

Capstone Portfolio

English as a Foreign Language (EFL)

Teaching English to Speakers of Other Language (TESOL)

Yang Zhang

Peabody College, Vanderbilt University

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### Abstract

This portfolio is developed to show my growth as an EFL/TESOL teacher. In this project, I demonstrate both the theoretical knowledge that guides my teaching practice and professional knowledge on standards for EFL/ESL teachers for adult learners.

This project consists of three sections: philosophy of teaching, demonstration of professional knowledge and implication for future teaching. At first, I present the formation of my teaching philosophy, which is grounded in Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, embracing communicative language teaching and culturally responsive pedagogy. Then by providing supportive artifacts and explaining their relevance to the eight domains EFL/ESL teachers should address, I illustrate my professional knowledge as an EFL/ESL teacher. After bridging the theory and practice, I conclude this portfolio with the implication for my future teaching, discussing the challenge I will face and the potential action I will take.

## Table of Contents

<b>Part I Philosophy of Teaching .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Part II Demonstration of Profession Knowledge .....</b>	<b>12</b>
Domain 1 Planning .....	12
Artifact A: Multi-Genre Lesson Plans .....	12
Domain 2 Instructing .....	15
Artifact B: Lesson Plan (Same, Same, but Different) .....	15
Domain 3 Assessing .....	17
Artifact C: Parts of Case Study of a Nonnative English Speaker .....	17
Artifact D: SOLOM Protocol.....	18
Domain 4 Identity and Context .....	20
Artifact E: Field Trip Report.....	20
Domain 5 Language Proficiency .....	22
Artifact F: Audio Clip.....	22
Domain 6 Learning .....	24
Artifact G: Case Study of a Nonnative English Speaker .....	24
Domain 7 Content .....	26
Artifact H: SIOP Lesson Plan .....	26
Domain 8 Commitment and Professionalism .....	29
Artifact I: Classroom Observation Report .....	29
Artifact J: Reflection on TFLTA .....	29
Artifact K: Observation Form.....	30
<b>Part III Implication for Future Teaching .....</b>	<b>34</b>

## **Part I Philosophy of Teaching**

Almost one year and a half ago, I left my home country and took a 30-hour flight to the United States. It was a long and tiring journey but I still felt excited, because it was my first time to be in the States. As the graduation is approaching, I feel the same feeling as I had after I took the longest flight in my life. However, this time is not about travelling but about teaching. Studying in Peabody is my first time to learn about education. I came here with knowing nothing about education, let alone foreign language education. During the past one and a half years, I continued to master theoretical knowledge and even had opportunities to teach in real settings. Although the study process was tiring and frustrating, when I finally almost finished it, I feel excited about my teaching career.

As my study went on, I gradually formed my pedagogical knowledge storage. In part I, I will introduce the theoretical works that influence me the most as a pre-service teacher of English as a Foreign Language (EFL)/Teaching English to Speakers of Other Language (TESOL). In my future career, I will regard these theories as guidance to practice teaching.

### **Vygotsky: Sociocultural Theory**

My entire teaching philosophy is built upon Lev Vygotsky's sociocultural theory. In general, Vygotsk suggests that the development of cognition depends on people's interaction with social and cultural environment. Children learn social forms of behaviors through interacting with others, and then apply them to themselves (Vygotsky, 1978). This process is called internalization. According to Vygotsky (1978) "everything is learned on two levels. Every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level; first, between people and then inside the child. This applies equally to

voluntary attention, to logical memory, and to the formation of concepts. All the higher functions originate as actual relationships between individuals”.

The zone of proximal development (ZPD) is the core concept of sociocultural theory. Vygotsky (1978) defined this zone as “the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers”. Through observation, Vygotsky found that conversations children had with others provided them with assistance, which helped them build new knowledge upon the knowledge they had. In this situation, internalizing occurred within children’s ZPD and their performance was advanced to a higher level thanks to the scaffolding provided by an experienced partner (Lightbown & Spada, 2013).

### **Sociocultural Theory and Communicative Language Teaching**

In terms of language acquisition, Vygotsky suggested, “language develops primarily from social interaction” (Lightbown & Spada, 2013). Based on Vygotsky’s theory, some linguists believe that people acquire language through collaboration and interaction with others. From this perspective, the ZPD involves novice-novice and expert-novice interactions. With scaffolding, learners can make the most of their prior language knowledge to construct new knowledge. After carrying out a series of studies, Swain and Lapkin and their colleagues found that “second language learners construct linguistic knowledge while engaging in production tasks that simultaneously draw their attention to form and meaning” (Lightbown & Spada, 2013). In light of this stand, I believe that communicative language teaching (CLT) is a more beneficial approach for second language learners.

As its name implies, communicative language teaching (CLT) is a language teaching approach with an ultimate goal for learners to develop communicative ability. Learners will be prepared for real-life language use by engaging in contextualized and meaningful tasks that necessitate communication (Brandl, 2007). CLT emphasizes that the input of second language (L2) should be rich and meaningful. Like other educational approaches, CLT promotes cooperative and collaborative learning. Learners not only participate in conversations to interact and negotiate with each other, but also internalize language within the interaction. With the scaffolding of the social interaction, learners will exceed their current developmental level and reach their potential (Brandl, 2007).

