

## **Capstone Teaching Portfolio**

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### **Abstract**

In this teaching portfolio, I showcase my qualifications as an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teacher candidate ready to begin teaching independently. I first articulate my teaching philosophy, which prioritizes a balanced blend of meaning and form instruction as well as learner-centered instruction as key factors contributing to high-quality language instruction. I base my teaching philosophy on pedagogical theories and principles that resonate with my personal learning and teaching experiences. Then, I analyze artifacts from my program of study and practicum experience to demonstrate my understanding and achievement in the Professional Knowledge Areas and TESOL Domains that constitute the core learning goals of my program. The artifacts range from lesson plans and curriculum created by myself to critical evaluations of others' work. They show evidence of my compliance with both the program standards and my own teaching philosophy. Finally, I conclude the portfolio with a discussion on my takeaways from my program of study and practicum experiences and considerations for my future practice.

### **Teaching Philosophy**

After graduating from Peabody, I want to teach English as a foreign language (EFL) in South Korea. Specifically, I want to work with high school students because they are under immense pressure of preparing for the college entrance exam and I want to make at least the English portion of their learning and preparation more enjoyable. Generally speaking, the Korean style of pedagogy can be characterized as feeding students facts and knowledge that they uptake through rote memorization and then having students regurgitate what they have memorized through high-stake tests to prove successful learning. I find this approach especially problematic for language learning because in the end students may be successful at taking an exam but still struggle with communicating in the target language. Furthermore, when language is taken out of context and memorized as rules and formulae, learning becomes onerous and disengaging. A friend of mine once even compared his English learning experience in Korea to training in Sparta! Consequently, what I hope to add to the Korean EFL classroom are opportunities for use of English for communicative purposes that will allow students to practice the rules and formulae in authentic contexts and enhance their understanding and retention of prepackaged knowledge.

Keeping the Korean EFL context in mind for practical considerations and reflecting on my past experiences learning languages, teaching languages, and learning about how to teach languages, I have come to a preliminary conclusion about what high-quality language instruction looks like to me. My teaching philosophy is as follows: Effective language instruction should consist of both meaning-focused and form-focused teaching and teachers should make learner-centered instructional decisions to support students' language learning. In later paragraphs, I will elaborate on what I mean by meaning-focused, form-focused, and learner-centered. I will also explain the pedagogical theories that shaped my philosophy.

### **Meaning-Focused and Form-Focused Instruction**

Based on the problem with the Korean EFL pedagogical approach I described at the beginning of this paper, it may seem like I am a proponent of the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach, and that is right. However, CLT has become such a generic label used by people to refer to various instructional approaches that I feel the need to clarify my conceptualization of CLT. Unlike traditional interpretations of CLT, which tend to downplay the importance of explicit teachings of grammar and other form-focused language learning, it is my firm belief that effective language instruction should consist of both meaning-focused and form-focused instruction, not just the former. What I mean by meaning-focused instruction is providing students with authentic examples of the target language and prompting students to emulate the examples to produce natural and fluent utterances as well as discover patterns in how the language is used without teacher's explicit explanation. One downside to this approach is that students may not be able to fully decipher the underlying rules governing the target language without explicit explanation and thus make unpredictable mistakes, resulting in fluent but not always accurate utterances.

In contrast, what I mean by form-focused instruction is drawing students' attention to the target language's grammatical rules and structural components and explicitly teaching students how to obey those rules and manipulate those components to produce accurate utterances. One downside to this approach is that when linguistic structures are isolated and taught in terms of rules, students could end up knowing the rule perfectly well but not being able to apply it in a variety of situations. For example, students may know how to conjugate all kinds of verbs into the past tense but struggle with telling what they did yesterday. Their creativity in producing meaningful utterances is limited by the rules that they know. Clearly, both meaning-focused and

form-focused instructions have limitations in what they can help students achieve, and one's strength seems to complement the other's weakness, so to me it makes perfect sense to integrate the two approaches in order to provide comprehensive instruction.

Considering its inclusion of form-focused instruction, my conceptualization of CLT may seem unorthodox to some, but it is not without theoretical support. It resonates with Dornyei's (2009) Principled Communicative Approach (PCA), which was theorized as a modified and superior version of CLT. Dornyei (2009) raised a concern over CLT's overemphasis on implicit learning, or gaining linguistic insight and communicative competence through exposure to authentic L2 input and participation in L2 communication scenarios, resulting in neglecting or even discouraging explicit teaching of rules that dictate how the L2 works. He pointed out that such approach to language learning works well for L1 acquisition but does not produce the same promising results for L2 acquisition. Taking note of CLT proponents' dissatisfaction with the rote drilling and memorization that is often associated with form-focused instruction, PCA upholds the importance of meaning-based instruction through authentic input and interaction but calls for explicit instruction on linguistic form and formulaic language to help students become not only fluent but also accurate in the target language (Dornyei, 2009).

### **Learner-Centered Instruction**

Besides meaning-focused and form-focused instruction, another keyword in my teaching philosophy is learner-centered instruction, which includes "techniques that focus on or account for learners' needs, styles, and goals" and "curricula that include the consultation and input of students" (Brown, 2007, p. 46-47). In other words, have students' best interest in mind when making instructional decisions and involve students in the decision-making process. How do we know what constitutes students' best interest? We can directly ask them for information on their

learning needs, styles, and goals. We can also deduce from observations and interactions with the students what might interest them and facilitate their learning. Either way, we need to get to know the students and establish good rapport with them so that they will open up to us with their opinions and help us become more responsive teachers. Thus, a big part of enacting learner-centered instruction is actively trying to get to know the students and consider our instruction from their point of view.

In addition to Brown's (2007) definition of what learner-centered instruction entails, my conceptualization of learner-centered instruction is shaped by a core idea of Constructivism, which is that students rely on background knowledge to make sense of new knowledge, hence they "construct" knowledge (Windschitl, 1999). This idea is especially pertinent to language instruction because students learning additional languages will most likely process and construct L2 knowledge through the lens of their native language and culture. Following the Constructivist logic, because students are not empty vessels waiting to be filled with knowledge by the teacher but active participants in the knowledge construction process, teachers need to collaborate with students on the construction instead of dictating how the process should go. Effective collaboration requires a sufficient degree of familiarity and trust between the parties involved, so again it should be emphasized that teachers need to know their learners in order to enact learner-centered instruction. Especially with Constructivism, teachers need to look for sources of prior knowledge that can be utilized to facilitate students' language learning, and students' linguistic and cultural backgrounds are great starting places.

So far I have emphasized the importance of getting to know students as a way to make thoughtful instructional decisions, which constitutes as learner-centered instruction, but another big part of enacting learner-centered instruction is directly involving students in the decision-

making process. Consider two scenarios. In the first one, the teacher makes an instructional decision based on what they think the students will like. In the second one, the teacher lets students choose among options that the teacher thinks the students will like, or even asks students to come up with the options. The second scenario lets students have more control over the decision-making process and gives students a sense of ownership of their learning. It is not easy for teachers to give up some control over instruction and hand it to the students, but it is a necessary step to take in order to deliver learner-centered instruction. It signals to students that learner input is valued and honored, and substantially acknowledges that learners indeed are co-participants in the knowledge construction process.

To sum up, my teaching philosophy focuses on a balanced blend of meaning-focused and form-focused instruction as well as learner-centered instruction. Language instruction is a complex matter and what I prioritize as my teaching philosophy is only a small part of all the considerations that a language teacher needs to make in order to deliver effective instruction. However, it is also difficult to conform to every reasonable pedagogical theory and approach available. As I gain more experience and insight, my teaching philosophy may grow and change, but as of now I am satisfied with my preliminary conclusion on what high-quality language instruction means to me and I look forward to enacting and enhancing my philosophy in my future practice. In the rest of this paper, I will showcase the work I have done as a teacher candidate and compare it to the TESOL standards that determine whether I am an adequate candidate.



### **Professional Knowledge Area 1: Learner**

The first professional knowledge area concerns the learner, which may raise some questions. Why should I talk about the learner first when I am trying to demonstrate *my* teaching abilities? Actually, recognizing the importance of the learner is a very important realization for a teacher because teaching is not a performance for the learner but an interaction with the learner. Teaching and learning are social interactions and social interactions tend to fare better when at least one side tries to get to know and understand the other side. No matter how experienced and skilled instructors are, it is difficult for them to truly make an impact on their students' learning if they are unaware of who their students really are. Once teachers are familiar with their students' backgrounds and learning styles, they can make more informed curricular decisions (covered later in Professional Knowledge Area 3 Curriculum) and create a harmonious learning environment (covered later in Professional Knowledge 2 The Learning Contexts). Attention to the Learner will also help a teacher track learning progress (covered later in Professional Knowledge Area 4 Assessment). In this section I will zoom in on TESOL Domain 4 Identity and Context and Domain 6 Learning to demonstrate my understanding of the importance of the Learner in language instruction.

