructors and **learners** in the **assessment** process (Habanek, 2005). However, it is not a common practice among college teachers in China to share syllabi with students. Apparently, they are not making full use of the syllabus as an informative document of two-way communication between teachers and students.

Also, there is a power disparity between teachers and students in China in that students have little control over the **curriculum** and class policies, and this disparity could be even reinforced by the decisive nature of the syllabus. Therefore, as a symbolic message, how the syllabus is presented speaks volume about the teacher's perceived identity and set the tone for the **learning environment** (Habanek, 2005; McKeachie, 2002; Weimer, 2002; Wolcowitz, 1984).

Whereas teachers should be determined about the ground rules, they could allow some flexibility in less restrictive aspects of the syllabus.

There is one particular model of syllabus – negotiated syllabus – that is especially beneficial to **learners** in the ESL/EFL settings. It suggests that teachers should involve ELLs in the planning process (Kaplan & Renard, 2015). The advent of negotiated syllabus derives from the recognition that **learners**, rather than teachers, are central to language **learning** (Clarke, 1991). In other words, **learners'** affective, cognitive, and linguistic needs should all play a part in determining the content and implementation of whatever syllabus type is decided upon (Clarke, 1999). Moreover, negotiating the syllabus with students provides teachers with extra opportunities to reflect on their competencies and interests while designing the **curriculum** (Knowles, 1990). Also, a **learner**-centered syllabus helps students develop self-management and self-**assessment** skills, which is more valuable beyond the course content. Self-regulated students can use the collaborative syllabus to plan and monitor their **learning**, benchmarking their performance against the objectives identifies by the instructor (Parkes & Harris, 2002).

As a pre-service ELL teacher, I think it is possible and doable to introduce the authentic concept of syllabus into China. A well-designed syllabus can be really helpful to ELLs because it guarantees an optimal **learning environment** where there is two-way communication going on between teachers and students. Plus, it enhances the predictability of the instruction, thus lowering the affective filter of ELLs. More importantly, the involvement of **learners** in the syllabus development process maximizes their motivation and empowerment, as they are taking responsibility for their own **learning**. Given all these benefits of using syllabi, I am committed to

introducing this idea into higher education institutions in China and I can see endless possibilities of it in the field of EFL teaching.

Reflection on Challenges and Implications for Future Teaching

The two-year ELL program at Peabody College has equipped me with an all-embracing repertoire of teacher knowledge, both in the ESL and EFL context. I have gained an in-depth understanding of language learning and getting along with CLD students. While reading academic journals and research papers provided me with the theoretical knowledge base, writing lesson plans and actually implementing them gave me a taste of being a teacher on the practical side. Furthermore, I have experienced real-world classrooms in the United States thanks to all the fieldtrips and practicums I have accomplished.

Vision of Professional Development

As an educator, I attach great importance to being a lifelong learner. I look forward to all the possible opportunities for professional development, and I envision my future learning to be continual and sustained no matter what form it takes.

Benefiting a lot from the strong Peabody network of professors, researchers and fellow students, I will continue to build professional relationships with my teachers and peers. Meanwhile, I will also do my best to make my own contributions to this learning community. In an increasingly "flatter" and more globalized world, we can easily bring brand-new techniques and strategies while share the wisdom with educators across the globe. If we all work together in this way, we are on our way to creating a collaborative and reciprocal platform that keeps ourselves updated with the latest advances in the education world. From a more microscopic perspective, I will form teaching-study groups with fellow teachers, both expert and novice, and do lesson study to perfect my teaching methods through interaction with them. I really appreciate the strong group accountability

among teachers in Japan, not in the form of formalized accountability to the bureaucracy, but instead an intimate and genuine accountability to colleagues (OECD, 2010). Indeed, it is the best hope for the collective improvement of teaching practice.

Currently, I am interested in a non-profit organization called the JUMP! Foundation. It is dedicated to using experiential education as a means of youth empowerment, and arousing awareness among youth of community leadership and global citizenship. As JUMP! delivers educational programs worldwide, I cannot wait to see how experiential education looks like in China and other Asian countries. With additional programs, workshops and keynote lectures for educators, it is also a great opportunity for me to think about the greater purpose of education and reflect on my role as an educator in the larger society.

Although I initially considered teaching EFL in China and I still want that, I hope to get a chance to teach abroad while exploring the world some time in the future. I can picture myself working as a volunteer teacher in refugee camps in Thailand, Vietnam or Cambodia, or a social worker at Mother House in Kolkata, India.

Reflection on Challenges and Teaching Implications

One thing I have concluded from my two-year study is that effective teaching is all about finding a balance. Whereas every teacher is striving to reach a state of balance, it is challenging for ELL teacher and even more challenging than ever with an increasingly diverse student population.

I used to agree with the view that teaching should be eclectic. That is to say, teachers are supposed to choose and synthesize the best elements, principles and activities of different

approaches in order to optimize their teaching (Nassaiji & Fotos, 2011). However, after trying to squeeze all the information I thought might be helpful in one single lesson, I found that so-called eclectic teaching could be extremely overwhelming to students. Yet intimidating students with undue information load is the last thing I want to see in my teaching. Currently, my new interpretation of the word "eclectic" centers on balance. For students to benefit most, eclectic teaching has to be principled. It is understandable that teachers need to balance the tension between limited instructional time and excessive learning objectives, but we should keep students' feelings in mind. Focusing solely on teaching without considering whether learning is occurring does not result in effective education.

There are so many other kinds of balance teachers have to manage in a real-world classroom, for example, the balance between lecturing and practicing, teacher talk and student talk, teacher authority and student choice, students' cognitive development and language proficiency, etc. One particular type of balance ELL teachers need to deal with is the balance between accuracy and fluency. From my teaching experiences, I found it hard to locate appropriate materials for discourse-level input when developing ELLs' communicative competence. On the one hand, I want students to have a good command of routinized sentence patterns that can help them reduce cognitive load. More importantly, I hope that they could learn conversational etiquette and social norms from my class, because I believe the secret of speaking native-like English lies in the ability to use English appropriately, politely, and naturally, which appears to be the greatest challenge for many non-native speakers including me. On the other hand, I doubt that materials designed artificially for the sake of language acquisition reflect the authentic discourse of native English

speakers, because their everyday conversations include a great number of incomplete sentences and colloquial expressions, which can hardly be taught in a systematic way. Again, this is a problem of striking a balance between the learnability and authenticity of teaching materials. Although materials at the discourse of suprasentential level can help ELLs learn about the cohesion and coherence properties of language (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011), we should provide them with a mixture of authentic and simplified material, with both types supplying multiple uses of the target language structures (Nassaji & Fotos, 2011). It is legitimate that we as ELL teachers constantly revisit our objectives and reflect on our teaching, otherwise what we teach may not be the same as what we think we are teaching.

Teaching is indeed a dynamic job and calls for constant learning and updating. I agree that technology provides both teachers and students with endless resources, thus bringing enhanced teaching and learning experiences (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011). However, this era of information technology has exerted extra pressure on teachers. Teachers have to keep abreast of the cutting-edge educational technology and the latest trends of students' learning styles. For instance, language used in online interactions is definitely not considered as authentic discourse several years ago, but it is now so popular among students that teachers feel obliged to take advantage of technological improvement and figure out strategies to integrate this type of language into their teaching. One illustrating example is that icons and emojis can be utilized to teach the concept of writing systems (R. Jimenez, personal communication, November 3, 2015). Although English language is generational (S. Barone, personal communication, December 3, 2015), educational technology keeps it lively. To keep up with the evolving language, ELL teachers will

have to be open-minded and get ready for changes. Nevertheless, teachers need to be cautious about technology, considering it as an added value rather than a must, because overreliance on technology in teaching can be exhausting. As a consequence, teachers may spend too much time on technology integration in teaching, but little on the larger intellectual purpose of education. I would say instead of thinking about what we can do with technology, we should think more about what we can do if we do not have access to it, which is exactly the educational situation in a lot of underprivileged areas. Again, it is all about balancing.

Identity in the Future Classroom

In a social constructivist classroom, students are active learners and are encouraged to be linguistic and cognitive explorers, making connections between new information and their prior knowledge (Carrasquillo, Kucer, & Abrams, 2004). Therefore, I would define myself as a **facilitator** mediating students' learning rather than a transmitter of information. The reason why I choose the term "facilitator" instead of "mentor" or "advisor" is that I am committed to creating a learning environment with little power inequality. As a facilitator, I will provide both linguistic and instructional scaffolding within students' zone of proximal development. However, I will gradually release the responsibility to students using the "I Do – We Do – You Do" model, and empower them to take charge of their own learning.

I love the saying that to teach is to touch eternity. Thus, I wish to be a **role model** for my students. A role model does not necessarily mean being more knowledgeable or more proficient in a language in the case of language teaching. A role model is a person who inspires others to strive for greatness, live to their fullest potential and see the best in themselves. Apart from

teaching academic knowledge, teachers should do their best to model love, respect, empathy, passion and all the other qualities that contribute to a whole person. Fortunately, I have met several teachers who not only passed along knowledge, but also imparted life's most important lessons to me throughout my schooling. They are my lifelong role models and, to a great extent, they are the reason why I want to be a teacher. Therefore, I really care about how students perceive me as a teacher and, more importantly, as an individual. Henry Adams said, "A teacher affects eternity; he can never tell where his influence stops". Hopefully, I can become a teacher who touches eternity.

Last but not least, I will continue to be a **learner** in the classroom and learn from my students. I enjoy working with students who come from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, and it is thrilling to discover the talents that they bring into the classroom. As we all strive to be lifelong learners, we should recognize that teaching benefits students and teachers alike.

Important Takeaways from ELL Program

The most mind-blowing takeaway from my two years at Peabody College is that teachers, especially ELL teachers, should acknowledge and strengthen students' identities.