With a desire to cultivate my students as competent communicators in real life, I will employ communicative language teaching approach in my future classroom. Instead of delivering a traditional grammatical translation instruction, I will design task-based activities for my students, enabling them to develop communicative competence in the real world. I will create ample opportunities for learners to collaborate with each other and co-construct linguistic features through cooperation.

### **Sociocultural Theory and Culturally Responsive Teaching**

According to the zone of proximal development (ZPD), learners exceed when they are provided with appropriate scaffolding. For culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students, the scaffolding includes tapping into their prior knowledge in native culture. Culturally responsive teaching (CRT) is defined as a pedagogical approach that uses “the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them” (Gay, 2000). Though related to sociocultural theory, CRT goes beyond the ZPD, emphasizing that teachers

should design and construct learning experiences in a comprehensive way, promoting learners' intellectual, social, emotional, and political learning by "using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes" (Ladson-Billings, cited by Gay, 2000). As a comprehensive teaching pedagogy, culturally responsive teaching is featured by acknowledging the legitimacy of the cultural heritages from different ethnical groups, building the bridge between home and school, differentiating instructional strategies in accordance to different learning styles, helping students develop cultural competency and integrating multicultural information, resources, and materials in content area and skills taught in schools (Gay, 2000).

### **Culturally Responsive Caring**

Caring is one of the prominent features of culturally responsive teaching (CRT). "It is manifested in the form of teacher attitudes, expectations, and behaviors about students' human value, intellectual capability, and performance responsibilities" (Gay, 2000). Instead of caring about children, teachers should care for children as learners and as people by concerning, compassionating, committing, taking responsibility and acting (Gay, 2000). Genuine caring emphasizes that teachers should understand and be sensitive to students' cultural and linguistic difference. It is an essential step to create a learning environment that feeds students' needs, which can improve students' academic achievement (Risko & Walker-Dalhouse, 2012). In terms of the positive relationship between expectation and academic performance, culturally responsive caring teachers should also be warm demanders who have high expectation for all of the students regardless of their backgrounds and hold them accountable for high academic efforts (Gay, 2000).

### **Additive Bi/Multilingualism**

Additive literacy originally develops around Cummins' common underlying proficiency theory that children's second language development is not independent of their first language (Bauer, 2009). When exploring the complexities of a new language, learners draw on the patterns of the language they know (Lightbown & Spada, 2013). It emphasizes a language-as-resources orientation that literacy skills and strategies acquired in L1 can facilitate the literacy development in L2. The code switching, rather than interference, can actually advance students' linguistic knowledge in both L1 and L2 (Risko & Walker-Dalhouse, 2012). In Townsend and Fu's study (1998), it is clear that the freedom of bringing his knowledge of Chinese to learn English was conducive to Xiaodi's English proficiency.

It is noted that the bilingual learners will be deprived of multiple development opportunities to develop if teachers fail to build instruction on students' linguistic resources. As a matter of fact, CLD students are often taught at a lower instructional level that is below their cognitive abilities because they are not proficient in English. The denial of learners' linguistic and cultural resources also renders them invisible, leading to learners' believing that they are not valued in the classroom, which will negatively affect their academic performance (de Jong, 2011)

### **Funds of Knowledge**

Culturally responsive teachers value and make use of students' funds of knowledge to scaffold their learning. Funds of knowledge is defined by Moll, Amanti, Neff and Gonzalez (1992) as the knowledge and skills that are the historically accumulated and culturally developed, and essential for household or individual functioning and well-being. Students have life both inside and outside the school. Before they go into the classroom, they've already accumulated knowledge within households and their social networks. For teachers, there are too much they do not know which can be used in classroom instruction to facilitate students'

learning. When the instruction is built on information gathered from households, students become active learners, constructing new knowledge by using their social resources (Moll, Amanti, Neff & Gonzalez, 1992).

Regarding to funds of knowledge, family and community “contain ample cultural and cognitive resources with great, potential utility for classroom instruction” (Moll, Amanti, Neff & Gonzalez, 1992). By stepping into students’ community and collecting artifacts as teaching tools, teachers can introduce transnational and community literacy into classroom, taking advantage of students’ prior knowledge and fully engaging them in literacy and content area learning (Jimenez, Smith & Teague, 2009). The knowledge of students’ family culture enables educators to legitimize children’s real-life experiences in curriculum and break down the stereotypes towards CLD students’ family, which is caused by cultural discrepancy between family and school. “The relationship between family and class can become the basis for the exchange of knowledge about family or school matters, reducing the insularity of classrooms and contributing to the academic content and lessons” (Moll, Amanti, Neff & Gonzalez, 1992). Moreover, the people who students learn from in households have the expertise the class can rely on. Their visit to school can actually contribute to students’ academic activity. In this manner, they become valuable resource for students’ learning (Moll & Greenberg, cited by Moll, Amanti, Neff & Gonzalez, 1992)

To be a culturally responsive teacher, I should bear in mind that I need to care for student as a whole person. CLD students would benefit more when the instruction legitimizes their cultural knowledge. To incorporate students’ funds of knowledge into classroom, I should invite students’ family and community to participate in their learning. Instead of promoting an English-

only environment, I am supposed to permit and even encourage students to draw on their knowledge in native language to thrive in English learning and academic study.