#### **TESOL Domain 4: Identity and Context**

*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.*

If we compare culture, which encompasses language, customs, social norms and shapes one's identity, to brush strokes, I think the central message this domain is trying to convey is that

learners do not come into the classroom as blank canvases to be painted with knowledge. Rather, they are already rich in content and as teachers we have to study the previous paint strokes to decide how to add the next stroke so that it is in harmony with the previous strokes. Moreover, teachers or schools are not the only painters adding paint strokes to the canvas—the learner has a life beyond being a student and this too needs to be taken into consideration. In the following paragraphs, I will use Artifact A to demonstrate how I gained insights on how to teach Korean ELLs by researching the Korean community in Nashville.

### **Artifact A**

*Exploring Korean Community Literacies* was a project report detailing my findings on the Korean immigrant population in the US and the Korean community in Nashville. I conducted research on the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of Korean ELL students in an effort to discover potential “funds of knowledge,” or prior knowledge that can be leveraged in the language classroom (Moll et al., 1992). At the time of research, I was specifically thinking of Korean ESL students in American universities and trying to come up with engaging ways of teaching them academic writing. The same approach can be adapted to fit other instructional contexts as well.

In the report, I not only provided background information on Korean culture but also made recommendations on how to connect course content with students’ identity and circumstances. I identified six potential topics that can be used in an ESL academic writing class and paired the topics with writing tasks. One notable topic that I want to elaborate on is the Korean writing system, which is a topic that can be related to learning about Korean food. Below is an excerpt from my report:

As the teacher becomes more familiar with Korean food, she develops an interest in the Korean script that can be found on the outer packaging of Korean snacks. She learns from

a quick online search that the Korean writing system is regarded as the most scientific script, and then she develops an assignment that capitalizes on her students' knowledge of the Korean language to facilitate their learning of multimodal writing. The assignment is creating an infographic that details the origin of Hangeul, explains why it is scientific, and provides personal advice on how to learn the Korean alphabet.

To provide more context to the excerpt, I want to add that I was writing about how a teacher can visit local Korean restaurants and grocery stores to get to know a very important aspect of Korean culture: food. Using food as a springboard for brainstorming writing task ideas, the teacher eventually decides on using the Korean writing system as the topic for students to practice multimodal writing—producing an infographic to educate others about the Korean writing system. The writing task that I created shines a spotlight on the Korean writing system, something that Korean ELLs use on a daily basis with family and friends and see whenever they visit the local Korean community. It acknowledges that even though Korean ELLs are studying in an English-dominant environment, their knowledge of the Korean language and ties to the Korean community are valuable “funds of knowledge” that can help them in learning multimodal writing and many more. Such organic connection between one aspect of the learner’s cultural background and a potential learning activity is likely to happen precisely because the teacher tried to get to know the learner beyond the superficial level and actually visited the learner’s cultural community.

Other topics that I discussed in the report include teaching comparative writing through comparing Korean and American cuisines, teaching argumentative writing through evaluating which country’s diet is healthier, and teaching research writing through investigating U.S.-Korean collaboration. The first two are food related and self-explanatory, but the last one requires a bit more explanation. From my research I learned that some Koreans emigrated to the U.S. because they married U.S. soldiers who were stationed in Korea. This information inspired me to suggest a research project on US-Korean military collaboration and its social

consequences. By no means was I assuming that every Korean ELL student would be familiar with the topic; rather, I picked the topic because it intersects two countries that are relevant to the students. Behind all these suggestions, my motivation is to facilitate student learning by making connections between course content and Korean ELL students' "funds of knowledge." In addition, I included a recommendation for teachers to get students' opinions on cultural topics that they feel comfortable writing about. I think this could be overlooked in an earnest attempt to leverage students' "funds of knowledge"—what we assume students could relate to based on our understanding of their cultural backgrounds might not be something that students feel comfortable thinking and writing about.

### **Artifact B**

Although Artifact A offers telling examples of how I am able to recognize the valuable "funds of knowledge" provided by students' linguistic and cultural backgrounds and think of creative ways to leverage that prior knowledge, the examples focus on Korean students in general. I want to supplement Artifact A with a more focused example of getting to know one learner by introducing Artifact B.

*Interview with an English Language Learner* was an interview I conducted with a Brazilian international student named Victor, who is currently studying at a prestigious university in the US. The purpose of the interview was to gather information about Victor's linguistic and cultural backgrounds and the learning context in which he operates. It was a great opportunity for me to practice asking the right questions to understand a learner's identity and context. My favorite question from the interview was "Name some cultural practices, activities, and/or artifacts that are meaningful to you." I like it because rather than asking for an overview of Victor's cultural background, which can be overwhelming, the question asks for something

specific that is personally meaningful to Victor and I can get a more in-depth answer out of him. Indeed, Victor provided an impressive answer: he talked about his mother tongue, Portuguese, as a cultural artifact that is meaningful to him and explained that compared to English, Portuguese is more poetic which allows the speaker to embed more feelings and emotions into the words. On the other hand, he praised English for its simplicity and straightforwardness because compared to Portuguese, English has less complicated grammar. Victor's response indicated to me that he is a very meta-linguistically aware language learner and this trait should be leveraged in language instruction to help him grow as a learner. Victor also told me he is very familiar with American popular culture because he loves watching American movies and listening to American songs and has done so since a very young age. I learned that even though he is Brazilian, he grew up with American entertainment because it is popular in Brazil. This piece of information led me to believe that Victor's early exposure to English through American entertainment contributed to his acquisition of English and his knowledge of American popular culture is another source of prior knowledge. If I had not tried to understand Victor's cultural background, I could easily assume that he knew little about American culture and missed the opportunity to leverage a great source of "funds of knowledge".

Looking back at the artifacts, I wish I had included a discussion on the difference between US and foreign pedagogical styles. As pointed out by the Domain 4 statement by TESOL, part of knowing the learner is understanding their expectations, and I am aware that Korean students have very different expectations than American students when it comes to teaching and learning. According to Lee and Carrasquillo (2006), Korean students participate less in class discussions and professors consequently discredit them as passive students when in reality Korean students are just used to lecture-based classes like those in Korea. A change in

learning context does not mean that students will automatically adjust their expectations. The professors in the cited study failed to understand their learners and blamed their lack of participation as lackluster performance rather than a culturally driven reaction. Such unfortunate misperception could be prevented if the professors tried to get to know their learners.

As demonstrated by Artifact A, Artifact B and my afterthoughts, I am adequately aware of the positive impact on instruction that can be reaped from getting to know the learner's identity and context through learning about their cultural backgrounds and the local community in which they are a part of. The examples I cited from the artifacts further indicate that I am able to incorporate knowledge about the learner's identity into instructional planning. The positive association between knowing the learner and planning effective instruction will be further discussed in detail in a later section titled Professional Knowledge Area 3 Curriculum. In the section immediately following this one, I will move on to Domain 6 Learning, which focuses on understanding students' language acquisition.

### **TESOL Domain 6: Learning**

*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.*

My interpretation of this TESOL standard is that teachers need to apply theories and knowledge about the process of second language acquisition (SLA) to their instruction in order to support students' language learning in an informed way. A basic but fundamental understanding of SLA will allow teachers to recognize and respond to common challenges that language learners face during various stages of language acquisition. Furthermore, knowledge of SLA will empower teachers to identify motivating factors and learning strategies that will help

language learners advance toward their language learning goals. In this section, I will reuse Artifact B but analyze it from a different perspective to demonstrate my ability to apply SLA-related knowledge to make sense of information gathered about a language learner and make instructional recommendations for that learner.

### **Artifact B**

As a reminder, *Interview with an English Language Learner* was an interview I conducted with Victor, an international student from Brazil who is currently studying at a prestigious university in the U.S. The original purpose of the interview was to determine the linguistic and cultural backgrounds as well as learning context of Victor, but the information I obtained from the interview can also be analyzed from an SLA-focused point of view. In fact, I did use my knowledge of SLA to make inferences about Victor's stage of language acquisition and what may have contributed to his learning progress in the interview report. Thus, I decided to re-analyze the interview and offer my recommendations on how to support Victor's language learning.

From the interview, I learned that Victor is not required to take any ESL classes at his school even though he is an international student from a non-English speaking country. He feels confident about using English in daily conversations and class discussions, but he finds academic writing a challenging aspect of studying in a second language and as a result needs to seek language support from his school's ESL tutoring service. To be more specific, during our interview, Victor's utterances were well structured, sounded natural, and were almost free of grammatical mistakes. When he did occasionally need to rephrase something to fix a grammatical mistake or find a better word choice, he did so independently and without struggle. He did not pause or hesitate, did not ask for help, and just quickly fixed the problem and moved

on to the next sentence. He may not even come off as an English learner if I had not known his status as an international student. This information suggested to me that Victor is most likely an advanced learner of English, and as a result of his advanced proficiency his language learning needs will differ from the average language learner.