Before studying in the United States, the program title Teaching English to Students of Other Languages (TESOL) simply meant "teaching English" to me, but now I realize the significance of understanding "students of other languages". I recognize how diverse my future students can be in the light of their linguistic, academic, cognitive, and sociocultural background (Herrera, Perez, & Escamilla, 2014). Most importantly, I have learned to appreciate my identity as a non-native English speaker as well as my students'. I was deeply impressed by our teacher's words at the beginning of the program, "Accent is totally acceptable, because everyone has an

accent, even native speakers, and it is a part of one's identity (K. Fagan, personal communication, December 1, 2014)." Further, immigrant experience, both pleasant and unpleasant, contributes to one's identity. Instead of simply avoiding sensitive topics, I now realize the necessity for teachers to take the initiative to deal with these negative feelings by carefully directing students to find an appropriate emotional outlet (S. Daniel, personal communication, January 20, 2016). These enlightening conversations with my teachers and fellow students at Peabody College greatly moulded my current philosophy of nurturing ELLs.

Indeed, CLD students are a valuable resource that adds to the richness of our schools and classrooms. I like the terms "his-story" and "her-story" as they recognize that every CLD student arrives with a story (Herrera, Cabral, & Murry, 2012), and knowing about them as whole people is one of the most amazing things of being a teacher. A careful examination of the unique characteristics of them helps teachers understand how language, culture, and prior experiences shape the identities of these diverse students (Gottlieb, 2006). Effective teachers should make full use of the information to help structure their culturally responsive teaching and become "teachers who care" in Valenzuela's words (1999).

However, culturally responsive teaching is far more sophisticated than simply talking about superficial aspects such as traditional food or music. What matters most to ELLs is relating them to universal experiences and global trends that have a direct impact their lives (S. Daniel, personal communication, February 17, 2016). To be truly culturally relevant, we need to find out the answer to the question: what is the larger intellectual purpose (Wiggins & McTighe, 2011)? We should

keep in mind that integrating higher order thinking skills in the instruction is always a must rather than a bonus for ELLs.

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Appendix

Artifact A: Lesson Plan on *Humans of New York*

<table>
<tr><td>Topic:
Humans of New York</td><td>Class:
7th-grade Social Studies</td><td>Date:
03/01/2015</td><td>Time:
60 min</td></tr>
<tr><td>Content Objectives:
• SWBAT gain a special glimpse into New York City as a melting pot.
• SWBAT understand their roles as lively individuals representing their cultures in this world and learn to accept and appreciate their identities.
• SWBAT use photos or other graphic tools as a way of expression other than languages and tell the differences between them.
• SWBAT define social media and recognize the impact of it on our daily life.
• SWBAT know about the strategies on how to approach strangers in the real world and conduct a brief interview.</td><td colspan="3">Language Objectives:
• SWBAT know how to use key words that are associated with a person’s character by linking them to specific visuals.
i.e. well-educated, genteel, intelligent, learned, knowledgeable, energetic, passionate, expressive, humorous, warm-hearted, sweet-tempered, reliable, faithful, candid, amiable, ambitious, aggressive, romantic, self-conscious, athletic, stubborn, strong-willed…
• SWBAT use visualization as an instructional tool to memorize vocabulary and facilitate learning.
• SWBAT refer to visuals brought from their home cultures and illustrate the content or concept being presented; and SWBAT extend their knowledge through discussion and activities associated with the visuals.
• SWBAT infer a person’s personality from his/her appearance and behavior, and then add titles/subtitles to the portraits; and SWBAT justify their inference orally to develop a higher level of cognitive thinking.
• SWBAT develop their own “Humans of _____” albums or photo blogs.
See class activities for details.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Key Vocabulary:
Culture
Diversity
Identity
Visual/visualization
Photography
Portrait
Social media
Social network</td><td colspan="3">Materials:
• Book: Humans of New York (Stanton, 2013)
• Facebook page: Humans of New York https://www.facebook.com/humansofnewyork?fref=ts
• Video clip: On how I approach strangers in the street | Humans of New York creator Brandon Stanton | UCD, Dublin https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KPxzlGPrM3A
• Movie: The Social Network https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oxXj-h0ELwA</td></tr>
</table>

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

Add a title/subtitle to a picture & write a short story about the picture

- Show students a picture.

- Tell students explicitly what I am thinking when I see this picture.
  (1) *This may be a container truck.*
  (2) *There is a pair of dirty boots on the left; and there is a bouquet of fresh flowers on the right.*
  (3) *These two sets of objects seem contradictory to me in the same scene.*
  (4) *While the dirty boots may belong to a lower-class worker, the fresh flowers represent an elegant lady.*
  (5) *Such a sharp contrast remind me of a Disney animated movie "Lady and the Tramp", which depicts a romantic story between a lovingly pampered cocker spaniel and a freewheeling, king-hearted mutt.*
  (6) *Thus, I decide to name this picture "Lady and the Tramp".*
- Model how to write a short story about this picture in the same way.
  "He finally decided to propose to her tonight. Unlike the other days, the freewheeling man brought a brand-new suit and a pair of leather shoes to work so that he could change out of his dirty overalls and boots after work. During the break, he stopped by a nearby flower shop to get a delicate bouquet of flowers – of course, her favorite kind. Excited yet nervous, he has been waiting so long for this life-changing moment."

Introductory Activities

- Show students the picture "Lady and the Tramp" mentioned above on the Powerpoint and ask them to think about the following questions:
  (1) What did you see in the picture?

(2) What information did you infer from the picture?
(3) How do you interpret this picture?
(4) How will you name this picture? *(Teacher models first.)*

- Pair students according to their sociocultural and linguistic background, ask them to share with their partners the pictures that are related to their home cultures *(Teacher assigns during the last class.)*, and have them illustrate to each other the content or concept being presented in the pictures.

Class Activities

- Display a photo from *Humans of New York* on the Powerpoint. The selected photo had better be culturally relevant to students from different cultural background like the one underneath, with which they can always have something to talk about. Encourage students to freely express their opinion on this photo. Then ask students to name this portrait and guess the character of the people it. There is no definite answer for this question. Encourage them to state the reasons for their responses.

Students can use "In My Head" strategy to first document their thoughts in several ways before articulating their opinion aloud:
(1) using visual aids;
(2) using native language;
(3) talking to a more proficient peer or bilingual paraprofessional.

- Invite students to try to write several sentences or a short paragraph to describe what may be happening in this photo. *(Teacher models first.)*
- Introduce the book *Humans of New York* and its author, Brandon Stanton. Introduce the history of *Humans of New York* project from the photo blog to the bestselling book. Bring up the topic of social media.
- Group students and have them define social media and its various types based on their prior sociocultural knowledge and experience. Distribute the "True or False?"

handouts on social media. Then have students individually respond to the true or false statements. After that, have them discuss their answers in groups. Do not correct them at this point; rather, encourage them to elaborate on their individual rationales for their responses.

"True or False" handout on social media

a) *Social media is defined as Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn.*
b) *Everyone is on social media.*
c) *We must be on every social network in order to be socially successful.*
d) *We need to post 24/7 and respond to social activities immediately.*
e) *Social media is all about the number of posts and followers.*
f) *Only celebrities attract thousands of followers.*
g) *Social media makes us less productive.*
h) *Social media shortens the distance between people.*
i) *Elderly people are not active on social media.*

Have students continue to discuss in groups about the reasons of social media use and its influence on our everyday life.

- Have students develop their own "Humans of _____" albums or photo blogs after class.
  - Show students the video clip "On how I approach strangers in the street" made by the author Brandon Stanton and give them some explicit strategies on how to conduct an interview. Encourage them to interview people in their communities, including family members, neighbors, classmates, school teachers, etc., and take photos of them.
  - Ask students to describe the people they have interviewed with several sentences or short paragraphs.
  - Share students' albums or photo blogs with the class via social media.

What special challenges will ELL students face with this material?

- Students may be unfamiliar with this type of expression so that they may find it hard to construct meaning based on the photos alone.
- As *Humans of New York* is a work recording people's real lives, it may inevitably involve some touchy subjects, such as alcohol, drug, sex, violence, homosexuality, etc. Students may feel uncomfortable talking about them.

Artifact B: Lesson Plan on Negative Questions

Planning:

1. Age: 12 years old
   Grade: 5th grade
   Class/course type: English Language Arts (grammar lesson)
   Setting: An elementary-level class with English language learners in China who have just learned how to ask and answer positive questions

2. Explain why you chose this topic:
   I chose this topic simply because I, as an English language learner, have experienced difficulties dealing with negative questions. Negative questions are confusing. Even after over 15 years' of English learning, I still could not answer them smartly when asked by native speakers. It usually takes me several seconds to process the question and the answer. As negative questions are frequently used in spoken English, it is necessary to look into them and explicitly introduce some strategies to avoid misunderstandings.

3. Objective for this lesson:
   (1) Students will be able to define two different types of negative questions.
   (2) Students will know about the situations in which negative questions are usually asked.
   (3) Students will learn how to ask negative questions and answer them without ambiguity in their daily conversation. Strategies will be provided.
   (4) Students will explore the underlying linguistic and cultural differences that cause confusion when answering negative questions.

4. Lesson Method
   (1) Processing Instruction
      - processing input for meaning
      - overcoming faulty input processing strategies
   (2) Textual Enhancement: highlighting in both written and oral texts
   (3) Discourse-Level Grammar: emphasizing communicative use of grammar
   (4) Direct Method
      - teaching for communicative purpose
      - teaching grammar grammar inductively
      - allowing self-correction
   (5) Audio-Lingual Method: transformation drill/chain drill/question-and-answer drill
   (6) Culturally Responsive Teaching: making connections to students' native language, cultural background and prior experiences

5. Materials Needed:

- Handouts
- Colored cards with parts of speech on them

Teaching the lesson:

a) How will you introduce the lesson? Why did you choose this topic?

As mentioned above, I myself have problems with answering negative questions, so I will introduce the topic by sharing my own embarrassed experience. Hopefully, some students could share theirs too. Then, I will ask the students to discuss why it is so hard for non-native English speakers – Chinese English language learners in this case – to answer negative questions. By doing this, I am trying to build up connections with students' native language and prior experiences.

b) How will you explain the lesson objective?