### **Conclusion**

Informed by Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, I understand that my role as a teacher is to provide students with scaffolding, elevating their learning to a higher level. When given ample opportunities to interact with others, learners will move to a new developmental stage. When it comes to work with culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students, I should be a culturally responsive teacher who values students' cultural and linguistic resources. By drawing on students' knowledge and literacy skills in first language (L1), I can better help with their development in English proficiency. Moreover, students are more likely to participate in learning when their cultural and linguistic resources are valued, (de Jong, 2011). To prepare them for real-life communicators, I will strive to design task-based activities that necessitate communication so that for students can have more opportunity to interact with each other. Through social interaction, learners will internalize the language and construct new linguistic knowledge. Apart from English competency, I am also responsible for learners' academic study and social life. I should not be the person who solely imparts knowledge, but the warm giver who treats student as a "whole" person (Gay, 2000), and has high expectation for their academic achievement.

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## **Part II Demonstration of Professional Knowledge**

Since I plan to go back to China to teach adult English learners there after graduation, standards for ESL/EFL teachers of adults will serve as the guidelines to form my practice. The standards consist of eight domains, including planning, instructing, assessing, identity and context, language proficiency, learning, content, as well as commitment and professionalism. In this section, I will demonstrate my understanding of the eight domains by providing relevant artifacts as supportive evidence. For each domain, I will at first explain my personal interpretation. Then I will briefly introduce the artifact I use to demonstrate my competence. At last, I will elaborate on how the artifact shows my professional knowledge by focusing on its relevance to Learner 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.*

**Planning.** Planning is a fundamental skill in teaching profession. To facilitate learning, teacher candidates should be capable of planning a well-organized instruction or modifying the plan so that learners can engage in learning and achieve their goals.

**Artifact A.** This is a multi-genre lesson plan unit that was constructed as my assignment for the course Reading and Learning with Print and New Media. It is a reading scaffolding lesson unit for three genres and targets 8<sup>th</sup> graders. The unit was built upon the theme of race in the United States and would be delivered in three consecutive classes. I incorporated multiple learning strategies and multimedia in this unit to support students' reading comprehension.

**Relevance to Domain.** Essentially, teachers are design professionals whose job is to craft curriculum and learning experiences to respond to **learners'** achievement of desired **learning**

(Wiggins & McTighe, 2005). When I started designing this lesson, I was a reading tutor at Bailey Middle School in Nashville, Tennessee, a school predominately consisting of minority students. In general, this artifact was designed for 8<sup>th</sup> graders in that school. Even though race is a tough topic, considering the challenges minority student would face in their daily life, I thought it was necessary to touch on this topic. As the artifact shows, this lesson was also developed to meet students' **learning** goals at eight grade in English Language Arts, which are outlined in Common Core States Standards (CCSS).

To promote students' learning, I planed to create a safe and cooperative **learning environment** by designing small group or whole class activities. In this unit, students constantly had opportunity to share their thoughts with peers and collaborate with each other to complete tasks. By creating a facebook conversation, I extended students' communication and collaboration beyond the classroom. In this way, I hoped students would form a healthy academic classroom community that "promotes all students' evolving sense of themselves as competent learners" (Schoenbach, Greenleaf & Murphy, 2012).

In order to engage students in instruction and facilitate their comprehension, I incorporated technology into the **curriculum** and used a variety of strategies to support **learners'** needs. In the beginning of every class, I designed pre-reading activities to activate students' background knowledge. I planed to use a video clip to explain the concept of sharecropping, a word that is hard to understand and is closely related to history. The student supports section in the lesson plan demonstrates what I would do to provide learners with scaffolding. Apart from the strategies that would assist students' learning, I also considered the potential misconception in the unit and pre-designed the alternatives. The additional support shows how I would modify the **curriculum** to support ELL **learners** in the classroom.

Instead of only giving students a traditional test at the end of the unit, I planed to assess students in a variety of ways. A final project about civil rights was required as a summative **assessment** to examine whether the learners get the knowledge or not. By developing a project, students would have the opportunity to explore the topic they are interested in and synthesize the information they have. Learners were required to present their research results through PowerPoint or Prezi. In this unit, constant formative assessments were designed to monitor and evaluate students' learning so that I could revise and modify the **curriculum** accordingly (Herrera, Cabral & Murry, 2012).

**Domain 2 Instructing**

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

**Instructing.** To actively engage students in learning, teachers should know how to create a desirable and supportive learning environment. A healthy learning environment will also encourage respectful classroom interaction, through which learners can perform at a higher level.