For advanced learners like Victor, it would be less fruitful if language instruction focused on delivering discrete packets of linguistic knowledge such as vocabulary and grammar lessons. As Victor himself had pointed out, he required language support with more integrated skills such as academic writing. It may not be the lexical and grammatical components of the English language that he needed help with, but the discourse-level conventions that he could use tips and pointers on. A lesson on the differences between the English and Portuguese writing styles such as argument structure is one example of what Victor might need. Moreover, with advanced learners like Victor, sometimes it is not helpful to look for or anticipate mistakes in their language use because given their proficiency level, they have reached an almost guaranteed level of accuracy. A more helpful way to ensure their continued growth as a language learner is to look for linguistic items and structures that they are avoiding. According to Ortega (2013), avoidance is a strategy that language learners use to circumvent the use of certain language features and conceal their lack of control over that certain language feature. For example, a learner may avoid using phrasal verbs and opt for their one-word synonyms (e.g. let down vs. disappoint), or vice versa. While avoidance does not lower the perceived intelligibility or communicative competence of a language learner, in actuality it is a sign that the learner needs additional language support.

Another important piece of information that I learned about Victor through the interview is his intrinsic interest in learning English. Since a young age, Victor has been fascinated with



American entertainment such as movies, TV shows and music, which helped him develop a sense of familiarity and fondness of American culture and the English language as he was learning English back in Brazil. He had also studied in London for a semester when he was in high school and greatly appreciated the immersive learning experience. Last but not least, he made the decision to study abroad in the US of his own volition and wanted to master the English language so he could more easily adjust to life in the U.S. These facts suggested to me that Victor is highly motivated and willing in language learning and such high motivation and affect have helped and will continue to help him grow as an English learner.

Motivation and affect are important factors that teachers need to mobilize for any kind of learning, but especially with SLA, they play a critical role in helping students engage and invest in the learning process (Ortega, 2013). Knowing Victor's interest in American pop culture, one instructional recommendation I can make is to leverage his interest and use snippets from a movie or song as a way to illustrate language use. For example, one common hurdle that more advanced second language learners may face is not being able to express themselves as creatively as native speakers and not being able to understand figurative language that is couched in cultural references. Teachers can help learners like Victor overcome this hurdle by providing authentic examples and contextualized explanations on idioms and slangs using movies and songs.

The above reanalysis of Artifact B has shown my ability to make instructional recommendations based on my knowledge of how SLA works. Because Victor is an advanced learner, my recommendation focused on SLA theories such as avoidance and motivation and affect. For learners with lower proficiency levels, I will pay more attention to the phonological, morphosyntactic, and orthographic differences between their L1 and English, their development

of an interlanguage, and how they negotiate meaning and form. Of course, my recommendations are just general directions for consideration, and a more specific course of action to help support Victor's language learning will need a more focused assessment of his language production to determine, for example, whether he is indeed avoiding the use of certain language features. This demonstrates the importance of applying SLA knowledge to not only instruction but also assessment of language learners. More discussion on assessment will appear later in this paper.

Domain 6 Learning attests to the importance of understanding the Learner and reminds us that in addition to learners' linguistic and cultural backgrounds, their stage of language acquisition and their strengths and weaknesses in language learning are also important components of a learner's identity which requires the teacher's attention. With regards to my teaching philosophy, I believe it is very clear that Professional Knowledge Area 1 as a whole aligns with my philosophy of learner-centered instruction. In the next section, our attention will shift from the Learner to the Learning Contexts, but as dictated by my teaching philosophy of learner-centered instruction, the Learner will remain important in all of my teaching considerations.

## **Professional Knowledge Area 2: The Learning Contexts**

I think of learning contexts as the physical environment and emotional atmosphere where teaching and learning take place. Typical contexts include the classroom and school, but with advances in technology there are virtual contexts such as online learning management systems as well. These contexts should make students feel welcome and comfortable with sharing views and making mistakes so that they are motivated to participate and learn. Though not every aspect of the language learning context is under teachers' control, teachers do play a big role in shaping the learning context especially at the classroom level. In this section, I will focus on the TESOL domain of instructing and demonstrate my understanding of how teachers can optimize the classroom as a learning context.

### **TESOL Domain 2: Instructing**

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

From the TESOL statement above, I extracted two key phrases that I think are the most important when it comes to the teacher's role in shaping the learning context: "all learners" and "purposeful learning." The first phrase is important because it stresses equity. Teachers should not show support and care to some students but not others, even if the difference in treatment is unintentional and not based on prejudice. The second phrase is important because creating a comfortable environment is not enough—the environment also has to be conducive to language learning, which is the end result that we want. The TESOL statement also reminds me of de Jong's (2011) *Principles of Striving for Educational Equity and Affirming Identities*, which urge teachers to provide equal learning opportunities for all students and acknowledge students'

backgrounds. In the analysis below, I will use Artifact C to demonstrate my understanding of the Learning Context and Instructing.

### **Artifact C**

*Investigating Local Practices* was a school visit report that I wrote up after observing an ESL class and interviewing an assistant principal about school-wide support for ELL students at a local high school. The report has roughly three parts. First, I provided background information on the ELL population at the high school and the kinds of support programs available for ELLs and their family to pave the way for further analysis. Second, I described what I saw and heard during the visit, including classroom setup and decoration, teacher-student and student-student interactions, and the administrator's clarification of school practices. Third, I compared the teacher's practice and school environment to the pedagogical theories and principles that I had been learning at Peabody and evaluated the local high school's performance in terms of ELL support. Even though I was not the one creating the learning context or giving instruction, being able to recognize what others are doing well and where they are lacking and being able to justify the evaluation in reference to pedagogical literature can still showcase my understanding of this TESOL domain.

One of the most noteworthy factors shaping the language learning context for ELLs is whether the use of home language is permitted. The debate between English-only and bilingual education advocates continues despite empirical evidence supporting the latter (August et al., 2010). In Artifact C, I applauded the teacher that I observed for permitting the use of home language in her classroom even though she appeared to be monolingual. Some teachers forbid L1 use in fear of students getting off task or even in frustration of not being able to understand, but this teacher recognized how L1 use can foster student collaboration and facilitate learning. In

fact, my observation validated that “the students were discussing task-related things such as borrowing school supplies and clarifying page numbers for their assignments.”

However, the use of L1 also negatively affected the language learning environment. Not all students in that classroom shared the same L1—there were two non-Hispanic students who remained silent when the rest of the class is codeswitching between English and Spanish, and they did not interact with their peers. In response to this observation I wrote, “In this case, only the Spanish-speaking students benefited from the teacher’s permission of home language usage in the classroom—the use of Spanish actually alienated some students.” This is exactly the kind of unintentional neglect that requires teachers to think deeper about whether their classroom policies actually promote equal participation. Connecting to pedagogical principles, I wrote, “This seemed problematic to me because it violated de Jong’s (2011) principle of affirming identities, which states educators should ‘create spaces for diverse student voices’ (p. 174).” So far, Artifact C has shown that I was able to analyze the teacher’s decision to allow use of L1 in her classroom beyond the simple dichotomy of English-only or multilingualism. I recognized the complexity in how the decision impacted the language learning context, that the teacher indeed intended to create an equitable space where student voices can be heard through languages in addition to English, but her good intention resulted in an unwanted outcome of unequal representation in the space. To rectify the situation, my suggestion is for the teacher to discuss with students and determine one or two rules regarding the use of L1 in the classroom. For example, in whole-class discussions, use of L1 is not entirely prohibited but encouraged to be kept at a minimum so the two non-Hispanic students will not feel left out. However, in pair activities, which the teacher should make more frequent use of (will be discussed shortly), L1

can be used more freely since the non-Hispanic students can help each other negotiate English using their L1 and the Hispanic students can rely on Spanish to negotiate English.

With regards to the physical space of the classroom that I observed, one wall with pictures of people from different cultures and the words “many cultures, one people” caught my attention and I appreciated it because it not only celebrated students’ cultural differences but also conveyed the message that cultural differences do not make us fundamentally different from one another. Having such message clearly displayed on the wall reminds everyone in the classroom to respect one another and signals the teacher’s commitment to creating a harmonious language learning environment. Due to the brief duration of my observation, I was not able to see whether the teacher included any activities where students could share about their own linguistic and cultural backgrounds. However, if I were the teacher, I would back up the poster on the wall with an intentional planning of a classroom activity in which students get to introduce their home language and culture to their teacher and classmates. Such activity will reinforce the idea that cultural differences are something to be learned about and respected, and everyone can participate in the learning and respecting of another culture. The activity will also serve as a meaningful language practice.