I will remind students of the ubiquity of negative questions in oral English. Therefore, as a part of everyday conversation, negative questions should be paid close attention to. Moreover, based on my own experience, the students' first language may affect how they answer a negative question. Thus, strategies need to be explicitly taught to avoid misunderstandings.

c) How will you explain the lesson procedure?

I will clearly state at the beginning of the class what we are going to do in the next ten minutes. I outlined the procedures on the handouts as well.

The class will be conducted in the following steps:

- Introduction of negative questions
- Differences between contracted and uncontracted negative questions
- How to ask negative questions?
- Why and when shall we ask negative questions?
- What are some strategies that we can employ to answer negative questions?
- Practice (first as a group and then one by one)

d) How will you end the lesson?

I will briefly summarize what we have learned today and wrap the lesson up with a negative question "Don't you want to take a quiz?" to bring out the theme again.

e) How will you ask the students to reflect on the lesson?

At the end of the class, I will guide the students to reflect on what they have learned. I will ask them to retell and rethink about the strategies to answer negative questions and see if the strategies really make sense to them. If not, they could come up with their own solutions and share with the class.

Apart from that, I think the discussion in the introductory part would be a good pre-reflection. On the one hand, the students could reflect on their past experience and think about whether

they do it right or wrong. Students could work together to figure out the underlying reasons that lead to confusion when answering negative questions. On the other hand, the students could reconsider the situations in which negative questions are supposed to be asked. They should not avoid negative questions simply because they are perplexing.

f) How will you assess students?

After introducing the two different types of negative questions, I will ask the students to generalize the patterns of contracted and uncontracted negative questions. They will also be asked to do a transformation drill, transforming the sentences from negative statements into two types of negative questions.

I will pose some negative questions, which are carefully designed according to students' background and characteristics. Students will be asked to give a clear-cut answer in a complete sentence as fast as they can – either affirmative or negative. As the exercise goes on, I will ask faster and faster so that students have to answer without hesitation. And then I will initiate a chain drill with a negative question. The student next to me will answer it and then pose another question to the one sitting next to him/her. And then chains continues until everyone gets a chance to practice. The practice part is supposed to be fun, so I will not correct the students even when they give a baffling answer. Instead, I will give them an opportunity to clarify their answer and then self-correct.

Artifact C: Case Study of a Non-Native Speaker

Introduction of the Participant

My participant Tristania (pseudonym) is a 23-year-old Chinese girl from Wuhan, the capital of Hubei Province. She is now a second-year graduate student in the ELL (English Language Learners) Program at Vanderbilt University. She is an outgoing and helpful person with a great passion for life. As her roommate, I really enjoy her company, sharing our life as well as sharing the room. However, as I spent much of my spare time together with Tristania, I noticed that though fluent, her English still has some space for improvement.

In this paper, I will briefly introduce Tristania's characteristics, along with her linguistic, cognitive and socio-cultural background. During this semester, I collected both her speech and written samples and analyzed her second language acquisition based on these materials. I will also elaborate on her English language proficiency in terms of phonology, phonetics, morphology, syntax, semantics and pragmatics in the second part of this paper.

Linguistic Background

Tristania's native language is mandarin Chinese (L1) and she has a good command of English (L2), which has been formally taught at school from fifth grade and also German (L3), which is her undergraduate major. Plus, she is now learning Spanish (L4) as her fourth language on a daily basis.

Receiving high-demanding schooling throughout her lifetime, Tristania is rather proficient in her L1, L2 and L3 and does well in reading, listening, speaking, writing and translating. She

started to learn English when she was in the fifth grade, which means she has been learning English for about thirteen years.

Despite that, Tristania still has plenty of opportunities to use her native language, because her roommates and most of her classmates are native Chinese speakers. Also, she talks to her parents using her mother tongue. Additionally, she speaks Chinese when interning as a Chinese language teaching assistant at school. She speaks mandarin Chinese with a cute Wuhan accent, which is typical in central China. From my observation, people with Wuhan accent opt to prolong certain vowels, especially within adjectives and adverbs, in Chinese to express excitement or anxiety. However, as both of her parents were not born in Wuhan, they three do not usually speak Wuhan dialect yet they can understand it pretty well. Nevertheless, she prefers to use English when there are both bilingual speakers (which refers to people who can speak Chinese and English here) and English-only speakers around, in order to show respect to all.

What is worth mentioning is that although there is an immeasurable distance between English language and Chinese language, Tristania masters in them both. While modern English belongs to Germanic language group, Chinese is under the family tree of Sino-Tibetan language (Chiswick & Miller, 2004). What is more, they belong to different phonological system: Chinese is a tone language, using four pitches of a phoneme to distinguish word meaning, but in English, changes in pitch are used only to emphasize or express emotion (Showbottom, 2014). Additionally, English is a typical phonographic writing system, whereas Chinese is known as a highly morphographic one (Mihalicek & Wilson, 2011). According to Tristania, the most noticeable difference between English and Chinese is the tense of verbs. In English, much information is

carried by auxiliaries and inflectional affixes of verbs. Chinese, on the other hand, is an uninflected language and conveys meaning through shared understanding of the context (Showbottom, 2014). In spite of these remarkable differences, Tristania's mother tongue still helps deepen her understanding of English language and culture.

An interesting fact is that Tristania used to think of teaching German instead of English in the first place, because she has received formal and systematic German language education from scratch during her undergraduate studies. It seems that she is not that confident about or interested in English language teaching, even though she apparently has a better command of English than German. Tristania also mentioned that her third language German would affect her pronunciation in English. In fact, it is more like a bidirectional influence.

In general, her L1, together with L3 and L4, facilitates her English language learning to a large extent.

Cognitive Background

I would characterize Tristania as an intelligent student, or I should say that she is good at learning innately. She graduated from Wuhan University, a renowned and highly-ranked comprehensive university in China. Surprisingly, she neither took the high school entrance examinations, nor the college entrance examinations. In other words, she was recommended for admission by her previous schools throughout her secondary and tertiary schooling, which is extremely rare for Chinese students. In China, only a minority of students who achieve top-notch

academic excellence and well-rounded development could enjoy this privilege. Tristania is one of them.

According to Tristania, most of the English education at her schools is test-oriented. Specifically, English teaching is based on the traditional grammar translation method, which is quite typical in an English class in China. Students at her age have been receiving spoon-fed education since elementary school. To meet the provincial or municipal requirements of English education, teachers focus on mainly on reading and writing rather than listening or speaking, thus overlooking the importance of phonological and phonemic awareness (D. Freeman & Y. Freeman, 2004). Teachers would assign a great number of exercises along with the lessons so as to make sure that students totally understand, absorb and acquire the knowledge. The teaching goal is to get everything on the right track, so grammar is like the basic rules or prerequisite for learning the "right" English.

However, Tristania said she is not that kind of students who spend all of her time studying in the library. Instead, she would like to fully experience the outside world and thus learn from the real-world experiences. "Study hard; play hard" has always been her motto since high school. In her opinion, the perfect way of learning is the combination of hands-on experiences with a proper load of drills. Although she is not a fan of test-oriented education, she still thinks drills are necessary, because she regards herself as the kind of students with poor self-discipline.

Socio-cultural Background

Tristania was raised in a well-off and caring family in Wuhan, which is recognized as the political, economic, financial, cultural, educational and transportation center of central China. Although her parents know little about English or other languages, they are always being supportive both economically and psychologically when Tristania decides to learn new languages.

During her undergraduate studies, Tristania has been to Europe, Austria, Germany and France included, for half a year as an exchange student. This experience of cultural and linguistic diversity has greatly changed --- or, in other words, reshaped --- her values and world outlook, which also contributes to her motivation of becoming a multilingual person. Tristania strongly advocates diversity, and therefore she has a multicultural and multicolored circle of friends. One thing fascinates me most is that unlike other Chinese students, she gets along really well with foreign friends and builds up genuine friendship. All of them think highly of Tristania and describe her as “the coolest Chinese girl they have ever met”. One possible reason is that she enjoys expressing her feelings and sharing her thoughts with everyone regardless of the language barrier, which effectively shortens the “built-in” distance between Chinese students and native English speakers. However, other Chinese students are more likely to yield to this awkward language barrier and thus prefer not to express freely in front of their unfamiliar foreign peers. Tristania also takes an active part in all sorts of social activities, especially those concerned with language learning, such as the German Table every Friday evening. Immersed in an all-rounded foreign language speaking surroundings, her communication and expression skills and language proficiency in L2, L3, L4 have therefore been tremendously enhanced.

Description of the Participant’s Oral and Written Language Abilities

Since I did not have much access to the formal settings where Tristania spoke English, the speaking samples were mainly collected during the interview and the narrative tasks (telling stories with wordless pictures). The majority of her writing samples are informal emails, short letters and academic writings from her first-year graduate courses.

Phonetics and Phonology

In respect of Tristania's phonetics and phonology, she is doing quite well overall: she clearly pronounces almost all the syllables in English, making her speech very understandable; she correctly puts stress on words; and her intonation really sounds beautiful. However, certain accents brought by her L1 and L3 interfere when she speaks English, which makes her oral English not that native-like sometimes. Also, she has minor problems with the pronunciation of certain words. I noticed the following distinguishable features in her speech.

(1) Like many Chinese English learners, Tristania sometimes inevitably mispronounces the "th" sounds ([θ] or [ð]). From most of her speech samples, she substituted the [z] and [d] sound for the voiced interdental fricative [ð]. She would say [wɪz] ("with") instead of [wɪð] (see Appendix A, line 13 & 26); and she may pronounce "they" as [deɪ] rather than [ðeɪ] (see Appendix A, line 230-238). However, she does better in pronouncing the [θ] sound than the [ð] sound, especially in word-initial circumstances.