**Artifact B.** This artifact is a lesson plan I developed as an assignment for the course entitled as Teaching Second Language Literacy. It was designed for 3<sup>rd</sup>-grade newcomer English Language Learners from diverse backgrounds. Through this unit, students were expected to be able to compare and contrast different items by using appropriate expression, and write a friendly letter. By sharing their native cultures with peers from other backgrounds, students had the opportunity to achieve the language objectives. Although this lesson was designed for younger kids, the procedure through which I constructed it still followed the standard pertaining to instruction for adult learners.

**Relevance to Domain.** When designing this lesson plan, I was trying to create a good teaching, which would allow **learners** to take the role as active participants in learning instead of passively being fed with knowledge (Diaz-Rico & Weed, 2005). In order to promote a reciprocal interaction in classroom, I incorporated **learners'** culture into tasks. In the beginning of the class, students introduced the greeting manners in their native country and shared the information with peers. In this manner, I made use of **learners'** prior knowledge and connected curriculum to **learners**, therefore facilitating their **learning**.

To create a cooperative **learning environment**, I built ample opportunities for students to interact with each other through pair or group activities. By learning about their peers, and

comparing and contrasting the difference and similarities among them, students learned each other's culture and knew how to respect people from backgrounds different from theirs. By visualizing the input, video clip and posters not only engaged students in activities, but also made the instruction more comprehensible.

In terms of **curriculum**, instructional strategies were deliberately used in this unit to support and advance English Language Learners' (ELL) learning. For example, learners read the book in the manner of paired reading. ELLs enjoy reading together with peers and by doing so, they will have the opportunity for social interaction (Carrasquillo, Kucer & Abrams, 2003). Also, in this unit, I set aside room for students to read and write in their first language. In the final writing activity, learners were paired with a peer who shared the same language with them and they were allowed to write in their native language. In this way, I passed on the message that students' native language was valued in my classroom. Though the lesson was mainly designed to help with learners' English proficiency, the topic touched on appreciating different cultures and this would increase learners' cultural awareness and competence, which are important parts of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills.

At the end of this unit, students were required to develop a project as the **assessment**. They worked in small groups and created a picture book. In light of the content of the book, learners were asked to compare and contrast their lives in homelands and their lives in the United States from different aspects. Through the project, content objectives and language objectives were assessed. Moreover, the books students developed would be sent to ELL learners in other schools. Other than a test to examine students' learning results, the project **assessment** was real and meaningful. Students would be more actively participate in it.

**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.*

**Assessing.** Students come into classroom with academic and linguistic history. In order to plan and construct appropriate instructions for learners, it is important for teachers to assess students and glean information about their sociocultural, linguistic and educational backgrounds. Through well-designed assessment, teachers will be able to determine learners’ current developmental stage and wisely plan future instruction. Considering students’ roles in their own learning, teachers should involve students in the assessment process and provide them with constructive feedback to advance their linguistic and academic achievement.

**Artifact C.** This artifact is several parts of the final project I developed for course Linguistics/Second Language Acquisition in the Classroom, which focuses on assessing learner’s sociocultural and linguistic backgrounds. It was an ongoing project and I regularly kept in touch with a Chinese ELL girl through the whole semester. On the first day I met her, I interviewed her about her family background and her learning experience before she came to the United States. Later, I was in her classroom every week to work with her and monitored her development in English proficiency. By collecting and interpreting her oral and written samples in English, I analyzed her current English proficiency and developmental stage. According to her

sociocultural backgrounds and language proficiency, I designed a specific instructional plan for her future learning.

**Artifact D.** This is an observational protocol I recorded during my language assessment practicum on Jan. 29, 2015. I assessed a group of adult English learners by using Student Oral Language Observation Matrix (SOLOM) at Peabody College, Vanderbilt University. The aim of this assessment was to place learners in a level-appropriate language study group. Later, this form was used as reference to determine students' English proficiency level.

**Relevance to Domain.** Successful teachers not only master the skills to effectively deliver an instruction, but also are able to understand and respond to what individuals bring into school. To better serve culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students, teachers should legitimize learners' prior knowledge and experiences, recognizing them as whole people (Herrera, Cabral & Murry, 2012). From this point of view, it is necessary and even mandatory for teachers to continuously assess **learners** from different perspectives in different ways. The Artifact C demonstrates how I assessed an English learner's sociocultural and linguistic backgrounds, and used the information to plan instruction. I started with learning my learner's sociocultural and family backgrounds by conducting a short interview. The preassessment on her backgrounds informed me of the challenges and opportunities I might have to enhance her language **learning** and how I could design or modify instruction to feed the **learner's** needs. For example, after knowing my learner will go back to China in the next year, I suggested that her teacher consciously correct her phonetic errors in case that the error could be fossilized if she was not exposed to a rich and accurate input when she went back to China. Also, when observing her learning, I constantly noticed the factors in her classroom that positively and negatively impacted her performance. Based on this information, I could improve the **learning**

**environment** and create a safe place where she would be willing to communicate with others, thus improving her English proficiency.