Besides the physical space, another important aspect of the learning context is how members of the classroom usually interact and conduct class. What I am alluding to is whether the classroom is teacher-centered or student-centered and whether peer interactions are encouraged. In Artifact C, I determined that the classroom I observed was teacher-centered since most interactions were initiated by the teacher and students collaborated minimally when completing tasks. I wrote, “there were limited pair and small group interactions” and “the teacher did most of the talking,” to which I commented “the teacher should have created more

opportunities for students to practice speaking English” and “the teacher could use more constructivism in her instruction and let the students take the lead in acquiring knowledge.” My observation reminded me of the classroom Valdes (1998) described where students mostly worked on individual assignments that required limited speaking or peer interaction, and I voiced my concern that without opportunities to practice speaking, the students’ oral proficiency may stagnate like one of the main research participants in the cited study. However, I did not urge the teacher to abandon her current approach altogether and opt for constructivism. I wrote, “it is easier to make use of a few constructivist practices as a starting point rather than transforming the classroom culture overnight.” Looking back, I think I had made an objective evaluation because I did not blindly believe in constructivism and criticize the teacher for her non-constructivist approach. Instead, I saw a potential problem in her approach, that her students might not improve in oral proficiency if the class is always teacher-led and peer interactions are kept at the minimum. Then, I suggested incorporating some constructivist practices rather than imposing constructivism as a whole.

What I hope to showcase through Artifact C is my ability to recognize the pros and cons of another teacher’s choices that pertain to the language learning context. To sum up, I believe the teacher I observed more or less created a welcoming language learning environment where cultural differences among learners are celebrated, but to what extent did the environment facilitate language learning was questionable since the students mostly interacted with the teacher only and did not talk much. As I mentioned in the opening of this section, a good language learning context should be a place where students are not afraid of making mistakes. This cannot happen if the students are not given enough opportunities to potentially make mistakes. When I have my own classroom, I can use Artifact C as an example and analyze my

own classroom setup and make adjustments so that I create a context that is both welcoming and conducive to language learning. After analyzing Artifact C, I realized how embracing student-centered teaching and learning, which is a major part of my teaching philosophy, can help a teacher to create the optimal Learning Context. Essentially, learner-centeredness in my definition requires the teacher to make curricular and instructional decisions in the students' best interest. I think it makes a lot of sense that the Learning Context is sandwiched between the Learner and Curriculum. Creating the optimal Learning Context is impossible without knowledge about the Learner, which is going to inform what kinds of learning environment they would find comfortable. Understanding the potentials and constraints of the Learning Context will also help teachers plan better instruction and design more sensible Curriculum, which will be the topic of the next section.



### **Professional Knowledge Area 3: Curriculum**

After considering the Learner and the Learning Context, the third professional knowledge area is Curriculum. The sequence of the professional knowledge areas makes sense because curriculum needs to be responsive to the learner and the learning environment. From the perspective of a language instructor, I see curriculum as a plan of how to fulfill the promise that I make to my students, which is that they should be able to acquire the target language to a certain level of proficiency after taking my course. The plan needs to be detailed, specifying what will be taught, when and why; what materials and resources are useful and reliable; what activities and assessments are engaging and feasible; and most importantly, how everything will be conducted (Clementi & Terrill, 2017). The plan also needs to be flexible in order to respond to individual learner needs and changes in the learning environment rather than just to standardized learning goals and expectations set by the school (Kumaravadivelu, 1994). Without this plan, even the most experienced teacher will not be able to deliver instruction that ensures effectiveness and coherence throughout the entire course. In this section, I will demonstrate my achievements in TESOL Domain 1 Planning and Domain 7 Instructing.

#### **TESOL Domain 1: Planning**

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

In my interpretation, this domain highlights the necessity of advanced planning and preparation to ensure quality instruction and smart use of class time. It also highlights the importance of flexibility in executing the plan. After all, plans need to adjust to what actually happens in and outside the classroom. For this domain, I will analyze two artifacts to showcase my work. Artifact D is a lesson plan that demonstrates planning at the micro level, the nitty-

gritty instructional decisions; Artifact E is a curriculum design that demonstrates planning at the macro level, focusing on overarching themes such as course objectives and scope and sequence.

### **Artifact D**

*Questions for Doctor* was developed as a lesson plan for Vanderbilt English Language Center's (ELC) General English for Spouses/Partners (GES) class. It can demonstrate my achievement in Professional Knowledge Area 3 Curriculum and TESOL Domain 1 Planning because it showcases my capability to plan a lesson that responds to student needs and promotes learning. Here is a little background information on GES: it was a class that met for two hours on a weekly basis and aimed to help learners with lower levels of English proficiency develop functional oral language skills. The particular group of learners that I taught consisted of housewives who came to the U.S. because their spouses study or work at Vanderbilt. They joined the class so that they could practice speaking English and pick up new vocabulary and expressions.

The lesson plan is responsive to student needs because it was inspired by a needs analysis conducted on that particular group of learners. Needs analysis is helpful because it helps make the curriculum relevant and useful to the learner (Nation & Macalister, 2010). The topic of the lesson is "How to Ask Your Doctor Questions," which I chose in direct response to my learners' concern over communication with healthcare providers. At the beginning of the semester, my mentor teacher and I asked the students to indicate how comfortable they feel using English in various common situations, such as at the mall, movie theater, library, etc. Doctor's office was one of several situations where the students felt uncomfortable using English as the only medium of communication. Given the importance of healthcare in our daily life, we decided to prioritize patient-doctor communication and plan a lesson to boost our students' confidence in that

situation. I specifically chose to focus on how to ask questions because it will enable students to gain agency in conversations with their doctors. I also picked modal verbs (can, should, would, etc.) as a language objective because they are useful in asking questions.

The lesson plan promotes learning because it features a series of “gradual release of responsibility” activities that aim to gradually guide students to meet that lesson’s learning objectives (Pearson & Gallagher, 1983). Each activity builds upon what was covered in the previous one and as the activities progress students are expected to take a more active part in using the target language. To start off, the “Warm-up” activity introduces students to the topic of the lesson through a fun and informative YouTube video and a follow-up discussion, which sets the tone of the lesson and gets students thinking about the topic. The video also primes students for the lesson’s grammar point, modal verbs, since it uses modal verbs a lot in its list of recommended questions to ask the doctor. Then, the grammar point is reviewed in “Grammar review” to remind and potentially teach students the purpose, structure, and use of common modal verbs. Having this review rather than jumping straight into asking students to use modal verbs to create questions for the doctor is a better way to prepare students for more challenging tasks. After the review, there is a sequence of practice activities that gradually push students to apply what they learn in this lesson to real life situations. At first, in “Guided practice,” students are given a handout which contains example questions for the doctor and they have to practice reading the questions and identify the situation in which modal verbs are used. This activity further provides students with examples of how modal verbs are used to ask questions and also checks the effectiveness of the previous review. Then, students are asked to take on the role of the patient and create original questions using modal verbs based on the provided doctor’s response in “Application.” This activity is an intermediary step that prepares students for the

eventual “Evaluation: Creating a dialogue” activity which asks students to create and enact an original patient-doctor dialogue. Essentially, the complex lesson of how to ask doctors questions using modal verbs gets broken down into manageable pieces that scaffolds student learning. While this example focuses on micro planning, the next one will focus on macro planning.

### **Artifact E**

*Curriculum Design* can supplement Artifact D to demonstrate my achievement in Professional Knowledge Area 3 Curriculum and TESOL Domain 1 Planning because it reflects flexibility in curricular planning. The task was to design a course for a teaching context that we want to work in and include essential elements of a curriculum such as course objectives and goals, scope and sequence, and course materials. I chose to create an ESL writing class that prepares Chinese high school students for college-level academic writing in the U.S. The class meets three times per week for a total of six weeks. In a nutshell, students learn how to find, evaluate, cite, and synthesize previous literature and how to form their own argumentation and respond to previous literature. What makes the class flexible is that in each of the weeks there is at least one workshop session, which is designed as a time for students to apply what they learn from the lectures of the week to their individual project and seek peer review and consultation with the teacher. Although each workshop session still has a preplanned task, it is loosely structured to allow flexible use of class time depending on student needs. For example, in “Week 4 How to Write about What They Say,” the workshop is designed to have students practice quoting or paraphrasing sources and give proper citations. Depending on student needs, the workshop can be conducted in multiple ways. A mini review can be given to remind students of the relevant strategies, or students can start writing right away and seek help from peers or the instructor as needed. Some students may need more help with paraphrasing while others may

need a second pair of eyes to check their citations. The flexible design of the workshop allows the teacher to better respond to students' individual needs.