As Justice (2004) stated, "not every language has the same phonetic inventory". In this case, although Chinese and English share some vowels and consonants, the Chinese "phonetic inventory" does not include the "th" sounds ([θ] or [ð]). Therefore, they are extremely hard

for Chinese native speakers to pronounce, and become a typical and persistent barrier concerning phonetics. As a result, English language learners in China tend to substitute similar sounds in the Chinese alphabet that are psychologically real to them (Justice, 2004). Tristania's problem with the "th" sounds is exactly the case for this reason. Tristania has to consciously put her tongue between her teeth in order to correctly and clearly pronounce the "th" sound. When she speaks too fast or unconsciously, she is more likely to ignore it. However, when she practices this sound on purpose, she can do it really well.

(2) Tristania tends to prolong the last syllable in an English word, such as [dæ:d] (dad) (see Appendix A, line 17) and [ɪˈnʌ:f] (enough) (see Appendix A, line 60), as she does in Chinese too. Moreover, she would replace the high, front, unrounded and tense vowel [i] with its lax counterpart [ɪ]. For example, she would pronounce "live" as [liv] rather than [lɪv] (see Appendix A, line 17), and she would say [ˈdifrənt] (different) instead of [ˈdɪfrənt] (see Appendix A, line 46). Similar problem could also be witnessed in [buk] ("book", which should be pronounced as [bʊk] (see Appendix A, line 125). We could safely conclude that Tristania is struggling with the short monophthongs. I believe the unique style of speech in her hometown Wuhan may account for certain accent. Nevertheless, Tristania has no problem with other monophthongs and diphthongs. She could accurately and almost native-likely distinguish [ɛ] from [æ], and [ɔ] from [ɑ], which is so much better than other English language learners in China.

(3) Tristania would occasionally confuse the voiced labiodental fricative [v] with the voiced bilabial glide [w]. For example, I remember once she pronounced "vanderbilt" ([ˈvændɚˌbɪlt])

as [ˈwændɚˌbɪlt] by mistake, although she could tell the difference between them for sure. It is probably because there is no “v” sound in Chinese phonetic alphabet.

However, in some regions, especially the northern part of China, people pronounce [w] as [v] even in Chinese, which surprisingly has already been accepted by the public. When I was studying in Beijing, I found almost all the Beijing people mispronounce the [w], but none of them ever pointed out this mistake. They would only be corrected by teachers in the English class. A funny yet typical example would be pronouncing the phrase “very well”: some students really have a hard time saying it correctly; more often than not, they would say [ˈweri, vel] instead of [ˈveri, wel].

(4) Last but not least, Tristania mentioned that apart from her L1 Chinese, her L3 German would affect her pronunciation in English from time to time. As she received four-year formal German education during undergraduate studies, German phonological rules were deeply rooted in her mind. Tristania illustrated this phenomenon with an example of the word “organization”. Whenever she sees this word, the pronunciation that first occurs to her is [ˌɔːgɑnɪˈzeɪʃn], but not [ˌɔːgənaɪˈzeɪʃn] as it should be in English. The reason is that the pronunciation [ˌɔːgɑnɪˈzeɪʃn] is more corresponding to her phonological and phonemic awareness.

Apparently, both one’s L1 and other languages have a significant influence on his second language acquisition. The interplay among one’s language reportoire sometimes contributes to his language learning; sometimes, however, it hinders the development of certain linguistic features or slows down the process.

Morphology

As a graduate student with top-class education and high proficiency in English, Tristania has a really thorough grasp of morphology.

Looking through all her speech and written samples, I found that she really did a great job even when dealing with sentences involving third person singular and past tense. Many English language learners would occasionally leave out the inflectional affixes like "-s" and "-ed", which is more frequently seen in their oral English rather than written English. Having a good sense of tense and aspect, Tristania finished the narrative tasks accurately in accordance to morphological rules. The only minor mistake she made is that she came up with a sentence "So I was hang out with my friends and most of them are from China" during the interview (see Appendix A, line 30). She omitted the inflectional suffix "-ing" indicating the progressive aspect in "hang", which, I think, was just a slip of the tongue.

One interesting fact I would like to mention is that Tristania used to memorize English words by taking great advantages of roots and affixes. This phenomenon or let's say learning method is not uncommon among Chinese students, especially when they are preparing for TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) and GRE (Graduate Record Examination), which require an enormous number of vocabularies. As morphology studies the internal structure of words, namely smaller meaningful pieces (Mihalicek & Wilson, 2011), knowing the meaning of each part of a word --- root, prefix and suffix --- and combining them together are indeed helpful to know what the whole word means. For instance, if you have already known the derivational prefix "anti-" refers to "against", the root, or the free morpheme in this case, "bacteria" means "a large group of

unicellular microorganisms", and the derivational suffix "-al" indicates an adjective form, you probably will not misunderstand the word "antibacterial". Chinese students like Tristania love to use such a productive method for the sake of memorization, because it helps them maximize their vocabulary in a limited amount of time.

Syntax

When it comes to syntax, Tristania does well in constructing phrases and sentences. There's nearly no syntactic mistake in her written samples. However, as for her oral English, she sometimes demonstrates several drawbacks in syntax. In the following paragraphs, I am going to examine her grammar using syntactic categories and phrase structure trees.

(1) One major syntactic problem that could be found in Tristania's speech samples is that she habitually delivers incomplete sentences. For example, she omitted the subject in the following four sentences: "So maybe some … only some [//] speaking … maybe some oral German" (see Appendix A, line 62), "So I think fluent or advanced" (see Appendix A, line 105), "Used to be very fluent" (see Appendix A, line 55) and "So I don't think very fluent now" (see Appendix A, line 64). If we look into the fourth sentence by drawing a phrase structure tree, we can clearly see that she left out the NP (noun phrase) and AV (auxiliary verb) (see Diagram 1). It seems that she chose to simplify the answer as long as it could convey her idea. Yet the simplified sentence is not always grammatically correct.

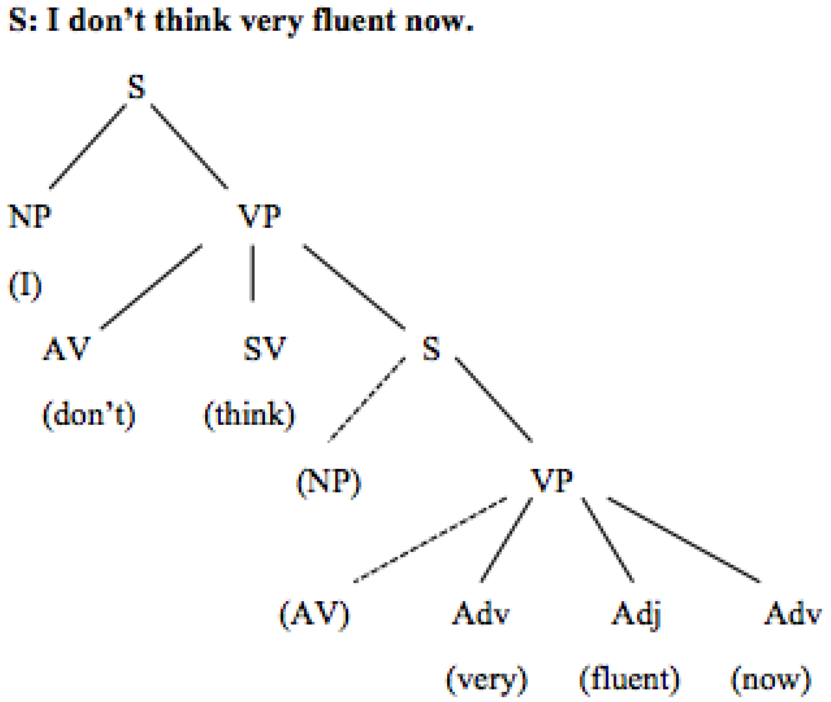

Diagram 1

(2) Another problem is that Tristania sometimes has difficulty with personal and possessive pronouns that indicate gender, which means she confused "he", "his" and "him" with "she", "her" and "her" (see Appendix A, line 159 & 240). One possible reason is that Chinese does not have so strong a linguistic awareness of gender. Even though Chinese does have three different characters meaning "he", "she" and "it", they are pronounced exactly the same.

(3) The third noticeable problem is that Tristania sometimes violated subject-verb agreement, especially in the "there be" sentence structure. For example, "There is enough people for me to speak Chinese with" (see Appendix A, line 29), "There is a lot of differences" (see Appendix A, line 33) and "There are a lot grammar" (see Appendix A, line 40). In the three sentences listed above, the verbs failed to agree with the real subjects. This kind of mistakes may be also

affected by Tristania's L1. In Chinese, the singular form of a noun is the same as its plural form; and also, the verbs remain the same no matter how subjects change. Chinese native speakers only use adjectives or measure words to indicate the plural.

(4) Occasionally, Tristania misused prepositions. For instance, in the sentence "I was a good friend with the daughter" (see Appendix A, line 122), "with" should be replaced by "of". The phrase structure tree of this sentence is shown as follows (see Diagram 2). The similar error could be seen in the sentence "the baby starts to grab things on the shelves" (see Appendix A, line 235) where "on" should be substituted for "from".