For English Language Learners (ELL), most of the educational and social settings are in English. To which extent learners can benefit from the **curriculum** depends on their English proficiency. Therefore, classroom teachers should know how learners function in the instructional language so that they could minimize the language barriers and maximize the potential opportunities (Herrera, Cabral & Murry, 2012). Both Artifact C and Artifact D demonstrate my competence in assessing learner's linguistic proficiency. In the case study (Artifact C), I assessed the learner and analyzed her English proficiency by focusing on phonetics, morphology and syntax. Realizing her problem in subject-verb agreement, I came up with the instructional plan that could be added to the **curriculum** to improve the learner's language performance. During my assessment practicum, I assessed an adult learner by employing SOLOM protocol, which is shown as Artifact D. According to her performance in comprehension, fluency, vocabulary, pronunciation and grammar, I indicated that her English abilities were at level 4. The results were later used to place the learner in an English class appropriate to her level, where the **curriculum** was considered capable of facilitating her language **learning**. The information I collected through assessing learners' sociocultural and linguistic background can also be used to design future **assessment**. For example, in Artifact C, since my learner was developing in all the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing), she should be assessed in all these areas. However, considering her needs, the assessment could emphasize more on phonetics.

**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 of how context contributes to identity formation and therefore influences learning. Teachers use this knowledge of identity and settings in planning, instructing, and assessing.*

**Identity and Context.** Learners have life inside and outside classrooms. Their communities, heritages and goals have great impact on their learning. Qualified teachers should understand the significance of knowing students' native culture and respect what learners bring into the classroom. They are determined to create a healthy classroom where students' identities are affirmed, which will contribute to students' active engagement in learning. By tapping into learners' native culture and prior knowledge, teachers will be able to develop effective instruction and assessment for English learners.

**Artifact E.** The artifact I use to demonstrate my competence in the domain of identity and context is a field trip report I wrote after visiting the Hispanic community in Nashville. During the visit, I collected artifacts for transnational literacy project and interviewed a shop owner from that community about their cultural values. In this report, I presented my knowledge about the Latino community in Nashville. By describing how I would use the information and artifacts I collected from that community to develop instruction, I showed my ability in incorporating students' native culture into classroom to affirm their identity and facilitate their learning.

**Relevance to Domain.** Learners' sense of identity has a significant role in their learning. Culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students come into the mainstream classroom with their unique backgrounds. When **learners'** identity are validated and the instruction is built upon

their prior knowledge, they are more likely to be motivated and be engaged in **learning** (de Jong, 2011). As a pre-service English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher, I understand the importance of knowing **learners'** background and valuing their native culture in my classroom. In this field trip report, I demonstrated my efforts to know my students by searching different resource and visiting their family and community. With the knowledge of Hispanic community's family value, I described how I would incorporate learners' family into **curriculum** to facilitate their **learning**. By highlighting the connection between Spanish and English, I indicated that I valued **learners'** native language and native culture in my classroom. I understood the importance of taking students' first language (L1) as an advantage to facilitate their English **learning** and would love to take action to practice it.

The description of how I would use the artifacts I collected from the community shows my competence in welcoming learners' native culture in classroom and creating a respectful and supportive **learning environment**. For example, I took some pictures of the food that is unique in some culture at a local International supermarket. By using these photos as prompts, I could ask students to provide information about how to use the material to cook a meal. In this way, students from diverse backgrounds could have an opportunity to learn more about each other (Jiménez, Smith & Teague, 2009).

In light of **assessment**, the knowledge of Hispanic culture I gained through the field trip allowed me to consider how to select culturally appropriate test for my students. With a deeper understanding of my students' native culture, I can get rid of the assumption that some background knowledge is embedded in their cultural experiences, avoiding creating or employing culture-biased tests in my teaching practice (de Jong, 2004).

**Domain 5 Language Proficiency**

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

**Language Proficiency.** Being foreign language instructors requires teachers to be proficient in the target language in different contexts. English instructors are supposed to equivalently function in English as a native speaker with higher education.

**Artifact F.** This artifact is an audio clip recorded during my practicum at English Language Center at Vanderbilt University. It was the first lesson I delivered as a student teacher. The lesson was constructed around the topic of family. In this audio sample, I firstly shared my own story with the students and implicitly modeled how to use the phrase “used to”. Then, I organized a classroom activity that students would talk about their changes in recent years by using appropriate expression to compare and contrast.

**Relevance to Domain.** As a foreign language teacher, I understand that my English proficiency is the most important qualification I should have for my position. To successfully implement communicative teaching approach, I should provide **learners** with maximum input of target language (Brandl, 2007). English should be the primary instructional language in the **curriculum**. An effective instruction also requires me to make verbal communication accessible to learners by consciously paying attention to their linguistic needs (Echevarria, Vogt & Short, 2007). In order to achieve these goals and create an optimal **learning environment** for learners, I should be proficient in English in different discourses at first. In this audio sample, I delivered the instruction primarily in English and had myself understood by students. The learners could understand me and responded appropriately. The communication between the learners and I went

smoothly. Through the interaction, I could scaffold my students' English language **learning**. In addition, my English proficiency enabled me to conduct and analyze informal classroom **assessment** by observing students' language performance. I could understand learners' oral and written English, and find out in which areas they are less proficient, which would impact my **curriculum** development.