Together, Artifacts D and E showcase how I am able to plan flexible instruction that promotes learning with attention to learner needs. From something micro as a GES lesson plan to something macro as an ESL course, I can plan instruction effectively because of my awareness and responsiveness to the learner. As already demonstrated in my discussion of Professional Knowledge Area 1 Learner, knowing who learners are can greatly help teachers plan instruction. The artifacts also attest to my teaching philosophy of student-centered instruction, which emphasizes knowing students and putting their needs first. Essentially, effective planning requires the teacher to walk in the students' shoes and imagine what kind of instruction will engage the students and help them succeed. However, what I have analyzed so far is not without weaknesses. Despite my attempt to meet student needs through conducting the needs analysis in Artifact D and providing workshop time in Artifact E, I have neglected an important aspect of learning—students have different learning styles. I mostly relied on traditional methods of instruction which include using PPT slides and handouts. In this day and age, students may need more varied styles of instruction to keep their attention. Next, we will zoom in on Content as a Domain under Curriculum.

### **TESOL Domain 7: Content**

*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.*

The description of Content above reminds us that learning a new language is not the ultimate goal of language learning—being able to use that new language to communicate academic or professional information and to make casual conversations or carry out daily tasks is the actual goal. Teaching physics students Shakespearean English is not going to help them with their study; teaching homemakers how to write a science report is also unnecessary. Therefore, it is imperative for teachers to deliver language instruction that is useful to students in their life outside the language classroom. In this section, I will continue using Artifact D and E to showcase my understanding and achievement in Domain 7 Content.

#### **Artifact D**

As a brief reminder, Artifact D is a lesson plan that was created for a speaking class (GES). The learners were housewives who wanted to learn functional oral language while they accompanied their husbands in the U.S. Because the learners were not actually in school, their subject/content area can be generalized as daily life. Consequently, the content of GES should focus on language that will be useful in social contexts that the learners are likely to be in, such as the grocery store, mall, doctor's office, children's school, etc. Since the learners indicated concern about communicating with doctors, I decided to set the topic of the lesson as How to Ask Your Doctor Questions. In addition to addressing the topic question, the lesson also has an additional goal of reviewing modal verbs. The strongest argument that I can make about the lesson plan is how it provides students with pre-made questions that can be used as is or modified to fit more specific needs. Below is a list of questions I included in the lesson:

1. Will there be any long-term effects of this problem?
2. Can I give this illness to someone else?

3. Are there any activities or foods I should avoid until I'm better?
4. When can I return to school or work?
5. Should I stop the medicine if I feel back to normal?
6. Is there more than one disease or condition that could be causing my symptoms?

By providing these questions, I not only gave students something they can use when they go to their next doctor's appointment, but also showed them how questions are structured using modal verbs. Explicit instruction on the modal verbs is also built into the lesson plan to remind students that "should" is used when asking for advice or obligation and "can" is used when asking for permission or possibility, etc. This part attests to my teaching philosophy that explicit form instruction is necessary and should follow up meaning-focused instruction. With the list of questions and the review on modal verbs, students can adapt the question structure to other contexts. The content of the lesson is further enhanced by opportunities for creating original questions through authentic tasks such as acting out a scene at the doctor's office. Communicating with the doctor can be daunting for some people, but in this lesson students get to experiment with asking a "doctor" questions in a low stress environment. See below for an example of a prompt:

1. A patient is trying to decide whether to try a new treatment.  
Vocabulary to consider: benefits, side effects, alternatives...

Besides a list of pre-made questions and modal verbs, Artifact D also includes a homework assignment that asks students to create a "cheat sheet" consisting of vocabulary and expressions that they can take to the doctor's office and use when they need a reminder on how to say something. Medical terms can be difficult to memorize so having this tool can greatly boost a patient's confidence when communicating with the doctor. It can be adapted to fit other situations as well. Below is an example:

| Word or Phrase | Meaning | Example of Use | Pronunciation, etc. |
|----------------|---------|----------------|---------------------|
|----------------|---------|----------------|---------------------|

|              |                                  |   |                        |
|--------------|----------------------------------|---|------------------------|
| Lumbar spine | <i>Lower back above my hips.</i> | What <u>might</u> cause my lumbar spine to hurt when I stand for a long period of time? | <b>Lum</b> – bar spine |
|--------------|----------------------------------|---|------------------------|

All of the examples from Artifact D that I have included in this section clearly demonstrate that I understand the importance of choosing language items that are relevant to students' field of study or daily life. While Artifact D focuses on providing students with expressions they can use in a given situation, Artifact E will showcase content that focuses on a number of cross-disciplinary skills.

### **Artifact E**

As a brief reminder, Artifact E is a curriculum designed to help Chinese students who want to study overseas in US universities prepare for academic writing in English. Before I go into details on the analysis, I want to preface the analysis by clarifying my rationale for choosing Artifact E as an example for Content. Usually when we think of content learning, we think of specific subjects such as math or science. If we accept that language instruction is for the purpose of facilitating the learning of subject contents, then naturally we would have to include specifics on the subject matter in the language instruction. However, that is not the case with Artifact E. I intended for Artifact E to be cross-disciplinary because I have never been trained as a content teacher. Rather, I have plenty of experience tutoring academic writing in a variety of academic disciplines using the same strategies and I believe in the usefulness of teaching cross-disciplinary writing skills. Thus, in Artifact E, I treat academic writing as a subject matter and cross-disciplinary writing skills such as synthesizing across texts and providing proper citations as the content for the subject matter.

To start the analysis of Artifact E, I want to zoom in on the course objectives:



1) Have a good command of a citation style that is commonly used in their intended field of study (e.g. MLA for English Literature, Chicago for History, and APA for Psychology) and be able to use reference tools such as the Purdue OWL; 2) Show understanding of academic integrity and intellectual ownership by giving credit to ideas taken from other authors and complying with instructor's directions regarding collaborative work; 3) Produce clear and cohesive arguments, support arguments with relevant examples and reliable data, and link arguments in a coherent and reader-friendly fashion; 4) Consider different purposes, contexts and audiences of each writing task before and during the writing process and revise their drafts accordingly; 5) Critically evaluate the ideas of others, namely recognizing bias in writing, assessing source reliability, and engaging in academic conversation with other scholars through writing.

Embedded in these course objectives are academic writing related skills that the learners need in order to excel in college courses in the US. These skills are cross-disciplinary and useful regardless of the learner's specific field of study. Objectives 1 and 2 focus on citation styles and giving references, which are essential skills that colleges require to uphold academic integrity. Though these skills are often taught in US high schools and even in middle school, they are not taught in China. Thus, it is important to teach these skills so that when the learner arrives in the US, they are clear about the expectations and do not unknowingly violate the honor code.

Many skills are packed into objectives 3, 4 and 5, but the most noteworthy one in my opinion is how to engage in academic conversation with other scholars through writing. The idea of academic conversation is inspired by Graff and Birkenstein's (2016) book *They Say, I Say*. The book considers academic writing as an asynchronous conversation with other scholars—one reads what other people have written about a topic, synthesizes the information, comments on others' views through agreement or disagreement, and expresses one's own views. To facilitate the conversation, there are formulaic language such as sentence starters and transition words that can help the writer more clearly express their ideas. Consider the following template from *They Say, I Say*: Though I concede that \_\_\_\_\_, I still insist that \_\_\_\_\_ (Graff & Birkenstein, 2016, p. 65).

It shows one of many ways to express partial agreement with another writer and express one's own opinion. My curriculum essentially attempted to condense the vast advice and templates/word lists from *They Say, I Say* into several weeks of lectures and workshop to get students started on participating in academic conversation. Looking back, I feel uncertain about how much of the book or the art of academic conversation I can actually cover in several weeks of instruction. However, when strictly focusing on content, I feel confident that I was on the right track by incorporating the book into the curriculum so that students are equipped with high-quality academic writing templates that they can use in their college writing assignments.

Together, Artifacts D and E demonstrate that I am able to pick the most relevant language content for my learners that will enable them to use English to communicate in their respective field of study or social situation. This would not have been possible without knowledge about who my learners are, which ties back to Professional Knowledge Area 1 Learner and my teaching philosophy of student-centered instruction. With regards to the GES students, I was able to plan effective instruction and choose relevant language content because I formally assessed their learning needs through a needs analysis and informally learned about their lives through casual conversations, which informed me of other potential learning needs. With regards to the Chinese high school students, I drew inspiration from conversations with international students at my university and my work as an ESL writing tutor that informed me of what international students need to be familiar with in terms of academic writing before studying in the US. Knowledge about learners can also help teachers more accurately and appropriately monitor and assess students' learning progress, which will be the topic of the next section.