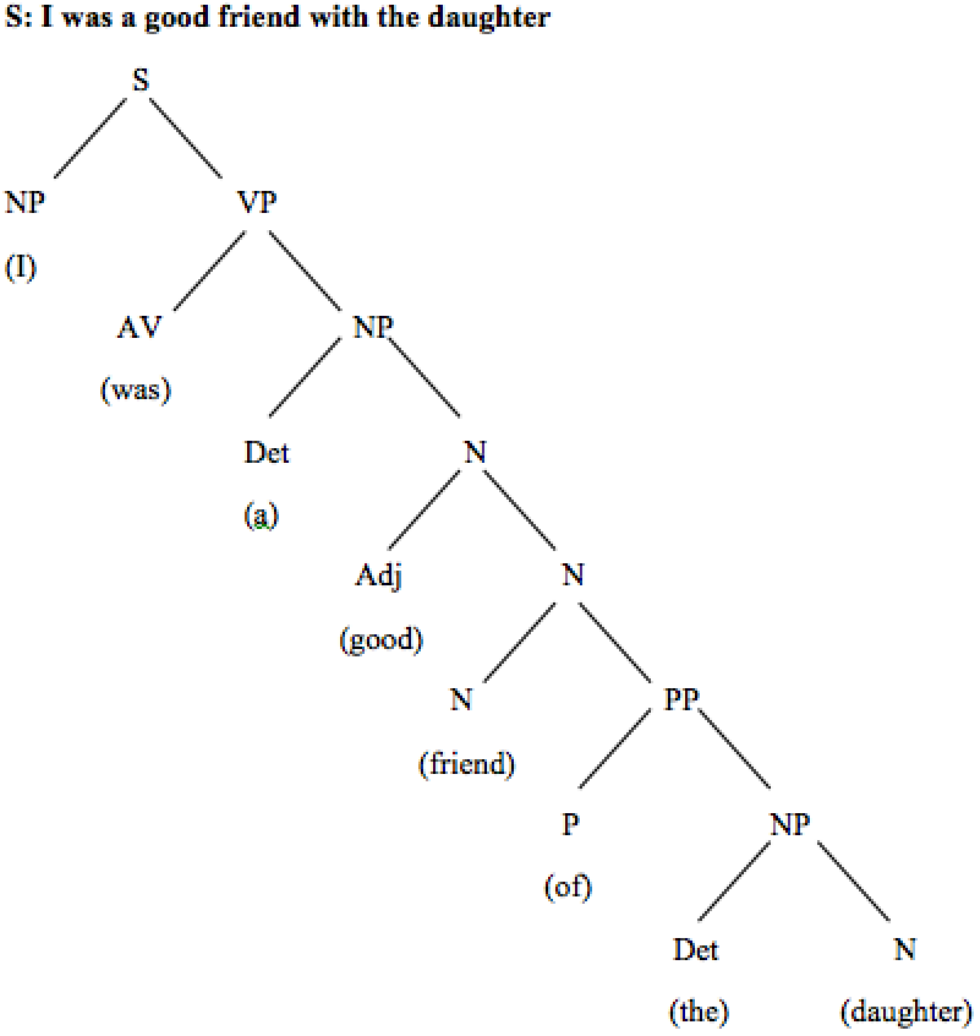

Diagram 2

(5) In addition, I found that she always starts a sentence orally by saying "And also …", "And then …" and "So …" (see Appendix A, Speech Sample 1). As a consequence, most of her speech samples were made up of short, simple sentences or coordinate sentences (see Appendix A, Speech Sample 1). However, in written samples, she was able to compose sophisticated complex and complex-coordinate sentences (see Appendix B, Written Sample 4). Furthermore, she knew how to make use of transitional words like "the first thing …" (see

Appendix B, line 20), “another different thing that …” (see Appendix B, line 33) and “in addition” (see Appendix B, line 31) to clearly organize her writing.

(6) When Analyzing Tristania’s speech samples, I noticed that there is an overuse of the word “like” (see Appendix A, line 35, 52, 68, 83, 150, 162, 168 & 188), which is frequently and habitually used by many people as a way to prolong their response time. Most of the time, however, the “like”s are unnecessary or inappropriate at all, and had better not be used in academic writing or speaking.

Semantics and Pragmatics

Undergoing intensive preparation for TOEFL and GRE, Tristania has accumulated a huge number of advanced English words, which lays a solid foundation for her English speaking and writing. Whereas she has a good command of lexicon and semantics, she still has difficulty in word choice every now and then.

In her speech samples, I found sentences like “That’s academically relevant to German ... [//] that’s relevant to academic German” (see Appendix A, line 60) and “I started at New Oriental Education … New Oriental School … [//] in another language institute … institution … institute, not in a … [//] at elementary school” (see Appendix A, line 108). It is obvious that Tristania had to take time to search for the right word. Yet she could figure out the accurate expressions after thinking for a while for most of the time, such as “get astray” (see Appendix A, line 75), “make adjustion” (see Appendix A, line 217), “grab a taxi” (see Appendix A, line 242) and “get rid of the snow” (see Appendix A, line 245). To be specific, she kept working on finding a detailed hyponym rather than

a generalized hypernym (Mihalicek & Wilson, 2011). Basically, I would say that Tristania could precisely express her thoughts and feelings.

However, she unavoidably produced some ambiguous expressions like “hit my mind” in the sentence “When it comes to different things in Nashville than in my hometown, the first thing that hit my mind is the food” (see Appendix B, line 20), which should be rephrased into “come to my mind” or “pop out”.

With regard to pragmatics, Tristania demonstrated some problems in language redundancy just as what she mentioned during the interview. We can tell from her Written Sample 4 (see Appendix B, line 22-32) that she used too many sentences to express similar ideas, which violated the maxims of quantity and manner in accordance to Grice’s conversational maxims (Mihalicek & Wilson, 2011). Nevertheless, She was able to use concise language to achieve communicative purposes including solving problems (see Appendix B, Written Sample 1), asking for help (see Appendix B, Written Sample 2), and negotiating (see Appendix B, Written Sample 3) in emails.

The Participant’s Current Stage of SLA and Theoretical Framework

According to the language proficiency levels put forward by American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Language (2012), I would characterize Tristania’s speaking skills as “advanced” while her writing skills as “superior”.

Speaking Proficiency

As mentioned earlier, Tristania is a sociable person so that she is highly exposed to English-speaking environment. When she talks to native speakers, she does present “a participatory manner” in everyday conversation and tries to be an active talker. For example, she employs

strategies like ice breaking and turn taking. Having a relatively abundant language and knowledge repertoire, she could handle most of daily topics. According to Tristania, she did experience difficulties in some of her courses. For instance, in Professor Heyneman's *Comparative Issues in Higher Education Policy* class, she found it extremely hard to volunteer an answer or participate in the group discussion when talking about abstract concepts.

Tristania has a good command of English idioms and slang because of frequent communication with her American classmates. Also, she is able to communicate her viewpoints quite clearly and convincingly with correct sentence structures. However, the basic sentence structure in her oral English is not as diverse or advanced as in her written English. Occasionally, she is struggling with word choice in her discourse, which is particularly apparent when she narrates a story. Yet those minor errors do not "distract native interlocutors or interfere with communication (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Language, 2012)". Few morphological mistakes like tense, gender or aspect confusion are found in her speaking samples. Compared with other English language learners, Tristania's pronunciation is above average.

Writing Proficiency

As for writing, Tristania demonstrates strong skills in both academic and non-academic tasks. On the one hand, she has "the ability to explain complex matters and to present and support opinions by developing cogent arguments and hypotheses (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Language, 2012)". On the other hand, she can freely express needs and solve problems in informal correspondence. In general, Tristania shows "a high degree of control of grammar and syntax, or both general and specialized/professional vocabulary, of spelling or symbol production,

of cohesive devices, and of punctuation (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Language, 2012)". I believe punctuation is a minor yet tricky part of language learning, but Tristania manipulates it fairly well. Her solid grammatical knowledge is reflected in her written sample in that she is able to compose complicated clauses and employ rhetorical devices such as metaphor, simile, hyperbole, etc. What is noticeable is that she has the ability to make her writing persuasive and interesting to audience.

Most of Tristania's written samples are clearly organized. However, she may have to work on language redundancy, as some of her informal written paragraphs are unnecessarily long, which makes her writing not very native-like. She said that she would ask her English-speaking friends to revise her paper or turn to writing studio for help. She could learn a lot from editing assistance and gradually improve her writing skills.

SLA Theoretical Framework

Before studying in the United States, Tristania has been undergoing traditional grammar translation method in terms of English learning, which could be mainly explained by theories of behaviorism, communicative competence, and sociocultural framework.

Most of the classroom activities in her early schooling focused on memorization and mimicry. Teachers asked students to memorize words, dialogues, sentences patterns or even the whole texts by heart with the belief that "memorization makes perfect". They strongly believed that language development is based on the formation of habits (Lightbown & Spada, 2006), and that those habits help students learn the correct use of language. In fact, such methods did help Tristania in learning English, but the help was quite limited. It only resulted in the acquisition of receptive skills. In

addition, Tristania's English teachers assigned a lot of translation drills because they assumed that a person learning a second language would start off with the habits formed in the first language (Lightbown & Spada, 2006). This assumption is similar to Cummin's theory of bilingualism and cognition with regard to common underlying proficiency – shared linguistic foundation between L1 and L2. However, in the case of Tristania, the overlapping triangle of Cummin's "iceberg" not only includes her L1 and L2, but also her L3 German. From my observation, she often does code switching back and forth between Chinese and English, and between English and German. The influences of her L1 and L3, including both positive and negative ones, are particularly obvious in her phonetics/phonology.

Apart from behaviorism, Hymes and Canale's theory of communicative competence also accounted for Tristania's second language acquisition. Unfortunately, English education in China overemphasizes the significance of grammatical competence, overlooking the other three higher-level dimensions – discourse, sociolinguistic, and strategic competence (Pray, 2014). Among them, discourse and strategic competence may be slightly covered in TOEFL speaking tasks, since test-takers are required to retell an announcement or a lecture, and convey the information effectively and coherently. Sociolinguistic competence, however, receives little attention in a typical English classroom in China. As a consequence, many overseas students may feel frustrated when they first come to the United States. Even though most of them have excellent academic performance, they experience a hard time making a casual conversation with foreigners: they do not know what they should ask and what they should not; and they have no idea how to respond

politely and appropriately. This phenomenon perfectly explains the reason why TOEFL scores cannot always indicate the real English proficiency of non-native speakers.

Besides, Tristania's experience as an exchange student in Europe is partly related to sociocultural linguistics. Immersed in a pure foreign-language-speaking environment, she had plentiful opportunities to practice English and German, and also "participate in social activities in which she could use multiple forms and functions of language with the goal of understanding and using new discourse appropriately (Pray, 2014)". Meanwhile, she unconsciously learned European culture and customs through daily communication with local people. When it comes to the classroom studies, she was highly exposed to learner-learner interactions where they could "co-construct linguistic knowledge while engaging in production tasks that simultaneously draw their attention to form and meaning (Lightbown & Spada, 2006)". In other words, she was "learning by talking" (Lightbown & Spada, 2006). On the contrary, Tristania seldom had chances to talk to other English learners within the classroom settings before coming to the United States. Thus, the language was neither taught nor acquired under sociocultural circumstances.