**Domain 6 Learning**

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

**Learning.** Language teachers should not only master pedagogical knowledge, but also understand the process of second language acquisition. By drawing on the knowledge of language and language acquisition, teachers can determine learners' current developmental stage and their needs, therefore, providing learners with appropriate instruction.

**Artifact G.** This is a case study I conducted as the final project for the course Linguistics/Second Language Acquisition in the Classroom in fall 2013. In this project, I worked with a Chinese English Language Learner (ELL) girl Lena. Through the whole-semester cooperation, I had an overall understanding of her background, learning environment and English proficiency. I analyzed her English skills from the perspectives of phonetics, morphology, and syntax. By using the knowledge of second language acquisition (SLA), I determined her current developmental stage, provided my suggestions for future instruction and reflected upon my learning through this project. Though the subject of this case study is an ELL child, the knowledge and method I used to study this girl are overlapped with that used to study adult language learning.

**Relevance to Domain.** Different from first language acquisition, second language learning has its own unique features. The knowledge of second language acquisition enables me to better determine learners' learning process, therefore providing him or her with appropriate instruction (Lightbown & Spada, 2013). The case study of a nonnative English speaker demonstrates my ability in drawing on linguistic knowledge to understand the process of my

**learner's** English acquisition. By conducting informal classroom observational **assessment**, I collected Lena's oral and written samples in English. Then I used my linguistic knowledge to analyze her English performance in phonetics, morphology and syntax and determined her current developmental stage. I found that her native language (Chinese) had negative impact on her pronunciation. Since I was frequently in her classroom and observed her learning, I had opportunities to gain more information about her **learning** process and **learning environment**. Combining Lena's English performance and the theory of SLA, I interpreted her English acquisition from different perspectives including usage-based learning, sociocultural theory, etc. During my observation, I noticed that Lena was afraid to speak in front of her classmates. With our further communication, I realized that it was because she was laughed at in the very beginning of her schooling in the United States due to her lower English proficiency. With the knowledge of the impact of **learning environment** on SLA, I expressed my concern about this problem and was seeking solutions to this problem.

With the information of Lena's sociocultural background and English ability, I provided suggestions on how to accommodate the **curriculum** to meet her needs by using linguistic knowledge to analyze the **assessment** results. Taking into account the reason why Lena avoided speaking in front of her classmates and the influence of learning environment on SLA, I emphasized the importance of creating a safe and supportive **learning environment**.

**Domain 7 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.*

**Content.** Language is used to mediate content learning. With regard to language course, the content is the language learners need to participate in social and academic life. Teachers are supposed to link language learning to content area, designing the curriculum to help with students' acquisition of communicative ability in English for both social and academic purpose.

**Artifact H.** The artifact I use to demonstrate my competence in content domain is a lesson plan I designed based on Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) model during my practicum at English Language Center at Vanderbilt University, Nashville, Tennessee. It was targeted for high-beginning or low-intermediate adult English learners. In this unit, students were expected to be able to talk about family memories by using emotional vocabulary and past tense. Later, I actually had a chance to deliver a part of the lesson in classroom.

**Relevance to Domain.** Language is the medium through which knowledge is taught and understanding is expressed. To successfully participate in academic or social lives, English language learners (ELL) have to master English in these fields (Echevarria, Vogt & Short, 2007). From this stand, it is important that the instruction is designed to address learners' needs. In the classroom I taught, the **learners** were primarily spouses of students at Vanderbilt University. Most of them came into the class with a desire to improve communication skills in English so

that they could cope with their life in the United States. Due the visa status, those students couldn't work in the United States and they spent most of the time on family life. Considering this, I thought that the **learners** would have more to talk about if the lesson was about family memories and they would be more engaged in **learning**. In order to talk about family memories, students should be able to use past tense to describe events and use emotional vocabulary to express their feelings.

In this **curriculum**, I created multiple group activities and group discussions to promote a cooperative **learning environment**. I constructed the **curriculum** around language objectives and content objectives. Generally, students would be able to use emotional vocabulary and past tense to talk about family memories. To facilitate students' **learning**, I created multiple opportunities for **learners** to communicate with each other, especially in an oral manner. For example, students would bring a family photo into classroom and share their photo stories with others. They would discuss the difference and similarities between two pictures in small groups. The group activities promote a cooperative **learning environment**, which is a strong facilitator of **learning** (Brandl, 2007). Personal artifacts like family photo would assist learners express their meaning on their own words. Meanwhile, they would be motivated to use their resources to communicate (Brandl, 2007). Though I had a textbook to use in my class, I decided to accommodate the **curriculum** suggested by textbooks by incorporating multimedia. To more actively involve students' in learning, I used a video clip to activate **learners'** background knowledge and enhance their comprehension. In an integrated curriculum, the **assessment** should be ongoing and performance-based (Diaz-rico & Weed, 2005). Instead of having students take a test consisting of random questions about past tense and vocabulary, I asked students to write a letter to their family members by using past and emotional vocabulary. In this way, both

language objectives and content objectives would be examined. By doing an exit card and reflecting on their own learning, students would also have an opportunity to do a **self-assessment**, which would advance their understanding to a higher level.