### **Professional Knowledge Area 4: Assessment**

The final professional knowledge area concerns assessment. For the longest time, I had considered assessment to be apart from teaching. A teacher teaches a unit of lessons and then administers an assessment, usually in the form of a test. The testing is a separate activity from the teaching. After learning more about pedagogy and the intersection between instruction and assessment, I have now realized that assessment is indeed a part of teaching. For starters, an assessment does not even have to be a test. It does not have to be intimidating and anxiety-inducing. It can be a quick and informal evaluation on student performance such as a mental note by the teacher. Assessment is used to determine the effect of previous instruction and help teachers prepare for future instruction. Assessment is used in the moment of teaching to determine whether a lesson plan or instructional activity is working (Brown, 2010). Assessment is an indispensable part of teaching. In this section, I will demonstrate my understanding and enactment of Assessment with reference to TESOL Domain 3 Assessing.

#### **TESOL Domain 3: Assessing**

*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.*

My understanding of this TESOL standard is that teachers should be able to 1) conduct assessment and understand the meaning and implication of assessment results; 2) use assessment results to guide instructional decisions; 3) use assessment results to affirm learner

accomplishment and advise on improvement; and 4) align assessment content with learner expectations. These four tasks show the importance of assessment as a teaching skill and practice. They also show that assessment is not just assigning a letter grade or numerical score to students based on their performance. Due to the complexity of assessment, it is not always possible or necessary to complete all four tasks described by the TESOL standard at once. Consequently, I will be using more than one artifact to demonstrate my achievement in this domain.

### **Artifact F**

*Assessing Oral Language Proficiency* was an assessment report dedicated to evaluating the oral language proficiency of an ELL using the Student Oral Language Observation Matrix (SOLOM). Because it was difficult to collect language samples due to the ongoing pandemic, I used an oral language sample provided by the Purdue College English Language Learner Language Portraits (ELLLPS). The assessment protocol used to obtain the oral language sample was a brief, four-minute question-and-answer session between Kenji, a high school exchange student from Japan, and an American interviewer. In this report, I accomplished three things. First, I evaluated the pros and cons of using question-and-answer to obtain a language sample, indicating my knowledge of specific assessment tools and their practical values:

While the question-and-answer elicited both receptive and productive language use, it was too brief to produce an extended and varied sample... The topic of the conversation also restricted varied language use... the question-and-answer also did not elicit discipline-specific language use because the conversation did not venture into any school subjects or professional areas. That is not to say the question-and-answer was a poorly chosen method of eliciting an oral language sample in this case. Brief linguistic exchanges can still provide valuable information about a learner's proficiency level to an assessor, especially an experienced one (Brown, 2010). One can also use question-and-answer alongside other methods to get a more holistic picture of a learner's linguistic repertoire and proficiency level... the question-and-answer dutifully captured his listening and speaking abilities in answering general questions about himself and his experiences living in the U.S.

I recognized the extent and limit of what a brief question-and-answer can accomplish, and such thorough understanding will help me judiciously interpret the assessment results. For example, I realized that the assessment did not prompt for discipline-specific language, so it would be faulty to label Kenji as deficient in discipline-specific language just because there was no evidence of discipline-specific language use in the sample.

Second, I meticulously analyzed the oral language sample, used the SOLOM rubric to determine Kenji's proficiency in five domains of oral language (comprehension, fluency, vocabulary, pronunciations, and grammar), and provided detailed reasoning for each score. Here is an example from the pronunciation domain:

For pronunciation, I gave Kenji a three because his utterances were mostly intelligible, but it required some effort to understand him. The SOLOM's level three description of "necessitate concentration on the part of the listener" perfectly characterizes Kenji's pronunciation...Kenji's pronunciation carries a non-native accent that is relatively close to standard English so it did not impede my comprehension most of the time... I think if he had spoken more loudly and enunciated words more clearly his pronunciation score would be higher...

My rationale for the score I assigned was logical and reasonable, demonstrating that I am able to conduct an assessment and evaluate learner performance with credibility. The excerpt also shows my ability to give constructive feedback. I acknowledged what Kenji was doing well, which was sounding intelligible most of the time, and suggested what he could work on, which was enunciating some words more clearly to prevent misunderstanding. Even though I knew my feedback would not be able to reach Kenji, I included it in my analysis anyway because I recognized the importance of feedback on assessments as a motivating factor. Brown (2010) deemed feedback that is given in addition to a letter grade or numerical score highly desirable because feedback is a more elaborate indicator of achievement. I personally think feedback is

nice because even if the grade or score is not ideal, a learner can still get strength and encouragement from a teacher's personal note.

Last, I concluded the oral language proficiency level of Kenji based on my careful interpretations of the assessment result: Kenji scored 17 out of 25 or on average a level of 3.4 on the SOLOM rubric. He has better receptive oral language ability than productive oral language ability and he can be considered as an intermediate learner of English. Due to the limitations of the question-and-answer and my indirect method of obtaining the language sample, I cautioned against the potential issues with my assessment and refrained from making instructional recommendations. Instead, I suggested improving the design of the assessment to obtain more reliable and valid results. Granted, I personally did not have a say in the original design of the assessment so it was not my fault that the assessment result was not the most reliable indicator of Kenji's oral language proficiency, but by recognizing the flaw in the assessment design and bringing it up in my analysis, I demonstrated my comprehensive understanding of assessment.

### **Artifact G**

Because I was not able to use the assessment result from Artifact F to inform instructional decisions and also not able to involve the learner in determining what will be assessed, I will supplement Artifact F with a new artifact, which includes examples of informal and formative assessments. Informal assessments can range from a verbal affirmation of "Nice job!" to marginal notes on students' written work (Brown, 2010). They are casual but still meaningful ways for teachers take note of student performance and provide feedback to students. Formative assessments are evaluations of student performance done during the process of learning that help teachers refine their teaching and guide students toward growth. Informal assessments are almost always informal, so there will be no distinguishing from here on (Brown,

2010). The reason why I bring up formative assessments is that I think they are meant to inform instructional decisions and align with student expectations, making Artifact B the perfect illustration.

*Breaking Down Word Problems* was a lesson I planned and actually taught. It was a math lesson focusing on helping high school ELLs decode word problems. The lesson spanned two days and I was able to use formative assessments made on Day 1 to modify the lesson plan for Day 2. Because the lesson was not recorded, I can only use my reflection as a tangible artifact to illustrate my point. I planned an introduction to get to know the students, whom I have not met before, and according to my reflection the introduction allowed me to get a glimpse of the students' linguistic and cultural backgrounds as well as oral English proficiency. I learned that the students had varying levels of English proficiency and they did not share the same L1, but all had rich experiences with languages other than English. I actually used this quick informal assessment to plan a warm-up activity for Day 2, which asked students to translate a word problem from English to their L1. I wanted the translation activity to prime students to start thinking about decoding word problems as translating from English to mathematical expressions, and the activity made sense because my assessment on Day 1 confirmed that the students will be able to engage in translation and make the connection.

The other example I want to show from Artifact G concerns student expectation of what will be assessed. Because the lesson was supposed to focus on breaking down word problems, not setting up equations, the focus of my informal assessment was whether students can highlight important words and phrases in a problem and explain the meaning in their own words. However, the students were more eager to jump straight into problem-solving mode and try to set up the equations. Seeing the discrepancy between what I had hoped to assess and what students

thought they were being assessed for, I made several “on the spot” changes to my directions to help students understand the focus of the lesson. Of course, the students probably did not consider answering whole-class discussion questions about a word problem as an assessment, but from my perspective, I was negotiating with them on the content of the assessment and trying to align my assessment with their expectations.

Together, Artifact F and Artifact G demonstrate my understanding of assessment as a multifaceted teaching act. I was able to show examples for all four tasks required by the TESOL standard and also demonstrate my cognizance of factors that can skew an assessment result. I am reminded of the importance of knowing the learner in not only Assessing but also Planning. Without adequate knowledge about the learner, a teacher may miss confounding factors that could have led to an assessment result and make ill-informed instructional decisions and curriculum planning. This point also ties back to my teaching philosophy, which emphasizes getting to know the learners as a key way of enacting learner-centered instruction. As the last Professional Knowledge Area, Assessment wraps up the artifact analyses and in the next section I will discuss applications of my teaching philosophy, the professional knowledge areas and TESOL domains, and the work I have done so far to future practice.



### **Applications to Practice: Implications and Future Considerations**

This paper was a valuable opportunity for me to reflect on and evaluate my teaching practices and visions to identify my strengths and weaknesses. From explaining my teaching philosophy of what I think are the most important criteria for high quality language instruction to examining artifacts of my own work in reference to TESOL standards, I have developed a more comprehensive understanding of my current teaching skill level as a teacher candidate. When I first started writing this paper, I decided a balanced blend of meaning and form instruction coupled with learner-centered instruction was a combination that is most likely to generate high quality language instruction. Now that I am approaching the end of this paper, I still stand by my teaching philosophy and I am happy to see that the learner-centered instruction part resonated with all the professional knowledge areas and TESOL domains. In this section, I will discuss to what extent my previous work (as shown in the artifacts) matched or echoed my teaching philosophy and how I envision implementing it or anticipate challenges with it in my future teaching context. Also, I will discuss aspects of language teaching that I should improve on and give preliminary suggestions.