The analysis of Tristania's SLA theoretical framework is based on her description of the teaching practices and class activities she has gone through. It would be more cogent if I had access to data like teacher-student ratio, student population, and teachers' philosophy of teaching.

A Specific Instructional Plan for My Participant

When designing a specific instructional plan for Tristania, I would take her cognitive maturity, linguistic repertoire and sociocultural background into account. She has outstanding academic ability and prefers to learn through real-world experience; she is a native Chinese speaker who is

also proficient in English and German; and she takes an active part in sociocultural activities and is motivated to pursue higher English proficiency.

Accordingly, I would adopt the sociocultural theory and focus on improving Tristania's sociolinguistic competence. Specifically, I would tailor a socially constructed and culturally enriched English learning environment for her. As Tristania is an outgoing and sociable girl who likes to learn by talking, it would be most efficient and effective to learn authentic English language and culture from native speakers. When she interacts with proficient interlocutors within her zone of proximal development, she could perform at a higher level (Vygotsky, 1978; Lightbown & Spada, 2006), which is consistent with her goal. The zone of proximal development could be seen as a type of scaffolding – the assistance and guidance from competent peers or teachers (Obukhova & Korepanova, 2009).

I was also inspired by the affective filter hypothesis proposed by Krashen (1985). Society is a larger version of the language classroom, but the learning is stimulated in a comparatively stress-free way, which would greatly boost the motivation and self-confidence. When the filter is down, language learners are not concerned with the possibility of failure and when they consider themselves to be potential members of the groups speaking the target language (Krashen, 1985). Moreover, language is a semiotic system consisting of signs involving phonological, lexical, and grammatical forms that encode the intrapersonal, interpersonal, and textual functions that occur in social behavior (Ellis, 2008). In this case, linguistic features other than sociolinguistic competence could be enhanced simultaneously. I hope that Tristania could try her best to produce complete sentences in the dialogue. Nevertheless, I would not be too strict with the grammaticality of her

discourse as long as it is comprehensible. Personally, I do not think that it is necessary to correct her pronunciation. I was deeply impressed by our teacher's words "Accent is totally acceptable, because everyone has an accent, even native speakers (K. Fagan, personal communication, December 1st, 2014)". I used to hold a stereotype that accurate pronunciation is a must for English language learners. But in fact, accent is a symbol of one's cultural and linguistic identity. Thus, it is important for teachers to create a supportive environment where students feel comfortable to be themselves and to make mistakes.

Aside from sociocultural immersion, which mainly practices Tristania's oral English, I would also design a content-based English writing course that helps improve her productive skills. Among all the linguistic features, I am going to focus on syntax and semantics/pragmatics. Special attention would be paid to the precision and concision of her language. I would give her corrective feedback for her writing. Particularly, I would ask her to practice writing summaries or abstracts within limited length and revise her writing. More importantly, I would have Tristania self-revise her writing for at least three times so that she could have a deeper understanding of what information must be maintained, what could be deleted, and how to construct a short yet informative writing.

Speaking of giving corrective feedback, I would take Tristania's characteristics into consideration (Lightbown & Spada, 2006). Tristania is a fairly advanced English learner with developed metalinguistic sophistication, so providing explicit feedback is indeed effective for her. However, I noticed that she often self-corrected her grammatical mistakes during the interview, which indicates that she was aware of them. Therefore, I do not think giving too much feedback

would be an encouraging teaching method. But in written English, the situation is totally different. Tristania said that she sometimes makes errors that she is not aware of. Plus, she believes that writing can best reflect one's grammar knowledge. Thus, corrective feedback for her writing is necessary and would be beneficial.

Meanwhile, I would take advantage of Tristania's L1 and L3 as facilitators of English learning, because experience with these two languages can promote development of the proficiency underlying all three languages given adequate exposure (Cummins, 1984). To be specific, I would continue to use translation as a tool, but I would embed it in a context-based task. For example, I would collect bilingual or multilingual printed resources written in Chinese, English or German from the local immigrant communities, and have Tristania identify the errors and come up with a better version of translation. Also, I would definitely encourage code switching between languages. I believe it is helpful for bridging the gap between different languages, capitalizing on the strength of them and communicating a broader variety of social meaning (Pray, 2014).

Teaching Implications and Critical Reflection

This project is an eye-opening experience for me and serves as a pilot study for my future teaching. It laid a solid foundation for my master program studies and gave me a sea of insights and implications.

To start with, it is essential for teachers to regard their students in a holistic way. When I was conducting this case study, I investigated my participant's cognitive, linguistic and sociocultural background. These characteristics work together to shape her second language acquisition. Without knowing the background information, it would be meaningless to analyze her linguistic

features alone. Every student brings his/her unique personality, talent, motivation, goal, belief and learning style into the classroom. They have totally different life stories. Thus, we should regard every student as a whole, taking various factors that affect language learning into consideration. Next, we should try to conduct our teaching in a way that meets the needs of our students to maximize their academic outcomes.

In addition, I realize the significance of having a basic knowledge of students' first language. Only in this way can I figure out where my students' errors derive from and better help them overcome the difficulties. As students learning a second language are more or less influenced by their mother tongue, relating the teaching to their familiar language and culture would stimulate their enthusiasm. Further, by knowing the similarities and differences between languages, teachers can effectively shorten the language distance, making classes more accessible and comprehensible. It also helps build a meaningful and productive relationship between teachers and students (Jiménez & Rose, 2010).

Last but not least, teachers should identify the objective of second language acquisition and make realistic estimates of how long it takes to learn a second language (Lightbown & Spada, 2006). Teachers have the responsibility to inform their students in the very beginning that learning a second language does take a long time and there is no shortcut in it. "Drip-feed" approaches like one- or two-hour weekly instruction will not produce advance speakers, but lead to frustration (Lightbown & Spada, 2006). Many foreign language learners have the feeling that they have been studying for years without making much progress. We as teachers should consciously remind our

students that time does contribute to language proficiency, but it does not necessarily result in ultimate success.

From interviewing and observing my participant, I, for the first time, combined theory with practice. On the one hand, this experience gave me an opportunity to look deeper into the class readings and critically reflect on them. My understanding of linguistics and second language acquisition was greatly strengthened. On the other hand, the face-to-face interaction allowed me to know more about myself as well as my participant. I am increasingly aware of the responsibilities of a pre-service teacher.

In the meantime, new questions were raised and drawbacks were found. One example is that the context where Tristania and I interacted was mainly one-on-one casual conversation. I did not have a chance to observe and record her interactions with others or formal discourse in her school life. The lack of diversity of contexts resulted in limited types of data and analysis. Fortunately, this case study is just a start of my future work.

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Artifact D: Community Literacies Investigation

Exploring South Asian Immigrant Community in Nashville and Building Community Literacies into the Classroom

America has long been a nation of opportunities, attracting billions of immigrants from economically disadvantaged and educationally underserved countries. In particular, South Asians have been swarming into the United States after the passage of the U.S. Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 (Kelkar, 2011). It is acknowledged that those South Asian immigrants are math geeks and accomplished experts. In sharp contrast to our stereotype, however, there is a silent yet significant segment of the South Asian immigrants who are struggling to make ends meet and finding their own slice of American dream. They at best occupy working class jobs, running cheap motels, small neighborhood stores, marginal gas stations, etc (Gopalakrishnan, 2014). And they are exactly the group of people I looked into.

This paper is going to walk you through a brief investigation of South Asian immigrant community in Nashville, during which I have collected a few multilingual scripts that reflect language diversity. Taking advantage of those materials, I am going to plan out a lesson on transnational and community literacies, and hopefully it could help English language learners fully engage in their literacy learning.

South Asian Immigrant Community in Nashville and Its Community Literacies

The local community I investigated in Nashville during the field trip on August 31 is the South Asian immigrant community. Apart from K&S World Market, I mainly explored Central Market and Patel Brothers along Nolensville Pike.

K&S World market is popular among international students and scholars, immigrants and local citizens in Nashville. It is divided into several sections decorated with flags of different countries, Mexico, China, Japan and Korea included (see Figure 1). Bilingual texts can be seen on most of the products. The interlingual translation may somehow seem awkward and funny to both language speakers. However, it would not cause much confusion, as those daily products are familiar to consumers.

Figure 1

Figure 2

The first community literacy site I visited is Central Market, which is a small market owned by a typical Indian family selling South Asian groceries (see Figure 4). The most impressive part of my exploration there is the bizarre atmosphere in the store, especially its exotic interior decoration and pungent odor of spices. The clock, the tapestries and the ornaments at the counter are decorated with unknown characters (which could be Hindi, Bengali or Urdu) and unique patterns that are very “Indian”. Also, I saw a picture of Taj Mahal. The products there are mostly from India, Pakistan, Bhutan and Nepal. Although Hindi seems to dominate the labels of products, the English translation below facilitates my understanding.

Figure 3

Figure 4

Central Market is surrounded by an array of small neighborhood business, including grocery stores, clothing stores, hair salons, etc. The exterior walls are covered with all kinds of advertisements, most of which are written in Spanish and English though (see Figure 5). Among them, I found a nicely printed but poorly designed advertisement for English courses using totally English posted by Nashville International Center for Empowerment (NICE) (see Figure 6). Although those courses are well-intended, the advertisement just does not make sense to immigrants who have little knowledge of English. NICE as a recognized organization is supposed to thoroughly consider the multilingual situation of local immigrant communities.

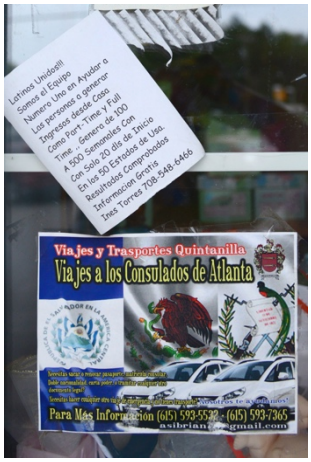

Figure 5

Figure 6

Besides, I noticed that there is a clothing store named “Just Women”, welcoming only women and selling draped garments such as sari, and delicate jewelry as well. It may give us a hint when we look into South Asians from a new gendered perspective.