**Domain 8: 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.*

**Commitment and Professionalism.** Language teachers understand that their work is greatly impacted by their colleagues in teacher community. Teachers understand the importance of the communication and collaboration with professional colleagues. By further understanding the relationship between professional knowledge and professional cooperation, teachers contribute to the change within themselves and within teacher communities.

**Artifact I.** This artifact is a classroom observation report I completed after observing a veteran Spanish teacher's class. It is an assignment from my Second Language Teaching and Learning class. In this assignment, I evaluated whether the teaching strategies in the Spanish class were effective or not, from the perspectives of communicative language teaching. In the end, I gave an overall evaluation of the class and justified my evaluation.

**Artifact J.** This is a piece of reflection I developed after attending the Tennessee Foreign Language Teachers' Association (TFLTA) conference in Nashville in November 2014. During the conference, I attended a presentation delivered by Mary Nolen, a Spanish teacher from Georgia. The presentation was about how to use the strategy PACE (Presentation, Attention, Co-construction and Extension) to teach grammar at a high school level. This reflection demonstrates how I was informed by Mary's presentation of grammar instruction and shows my commitment to accommodate strategies to meet learners' needs.

**Artifact K.** This is a set of observation forms recorded by my supervisor Keenan Fagen during my practicum at English Language Center at Vanderbilt University. When observing the first class I taught as a student teacher, my supervisor recorded how I delivered the instruction in detail and came up with suggestions conducive to my future teaching.

**Relevance to Domain.** As a language educator, I understand that my professional development cannot be achieved without the communication and collaboration with other teachers. Therefore, I value every opportunity to learn from my teacher colleagues. The classroom observation report (Artifact I) demonstrates how I applied my knowledge of communicative language teaching (CLT) to evaluate a teaching scenario. Though the purpose of this observation was to evaluate the effectiveness of an instruction with regard to CLT, through observing the veteran Spanish teacher's classroom, I also learned effective strategies that I could use to engage my **learners** in instruction and facilitate their **learning**. The instructional strategies the teacher used in her class gave me an insight into creating an optimal **learning environment**. Since it was a beginning class, the teacher used lots of strategies to make the input comprehensible and continuously assessed students' comprehension, which I found useful for my future **curriculum** development and classroom **assessment** design.

As a pre-service teacher, I recognize the importance of attending professional conferences and strive to seize this kind of opportunity to enrich my pedagogical knowledge storage. Within the TFLTA conference, I went to different panels to communicate with language teachers. The reflection piece (Artifact J) shows how I was inspired by the Spanish teacher Mary and became determined to be practical in teaching language. After hearing how Mary implemented PACE in her classroom, I was informed of how to student-relevant materials in a grammar class to create a cooperative **learning environment** and engage **learners** in instruction.

The biggest take-away I obtained from her presentation was to be practical. To better serve my **learners** and facilitate their **learning**, I should be practical. It is extremely important to know students' needs and tailor the **curriculum** to meet their needs. The **assessment** should be designed and conducted in a meaningful way.

My supervisor's notes and comments on my first lesson demonstrate how I applied what I learned as a teacher into practice and what I needed to do to improve my instruction. I will follow his advice in my future teaching. When designing **curriculum**, instead of focusing on one group per time, I will create a more cooperative **learning environment** by organizing activities in a way that all of the **learners** can actively participate in. In the future, I will continue to cherish every opportunity to learn from and cooperate with my colleagues. By doing so, I can improve my teaching and instructional skills to better serve ESL learners.

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### **Part III Implication for Future Teaching**

As I furthered my education as an English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher in Peabody College, I continuously learned and grasped theories in English Language Learners (ELL) education, which lays the foundation of my teaching philosophy. Through classroom observations and working with culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) learners, I applied the knowledge into practice and improved my skills as an ESL teacher. The artifacts in Part II demonstrate my competency in the eight TESOL domains. Both theory and practice inform me of my future teaching. In this section, I will elaborate on the implication I obtained from both theoretical and practical knowledge, describing an ideal classroom in my mind, challenges facing ESL teachers and how to deal with those challenges.

#### **My Future Classroom**

Influenced by Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, especially the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), I will create ample opportunities for learners to interact with each other. Through social interaction, students have the opportunity to advance their performance to a higher level. From this stand, I am determined to promote a cooperative learning environment in my classroom. The lesson plans presented in section II has already shown my competency and efforts to achieve this goal. In the future, I will stick to this practice by organizing various group activities and encouraging peer assessment and peer feedback.