The first major part of my teaching philosophy concerns a specific language teaching approach. Inspired by Dornyei's (2009) Principled Communicative Approach (PCA), I envisioned a balanced communicative approach that considers form and meaning instruction complementary to each other rather than one being superior to the other. Due to its technical nature, this part of my teaching philosophy did not get highlighted in the artifact analyses except for in Professional Knowledge Area 3 Curriculum, where I analyzed a lesson plan that clearly featured both meaning-focused and form-focused instructional components. The lesson plan included implicit language learning from a YouTube video, explicit teaching of grammar use,

and contextualized practice through roleplay. Unfortunately, I did not get a chance to implement the lesson plan because my practicum was cut short by COVID-19 and I could not try enacting the first part of my teaching philosophy in actual practice. However, I feel confident that I will be able to create more lessons like this using the balanced approach because I truly understand the purpose of having both form and meaning instruction.

My concern with this balanced approach is how to enact it in a teaching context that favors form-focused instruction, such as the South Korean EFL context, where I want to work in the future. Though I believe in the importance of form instruction, I am still a supporter of communicative language teaching in the sense that I believe being able to use the L2 in real-life contexts for authentic purposes is more important than knowing how the L2 functions. That is why I find my vision at odds with Korea's heavy reliance on rote memorization and grammar drills as the way to learn English. I could supplement the textbook with authentic reading and listening materials and assign speaking and writing assignments that require students to make creative use of what they have learned. However, I am afraid that it will add on to the stress that students already have with the current curriculum. I could explore other possibilities such as sponsoring an English club so that students gain access to more authentic materials and opportunities for peer language interaction.

I also realized that as of now I am not very familiar with the Korean EFL context or the Korean educational system. Almost all of my knowledge on the Korean EFL context has come from anecdotes and popular perceptions, which may not be representative of what the reality looks like. To make myself more educated, I want to interview friends and acquaintances who grew up and learned English in Korea to get a sense of how the system works and seek their opinions on what I could do to enhance the English learning experience of Korean high school

students. I also want to connect with Peabody alumni who are currently or have had the chance teaching in Korea to get their professional opinions and advice.

The second major part of my teaching philosophy is student-centered instruction, which according to my definition means making instructional decisions that are in students' best interest. In order to find out what would be considered students' best interest, it is critical to develop a holistic understanding of the students and incorporate their input on what and how they want to learn in actual instruction. My conceptualization of student-centered instruction was shaped by Brown's (2007) definition and a core idea of Constructivism that students construct new knowledge with previous knowledge (Windschitl, 1999). Generally speaking, my philosophy of learner-centered instruction aligns well with the professional knowledge areas and TESOL standards and evidence of learner-centered instruction can be found in all of the artifacts. However, most of the evidence is skewed toward getting to know students and using knowledge about students to make appropriate instructional instructions. I found little evidence of inviting students to directly participate in the decision-making process. According to my teaching philosophy, it is necessary to directly involve students in making some instructional decisions to signal to students that their input matters and will be honored. In my previous work, I had failed to attend to this finer point of my teaching philosophy and I will emphasize this point in my future work.

Extending on the topic of getting to know students, I feel confident about my ability to use formal assessment tools such as a needs analysis or informal ways such as casual conversation to get to know students and transfer my knowledge about them into my instruction. However, I feel less confident about how to reconcile individual student needs and wants to make appropriate instructional decisions for the entire class. In my artifacts, I had assumed that

because the students belonged to the same cultural or social group, they would want the same things. This is actually a very shallow understanding of the learner. Even if the whole class shares the same L1, students are bound to have different reasons for joining the class, topics of interest that will attract their attention, learning styles and learning expectations. All of these factors influence a learner in how they construct knowledge and respond to instruction. Thus, instruction needs to be responsive to students' individual circumstances. Differentiation seems to be the natural answer, but how can I ensure equity and equal learning opportunities while providing instruction that is tailored to individual needs? Even if I knew how to properly do it, will I have enough time and resources to make it happen with a large group of students? I believe a more thorough understanding of what differentiated instruction means will help address my concern, so I will start by reading Tomlinson's (2017) book *How to Differentiate Instruction in Academically Diverse Classrooms* and seek professional training opportunities. From class discussions, I have noticed that differentiation seems to be a common concern for a lot of my classmates. I hope we can support each other in understanding how differentiation is enacted in actual classrooms by sharing our teaching experiences and insights in the future.

While I am eager to try teaching on my own, I am also slightly worried about my lack of actual teaching experience. Due to COVID-19, a lot of teaching opportunities have been altered in ways that are less favorable to teacher candidates. For example, I was not able to put the lesson plan *Questions for Doctor* (Artifact D) to actual use and reflect on my execution of the plan or go back and revise the plan based on implementation. Another change COVID-19 brought to the field of education is the widespread use of online instruction. As a student, I am still adjusting to the online learning model and trying to cope with many of its limitations. As a teacher, I am excited for the increased use of technology and web-based tools in instruction but

also concerned that not every student will have equal access to these online resources. There is definitely going to be a surge in research and professional development opportunities on virtual learning, so I hope to keep an open mind and take advantage of these opportunities to equip myself with knowledge and strategies that will make me a more adaptable teacher. With all these uncertainties about what is going to happen in a real classroom but also assurances that theory and research will continue guiding my instructional decisions, I hope to start my teaching journey soon and make my vision of high quality language instruction come true.

In sum, I have articulated my theory-based teaching philosophy and shown evidence for meeting Professional Knowledge Area and TESOL Domain standards with critical analyses of artifacts from my previous work as a teacher candidate. I realize the need for me to continue developing my professional knowledge and expand my practical experience, but I also feel prepared to take on the responsibility of a full-time teacher with the guidance of my teaching philosophy and my commitment to provide my future students with a meaningful learning experience.

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## Appendix A

### Artifact A Exploring Korean Community Literacies

As an aspiring university ELL specialist, I am especially interested in the Korean international student population in the U.S. I want to help them develop literacy and proficiency in American academic language, and I believe the best way to accomplish this goal is making connections between what students need to learn and what they already know so that they can rely on prior knowledge to make sense of new knowledge and skills. To be more specific, I want to design a first-year writing course that teaches academic writing using topics students are already familiar with, such as Korean food, language, and education system. In this paper, I will explore the presence of Korean immigrant communities in the U.S., zooming in on Nashville in particular, to identify domains of knowledge that both Korean international students and I can draw inspirations from.

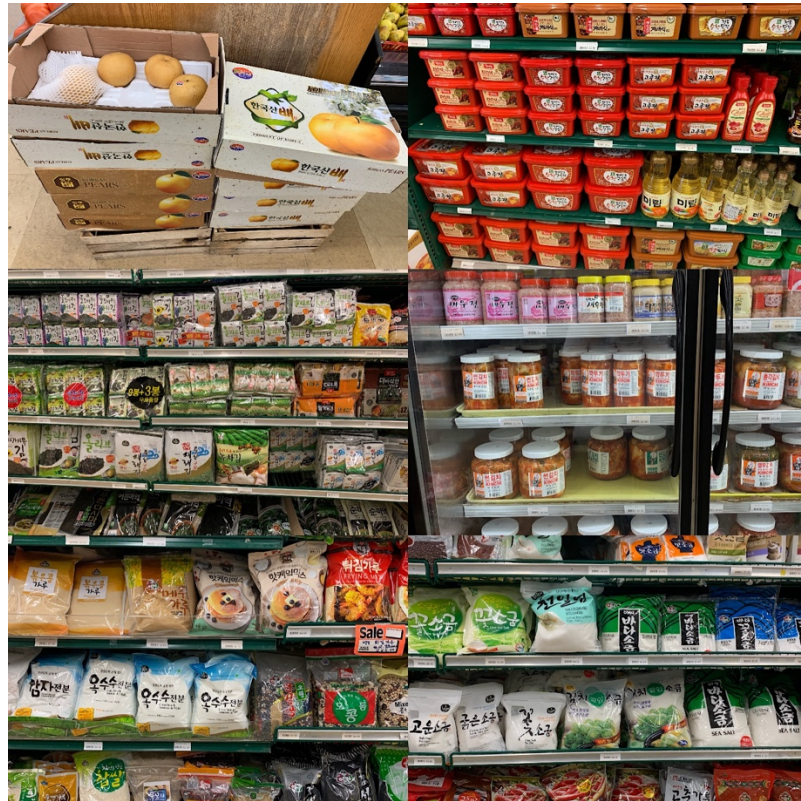
As the most popular emigration destination for South Koreans, the U.S. is currently the home away from home to approximately one million immigrants from the Korean Peninsula (O'Connor & Batalova, 2019). It all started in the 1880s, when Korea and the U.S. established diplomatic relations and began cultural exchange (National Association of Korean Americans). Like many other immigrant groups, Koreans came to the U.S. to improve their quality of life—escape political turmoil, study at world-renowned institutions, or take on higher-paying jobs. The Korean War had also resulted in a special group of immigrants: Korean “military brides” married to American soldiers and Korean children adopted into American families (National Association of Korean Americans). Today, as South Korea has stabilized politically and economically, many people still come to the U.S. for the same reasons as before, but a growing number of Korean immigrants are here because of international business and international education.