The second community literacy site Patel Brothers is also a grocery store focusing on South Asian products. Unlike Central Market, Patel Brothers is much larger, brighter, and also more standardized. To my surprise, almost all the products there are relabeled with an English version of raw materials, nutrition constituent, place of production, etc, which was characterized by our American classmate as “Americanization”. Those Americanized labels greatly help consumers know about the products, thus attracting not only local immigrants but also native residents. Besides South Asian groceries, some imported goods from Canada can be found in Patel Brothers too, which also helps enhance passenger flow.

As a result of Americanization, there are less signs of South Asian community literacy in Patel Brothers. I only found one sign that contains transnational texts, which reads “chikni” (see Figure 7). After looking it up on the Internet, I found an interesting fact that people have different opinion on this word. While some netizens state that “chikni” simply means “smooth” in Hindi and Urdu, others maintain that it refers to “a beautiful or sexy girl” in the Mumbai dialect and conveys offensive or impolite meaning. Since “chikni” is controversial even within the Indian culture, it is apparently not appropriate to be used in advertising. Transnational literacy may sometimes cause controversy among different regions even with similar cultures. However, we can tell that “chikni” here refers to some kind of bathing or skin-smoothing products.

Figure 7

Figure 8

In addition, I saw many souvenirs and ornaments of Ganesha, which is one of the best-known and most worshipped deities throughout India (see Figure 8). To some extent, they add religious and mythological colors to the grocery store and clearly represent the identity of South Asians.

Barriers during the Investigation

I did meet with barriers during the field trip. When I was collecting information, I found it difficult to start a conversation or explain my intention even though the owners seemed really nice. In order to overcome this problem, we as researchers had better bravely be the ice-breaker and be expressive but aggressive. In other words, we should let the interviewees talk about what they feel comfortable with rather than push them to answer our designated questions.

Besides, it is rather difficult to investigate as a team, because everyone has a different stance. For example, our American classmate could figure out some tricky translation between English and foreign language, but as nonnative speakers we found it extremely hard to get the point since we were unfamiliar with both languages, let alone to compare their cultures. However, I believe clarifying research goal, doing basic study in advance and making a list of effective questions would be helpful to get fully prepared.

A Lesson Plan Based on Community Literacies

As a future ESL teacher, I would like to plan a lesson on community literacies on the basis of both my students' prior knowledge and cultural identity.

The first class activity is closely related to printed resources that I have collected during the field trip. I will show students some imperfect advertisements like the one for English courses mentioned earlier in the paper, and ask students to discuss over it. Meanwhile, I will pose several questions: (1) What do you think of this advertisement? (2) Do you think it is an effective one? Why? (3) What will you do to improve it? (4) If you are the advertiser, how will you design your poster? This activity is similar to a SAT task – identifying sentence errors and improving sentences, which would direct students to reconsider word choice, idiomatic expressions, and the cultural values involved in the translation and presentation. Further, it has the potential to increase students' awareness of language diversity as well as promote their metalinguistic understandings and critical thinking ability (Jimenez, Smith & Teague, 2009). Multilingual students would be a great helper in this activity, since some advertisements need to be presented in languages other than English. Plus, it may involve some translation work, thus stimulating reciprocal interaction and cooperation between students from different linguistic background. Translation activities like this are rich sites of learning opportunities or "teachable moments", especially for English language learners who speak different varieties of a language (Goodman, 2003).

On the other hand, immigrant children are psychologically vulnerable, we as teachers are supposed to pay special attention to them. Therefore, it is better to have a more thorough understanding of both their social and academic life (Valenzuela, 1999). The next class activity occurred to me when I was doing research on South Asian immigrant community. During my investigation, I was wondering how people from the same origin are able to maintain a close relationship within the community. Later, I found a website called Sandhira (www.sandhira.com),

which was established with a vision to bring the South Asian community together on a platform globally. Likewise, I would like to use this type of platform as a tool to strengthen students' ethnic identity as well as their literacy skills. I come up with two activities accordingly where parent involvement are strongly recommended.

Firstly, I would ask students to read South Asian news on Sandhira to their monolingual parents or exchange ideas on recent events in South Asia with parents who have a basic understanding of English. I would recommend students to keep a reflective journal of what they have read to or discussed with their parents so as to ensure frequent and positive communication between generations. Moreover, writing journals on a regular basis could effectively help English language learners improve their writing skills.

Secondly, I would have students, together with their parents, design an electronic advertisement for family business or a poster based on their funds of knowledge just as the business listings on Sandhira. This type of activity encourage students to include consideration of which language(s) to write in (monolingual, bilingual, or multilingual), whether or not to include images and, if so, what kinds and where to place them in relation to the written text (Department of Education, n.d.). Additionally, it is a great opportunity for immigrant families to find authentic South Asian services within the community and promote their own business at the same time. They can reconnect their cultural roots and more importantly discover future possibilities on this amazing land.

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Artifact E: Lesson Plan on Making a Phone Call

Planning:

1. Age: adults
   Grade: n/a (proficiency level: 2)
   Class/course type: ESL class
   Setting: Students in the class are adult ELLs who have been learning English for 2 years or so in the United States, and their English proficiency is at level 2 or 3. They come from different countries and speak different native languages.

2. Explain why you chose this topic:
   Telephoning is very relevant to students' life. Living in the United States, students will have to make phone calls in English from time to time in order to get certain services. However, many non-native speakers may sound impolite or even rude on the phone – not on purpose, of course. This problem is also my big concern as an ELL. Therefore, I would like to give students some tips on telephone etiquette, teach them strategies to get them better prepared for phone calls, and provide them with useful English expressions in telephoning.

3. Objective for this lesson:
   (1) Students will learn strategies that they can use before and during a phone call to make them more confident.
   (2) Students will learn telephone etiquette so that they can use English more appropriately and clear up misunderstandings.
   (3) Students will have a good command of English expressions that they can use under different telephone situations. And they will be able to practice using the expressions and strategies they have learned in class.

4. Lesson Method
   (1) Communicative Language Teaching:
      - developing students' communicative competence
      - providing discourse-level input
      - designing output-based activities within a meaningful sociocultural context
      - relating to students' cultural background and real-life experiences
   (2) Task-Based Approach: engaging students in communication and social interaction when solving meaningful tasks
   (3) Processing Instruction:
      - processing input for meaning
      - emphasizing the actual use of target forms
   (4) Textual Enhancement: highlighting (color-coding & underlining) in written texts in order to enhance students' intake and comprehension of target forms

5. Materials Needed:
   - Slides of course content
   - Two-page handouts (one for strategies and useful expressions; one for the activity)

- Index cards with letters and numbers (for the activity)

Teaching the lesson:

a) How will you introduce the lesson? Why did you choose this topic?

I will introduce the topic by asking a question to see students' reaction to making phone calls. Then I will share my own experiences as an ELL and explain the reason why many ELLs have difficulties making phone calls in English. By doing this, I wish to lower students' affective filter and make connections to their real-life experiences. Also, funny pictures about telephoning will be displayed on the slides.

b) How will you explain the lesson objective?

I will tell students that making phone calls is an unavoidable part of their everyday life in the United Sates. More importantly, it is necessary for them to learn telephone etiquette in the American culture in order to lead a successful life here. Speaking English appropriately, politely and naturally is the ultimate goal of learning conversational English.

c) How will you explain the lesson procedure?

Based on my personal experience, I will first introduce some strategies that students can employ when making phone calls. Then I will include a slide that shows how I am going to structure the next section. It will be divided into four distinct situations in telephoning and I will weave useful expressions into each situation. At the end of the class, students will do a phone-call activity and I will explain the rules and model the activity before they do.

d) How will you end the lesson?

I will briefly summarize what we have learned today and give some advice to make them more confident in phone calls, such as note-taking strategies. I will also get their attention to numbers, as they frequently appear in phone numbers, home address, calendar dates, etc.

e) How will you ask the students to reflect on the lesson?

At the end of the class, I will ask students to go through their handouts and notes and see if they have any question or confusion. Also, I will lead students to reflect on their prior experiences in telephoning and write down several suggestions for themselves. Then, I will encourage them to share with the class and add to the list of phone-call strategies, making their contributions to the class.

f) How will you assess students?

The phone-call activity will assess students' understanding of the four telephone situations and their mastery of the expressions in telephoning. Students will draw lots and find their corresponding roles in different phone-call tasks on the handouts. In order to simulate an authentic phone-call situation, I will not let them know their partners or practice with them in advance. Yet they will be able to prepare on their own using the strategies they have learned. I will model the first phone call and then students will "call" their blind partners and finish their tasks based on assigned situations.

Artifact F: Term Paper

Making the Syllabus a Two-Way Communication between Teachers and Students in China

The syllabus is widely used as an instructional tool in higher education institutions in many English-speaking countries, especially the United States. As a contract between teachers and students, it greatly enhances the accountability and commitment of both teaching and learning (Habanek, 2005). However, it is not a common practice among college teachers in China to provide students with syllabi that contain important course information. Only those "Americanized" teachers who have schooling experiences in the United States are likely to use syllabi in their teaching. Yet the notion of "syllabus" does exist in educational settings in China. Unfortunately, its essence seems to have been lost in translation, as "syllabus" literally means "teaching outlines" in Chinese. The so-called syllabus in China only focuses on the teaching part but misses out the benefits of students. That is to say, only teachers get to see the syllabi and they do not usually share them with students.

The syllabus is supposed to be an informative document of two-way communication between teachers and students. Along with providing information about the structure and content of the course, the syllabus can be a means to communicate expectations to the student (McKeachie, 1999). Apparently, college teachers in China are not making full use of syllabi. However, I do think it is technically possible to introduce the authentic concept of syllabus into China, and there is surely plentiful room for improvement of the existing "syllabus".