Regarding to materials, I prefer authentic materials but I will definitely pay attention to learners' needs. Through my study and practicum, I understand that language learning will become more meaningful when it is embedded in content learning. I will incorporate content area into language instruction, preparing students for social and academic life.

Trained as an ESL teacher, I strive to become a culturally responsive instructor, who values students' backgrounds and respects their home culture. The lesson plan "Some, Some, but Different" described in part II indicates my efforts to incorporate students' native culture and connect instruction to learners themselves. In my future classroom, I will continue to dedicate myself to building instruction on students' background knowledge and creating a respectful learning environment. Understanding that teachers' expectation is positively related to instruction quality and students' performance (Nieto & Bode, 2007), I will hold high expectation for my students. When designing curriculum, I will try my best to make it relevant to students and differentiate instruction according to their needs. Instead of oppressing English Language Learners' voice, I will give them platforms to show their native culture and explore who they are. When their identities are affirmed, they will more actively participate in instruction (de Jong, 2011). To achieve these goals, it is extremely necessary for me to go to students' family and community and learn their lives outside classroom. The household funds of knowledge have great potential to be used for instruction (Moll, Amanti, Neff & Gonzalez, 1992). By conducting community literacy project, I can collect artifacts that can be used for instructional purpose to support learners' English literacy development (Jiménez, Smith & Teague, 2009).

### **Challenges and Development**

Though the theory and strategies I learned in classroom and through practicum continue to solidify and enrich my knowledge storage as an ESL teacher, I also see lots of challenges I will encounter in the future. In this section, I will describe the challenges I find through my practice and reflect upon what I will do to cope with them.

In terms of teaching English as a second language, I am in favor of communicative language teaching. My ultimate goal is to cultivate my students as compete communicators in

social and academic life. I believe that the use of authentic materials will expose students to real-world language, linking classroom to students' needs in the real world and providing instructors with potential to design instruction (Brandl, 2007). Nevertheless, through practice, I find sometimes it is difficult to use this sort of materials in beginning class. These materials usually contain difficult language that is inappropriate, especially for lower-level students. In this situation, instructors will have a hard time to locate and select level-appropriate authentic materials and design instruction (Brandl, 2007). In addition, when selecting materials for culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students, we should be sensitive to their prior knowledge and sociocultural backgrounds. The trend of content-based language teaching also requires ESL educators to be familiar with not only language materials but also subject materials. All of these factors make material selection a difficult task.

To cope with this challenge, I should at first continue improving my English proficiency, especially the competency in academic literacy. Only with adequate knowledge of academic and social language can I choose language-appropriate texts for my students. I should also work closely with my content area colleagues. Through the collaboration, I can learn how to select content-appropriate materials to help with students' academic learning.

As I mentioned before, I am determined to be a culturally responsive teacher. However, when I am finally in a classroom, I feel I need more experiences and practice to achieve this goal. As a pre-service ESL teacher, I understand that learners' prior experiences and knowledge play pivotal roles in their learning. I should tap into those kinds of information to facilitate their learning. Nevertheless, I am always struggling with what topics I could use to touch on students' prior experiences and what strategies I can use to involve all of the students in instruction.

Sometimes, I am even afraid that there is a cultural misunderstanding or mismatch in the activity. Students might be uncomfortable with the topic, which would lead to an undesirable result.

To solve this problem, I think the best and the only way is to stick to the practice of knowing students as a whole person. To truly care about CLD learners, I need to know their native culture and their lives outside the classroom. Apart from their linguistic and academic backgrounds, it is more important to know learners' sociocultural backgrounds and acculturation level. The information of students as a whole person instead of mere a student will inform me of how to respect them and how to help them adjust themselves to the new life here, which I think is the prerequisite for their academic success.

Through my practicum, I find it is also extremely important to work with veteran teachers. It is obvious that they are priceless resource of instruction strategies and I have already learned a lot about teaching approached from different classroom teachers. But more importantly, veteran teachers are experienced in being sensitive to learners' culture and emotion. I still remembered that on my first day as a student teacher, my mentor told me that when I chose a topic, I should consider whether it was culturally and emotionally appropriate for all of the students, which I've been bearing in mind all the time.

### Conclusion

Looking back to my two-year study as an ESL teacher, I can feel my growth from a know-nothing education major to a not perfectly prepared preservice teacher. My entire teaching philosophy is grounded in Vygostky's sociocultural theory. I regard communicative language teaching approach as my primary instructional method and determine to be a culturally responsive teacher. In addition to learning theory, I got opportunities to observe veteran teachers' classrooms and do hands-on practice, which enabled me to reflect upon how the theory could be

applied in practice and what were the challenges I would face. However, I am still not confident enough to say I am a well-prepared teacher. I feel I need more practice to gain more experience. When making instructional decisions in the future, I will start from theory but end with practice. In my future teaching, I will adhere to my teaching philosophy but be flexible in practice. When both the theory and reality are considered, the best decision will be made.

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