As a pre-service ELL teacher, I believe a well-designed syllabus can be really helpful to ELLs because it guarantees a fair and impartial understanding between instructors and students. Moreover, it enhances the predictability of the instruction, thus lowering the affective filter of

ELLs. In this case, students can be more empowered and motivated to take responsibility for their own learning.

In the following sections, four major characteristics of a well-structured syllabus will be discussed in detail. I am going to focus on what makes the syllabus a two-way communication in particular. Then, I will elaborate on one particular model of syllabus – negotiated syllabus, which is especially beneficial to students in the EFL/ESL settings. At the end of this paper, I will revisit the big question whether or not the syllabus is applicable in China.

Syllabus as a Communicative Document

A syllabus functions as a communication device that provides details about the roles of both instructors and students in the learning and assessment process (Habanek, 2005). Unlike the so-called syllabus in China, a real syllabus assures a two-way communication between teachers and students. On the one hand, it provides the contact information and office hour of the instructor, which is essential for help seeking, and it clearly conveys the learning objectives, grading standards, assignments, attendance policies, etc. (Habanek, 2005). On the other hand, students recognize the efforts to be put into the course on their behalf and understand the results of failing to meet the requirements. According to Smith and Razzouk (1993), the syllabus is the "'common script' that aids the efforts and activities of both the instructor and the students toward achieving desired instructional outcomes" (p. 220).

Beyond the content of the document itself, how the syllabus is presented is of great importance (Thompson, 2007). As a symbolic message, the presentation of the syllabus communicates what the teacher is like as an instructor and an individual (Habanek, 2005; McKeachie, 2002), and demonstrates his/her philosophy of teaching and passion for teaching (Becker & Calhoon, 1999; Parkes & Harris, 2002). In other words, how the syllabus is

communicated speaks volumes about the teacher's perceived identity (Weimer, 2002; Wolcowitz, 1984).

However, the greatest challenge for teachers is to balance the tension between showing students that they are caring and friendly while simultaneously conveying their seriousness via the syllabus (Baecker, 1998; Thompson, 2007). While teachers often strive to create a welcoming classroom environment, they must also establish certain rules to illustrate their authority. For one thing, teachers can design group activities to get students acquainted first; they can use positive yet soft tones; and they can also use inclusive language like "we" rather than "I" or "you" (Thompson, 2007). These classroom practices are especially helpful to ELLs, because they help remove their psychological barriers and lower their affective filter so that they feel more comfortable to participate in the classroom. For another, teachers need to be cautious about putting forward rules and policies: they have to be clear and straightforward, but at the same time they need to mind their word choices so as not to intimidate students into obedience because the syllabus is not meant to discipline or alienate students (Singham, 2005). Even though the syllabus helps teachers maintain their power, it can be also strategically employed as an encouraging invitation for students to devote to learning.

Syllabus as a Collaborate Contract

Another way to improve the effectiveness of the two-way communication is that teachers can work together with students to develop a syllabus or what is called a collaborative or negotiated contract (Clarke, 1999; Parkes & Harris, 2002). Without the word "collaborative" or "negotiated", the syllabus could set a tone that is defensive; it could even reinforce power disparities between teachers and students (Kaplan & Renard, 2015). The collaboration suggests that teachers should

not unilaterally define and present the syllabus to students on the first day of the course; instead, they should involve students in the planning process (Kaplan & Renard, 2015).

Whereas teachers should be determined about basic principles and policies regarding class attendance, late assignment, academic dishonesty, etc., they could allow some flexibility in less restrictive aspects of the syllabus. For example, teachers and students can discuss how various components of the grade should be weighted, and whether or not papers can be rewritten and regarded. In addition, it is legitimate for teachers to consider how to accommodate students with different learning styles and particular learning needs when constructing the syllabus (Parkes & Harris, 2002). Many colleges and universities today take students' rights seriously: they have services to identity students' specific needs and provide different ways to meet them. Giving students opportunities to accomplish the assignment in their own ways can effectively promote their accountability, commitment and motivation in learning.

According to Clarke (1999), negotiated syllabus is a highly-acknowledged syllabus model among ELL educators. It emerges in the field of English language teaching and learning, and it derives naturally from a confluence of four important and substantially overlapping streams of applied linguistics and educational thinking: (1) a variety of "humanistic" methodologies for an ESL environment; (2) emphasis on needs analysis as the basis for a syllabus; (3) research into issues related to learner individualization and autonomy; and (4) investigations into the nature of learner strategies in the language learning process (Clarke, 1999). Among them, the research into individualization and autonomy is of particular relevance to the advent of negotiated syllabus – a learner-centered syllabus.

What these four strands have in common is the recognition that learners, rather than teachers, are central to language learning. In other words, learners' affective, cognitive, and

linguistic needs should all play a part in determining the content and implementation of whatever syllabus type is decided upon (Clarke, 1999). Moreover, negotiating the syllabus with students provides teachers with extra opportunities to reflect on their competencies and interests while designing the curriculum (Knowles, 1990). When students realize that they have certain degree of control over the content to be taught or class policies, and that their needs and interests are taken into consideration, they will be more motivated to invest their time and efforts into learning. Also, a learner-centered syllabus helps students develop self-management skills, which is more valuable beyond the course content. Self-regulated students can use the contractual syllabus to plan and monitor their learning, comparing their performance to the objectives identified by the instructor (Parkes & Harris, 2002). Besides, this kind of syllabus gives guidance to students about learning strategies and what prior knowledge and skills are required in the course. Therefore, students can see what they are lacking in and then work on their weaknesses purposefully.

Syllabus as an Exercise in Preventive Medicine

Matejka and Kurke (1994) referred to a syllabus as "an exercise in preventive medicine" (p. 116), avoiding misunderstandings and saving the teacher from having to repeat information. Although the course syllabus does contain essential information that students need throughout the semester, it is not uncommon to see students keep asking questions about policies and procedures that are clearly stated in the syllabus (Raymark & Connor-Greene, 2002). Not only do students often fail to retain syllabus information, many appear to forget to refer to it as a resource for locating information (Smith & Razzouk, 1993).

One possible means to address students' inattentiveness is to give them a syllabus quiz. A brief in-class or take-home quiz can help narrow the potential communication gap between teachers and students. It also serves as an incentive for students to read and use their syllabus. The

purpose of a syllabus quiz is not only to familiarize students with the syllabus content, but also to function as a contract to verify understanding of important elements and clarify misconceptions about course content or policies, such as late work. More importantly, it gives students a chance to reflect on course-related questions.

Although the syllabus quiz is usually given at the beginning of the semester, the syllabus is supposed to be a tangible paperwork that students can refer to throughout the semester (Smith, 1993). Rather than a one-time reminder, the syllabus is an all-time study aide and should be made use of continuously. Nevertheless, it is teachers' obligation to update the syllabus and inform students in time when there are unexpected changes.

Syllabus as a Permanent Record

Apart from being a communication device between teachers and students, the syllabus is also a record that communicates teachers' ability to their colleagues and school administrators. In this age of outcomes assessment, the syllabus can be helpful in efforts to evaluate both individual instructors and entire programs by providing details of what content knowledge is covered, what students are expected to achieve, and how products and performance are assessed (Parkes & Harris, 2002). Since teachers' performance is evaluated through merit pay reviews, and promotion and tenure reviews (Classick, Huber, & Maeroff, 1997), syllabi are frequently collected as documentation in this process.

In addition to faculty reviews, programs and schools often undergo accountability reviews where syllabi are essential (Parkes & Harris, 2002). Looking through syllabi in a program of study can help administrators see what knowledge, experience and skills students are equipped with when they complete a degree.

Furthermore, the syllabus enables the communication between students and admission officers (Parkes & Harris, 2002). When students plan to apply for a new program, the syllabi of the courses that students have taken are evidence in admission officers' decision-making process. They can see from those syllabi what prior knowledge students bring with them and whether the program is appropriate for them or consistent with their schooling experiences.

Possibilities of Using Syllabi in China

To sum up, the syllabus is an effective yet user-friendly communication tool for both teaching and learning. Personally, I do think it is very doable in higher education institutions in China. However, the implementation will face several challenges.

According to my observation, there is a lack of knowledge and awareness at all levels of education, including policy makers, researchers and professionals, school administrators, teachers, students and parents. Those who are born and raised and educated in China may have never seen the word "syllabus", not to say the educational implications behind it. Therefore, the most challenging part might be to introduce the practice of syllabus into China, a country with a huge teacher and student population.

Besides, it is urgent and necessary to point out and correct teachers' current misunderstanding of the syllabus. They need to be informed that a syllabus should be a shared document between teachers and students. However, using syllabi is not a revolutionary change in pedagogy in China. In fact, the teaching outline seems to lay a solid foundation for syllabus development where teachers can build on and turn it into a learning outline for students as well. Yet teachers should be aware that they will need to develop rigorous time-management skills in order to meet the timeline set in the syllabus.

Last but not least, more theoretical and empirical research about the effectiveness of the syllabus is needed before its implementation. Researchers need to find out what particular types of syllabus would fit best in the actual situations in China. While the syllabus in the Untied States is a perfect model, some adjustment is necessary for it to be appropriately used in China. For instance, it is true that negotiated syllabus benefits ELLs in terms of self-regulation and motivation, but the large population of ELLs in China makes it impossible for teachers to collaborate with them when constructing a syllabus. At least for now, making the syllabus more communicative is the main priority.

Conclusion

According to Matejka and Kurke (1994), a syllabus serves four distinct educational purposes: (1) as a contract between faculty and student, (2) as a communication device, (3) as a plan for the course, and (4) as a cognitive map. Sure enough, the significance of a well-designed syllabus can never be overemphasized. It bridges the information gap between teachers and students, teachers and administrators, and also students and admission officers. More importantly, it helps hold everyone in the educational settings accountable for his/her own business, making the evaluation process efficient and fair. However, importing the practice of syllabus from English-speaking countries to China is not that easy; the top-down reform calls for commitment and it surely takes time. Hopefully, the results would be rewarding.

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