It comes as no surprise that Nashville is not a popular destination for Korean immigrants. The most popular states of residence for them are California, New York, and New Jersey, which host almost half of the population. They also tend to concentrate in big cities: 40 percent of the population live in Los Angeles, New York City, and Washington, DC (O'Connor & Batalova, 2019). However, among Asian populations in Nashville, Koreans are the largest group, making up almost 5 percent of the city's total population (Lotspeich et al., 2003). In the absence of a Koreatown, it seems that Koreans are spread throughout the greater Nashville area and they probably live in Fort Campbell, Clarksville, Brentwood, and Murfreesboro, identified by Lotspeich et al. (2003) as where Asians tend to reside. A substantial presence of Korean immigrants is expected near Vanderbilt University as well as Nolensville Pike, since both areas are known for their diversity.

In comparison to other immigrant groups and the native-born population in the U.S., Korean immigrants tend to have higher levels of education and income (O'Connor & Batalova, 2019). Many of them are either professionals who successfully transferred or earned their degrees and credentials, or entrepreneurs who started small business ventures. In fact, among Asian immigrant groups, Koreans have the highest rate of owning a business (Bae-Hansard, 2015). Some common examples of Korean-owned businesses include restaurants, international food markets, laundromats, beauty salons, massage parlors, and gas station stores. Even though business ownership allows Korean immigrants to afford a comfortable life in the U.S., not all are satisfied with their occupation. Some resort to entrepreneurship because they could not find a job in the U.S. that is similar to their occupation back in Korea. Some find their service sector business demeaning—such feeling is aggravated by some of their clientele's discriminatory

attitudes toward immigrants (Bae-Hansard, 2015). In other words, while Korean immigrants are generally considered as successful, their careers are not always meaningful and fulfilling, and they suffer from deeper hardships that escape our notice. Due to lack of data on the Korean immigrant community specifically in Nashville, I can only assume that the same trends regarding education, income, and occupation observed at the national level also hold true at the local level.



*Figure 1.* Korean food products found at K&S World Market.

Although Nashville cannot compete with Los Angeles or New York City when it comes to the range and variety of Korean products and services the city offers, it is still possible to find decent restaurants, grocery stores, churches, and community organizations that meet the basic needs of Nashville's Korean immigrants. Many people have recommended to me Korea House as the best Korean restaurant in town. Seoul Garden, another popular restaurant within the Asian community, not only offers Korean BBQ but also Korean karaoke. A wide range of Korean

products, from fresh produce like Korean chili pepper and Korean pear, to staples in Korean diet such as kimchi, rice, and ramen, can be found at K&S World Market (see Figure 1). The Nashville Korean United Methodist Church serves not only as a place of worship but also a cultural center for locals to learn about Korea through its Korean Culture Program (Gilfillan, 2010). The Nashville Korean Network helps members of the Korean immigrant community connect and disseminates information pertaining to everyday life in Nashville. Altogether, these businesses and institutions make Nashville more like home for Korean immigrants.

Even with all this background information on the Korean immigrant community, it may still be difficult for teachers from other linguistic and cultural backgrounds to make meaningful connections between course content and Korean international students' linguistic and cultural knowledge. Having the first-year writing course in mind, I will demonstrate how teachers can overcome this challenge. The initial step a teacher could take to make use of her knowledge of the Nashville Korean community and connect with her students is trying out Korean food at one of the restaurants mentioned above and buying Korean snacks from K&S World Market to share with her students. Then, she initiates a class discussion comparing and contrasting Korean and American culinary traditions and dietary preferences. She will provide information on the American side and ask questions about the Korean side as needed to facilitate the discussion. This activity can help students brainstorm ideas for their writing assignment and enhance their understanding of American food culture. Food is such a fun and accessible way to get a glimpse of another culture that both parties should feel comfortable in this mutual learning process. It does not matter which aspect of academic writing the subsequent writing assignment targets, but just to provide an example, the teacher could ask students to practice forming an argument by evaluating which country's diet is healthier. Overall, this food inspired assignment connects the

learning objective of how to form an effective argument with what the students are familiar with, Korean food, to facilitate student learning. It also imparts added benefits of increasing Korean international students' American cultural literacy and the teacher's Korean cultural literacy.

The same process can be repeated and modified for other topics and learning objectives. As the teacher becomes more familiar with Korean food, she develops an interest in the Korean script that can be found on the outer packaging of Korean snacks. She learns from a quick online search that the Korean writing system is regarded as the most scientific script, and then she develops an assignment that capitalizes on her students' knowledge of the Korean language to facilitate their learning of multimodal writing. The assignment is creating an infographic that details the origin of Hangul, explains why it is scientific, and provides personal advice on how to learn the Korean alphabet. Pivoting the writing assignment on a familiar topic lessens the stress associated with acquiring new knowledge and skills: students only have to figure out how to make an infographic; they do not have to worry about researching a topic that is completely foreign to them.

By the same token, the teacher could draw inspiration from the trend that Korean immigrants are highly educated to create an activity that compares the Korean and American education systems and college entrance processes. A research project on U.S.-Korean military collaboration and its social consequences, inspired by knowledge of the special immigrant group "military brides," could be used to target learning goals such as differentiating primary and secondary sources, citation styles, and synthesis of previous literature. Personally, I want to find ways to incorporate K-Pop and K-Drama into my course design and lesson plans. I also want to discuss and write about conscription in South Korea with my students, since I know that some of them will have to return to their country to serve in the military after their first year in the U.S.

Once again, my goal is to facilitate student learning by making connections between learning objectives and students' knowledge of *their* world. However, these activities may seem too teacher-centered because the topics are decided by the teacher—student input should be considered. I recommend conducting a survey in the beginning of the semester to find out what topics are of interest to students and more importantly, what topics do they feel comfortable exploring and sharing with the class.

Korean immigrants are an integral part of American society and Korean international students are a valued part of student bodies at American universities. I urge teachers to try connecting course content with elements from students' linguistic and cultural background so that they could leverage students' Korean literacies. This recommendation is inspired by Moll et al.'s (1992) conceptualization of "funds of knowledge," which considers knowledge gained from all spheres of life as an asset that has the potential to help students learn at school. Moreover, I urge teachers to consider student input when planning lessons that probe into culture and personal experiences, which is inspired by one key principle of constructivist pedagogy, student-centered teaching and learning. All in all, teachers need to familiarize themselves with Korean culture and the local Korean community if they want to better serve Korean ELLs.

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## Appendix B

### Artifact B Interview with an English Language Learner

From my understanding, assessing a language learner's linguistic and cultural backgrounds as well as the learning context is an important skill that teachers need to have because the results can reveal valuable information about the learner that is beyond the assessing ability of standardized language tests. Information on the learner's linguistic and cultural backgrounds points to sources of prior knowledge that teachers can capitalize on to make instruction more accessible and meaningful to the learner. Information on the learning context helps teachers recognize the affordances and limitations of the environment in which the learner operates, which sheds light on the teacher's instructional decisions to accommodate and enhance the learner's learning experience. To practice this important skill, I interviewed Victor, an acquaintance who is an international student from Brazil currently pursuing his undergraduate degree in the U.S. In this paper, I list the assessment questions that I used, explain my rationale for using them, and present my findings.

**1. What language(s) do you speak? How would you describe your proficiency in them? Are there additional languages such as dialects or foreign languages that you have had meaningful contact with?**

To gain insights on Victor's linguistic and cultural backgrounds, I started out with questions about the languages that he speaks or is familiar with. Because he is an adult learner, I can straightforwardly ask these questions and trust that he understands I am not looking for a language that he has only had a brief encounter with. Knowing what languages have a strong presence in the learner's life is the basis of understanding his or her linguistic background and helps the teacher decide how to leverage the learner's total linguistic knowledge while

minimizing linguistic interference. Victor's first language (L1) is Portuguese and English is the only second language (L2) that he knows, not that knowing one L2 is not remarkable enough. In terms of his English proficiency, Victor claimed that he has no problem using English in everyday situations and he feels comfortable using English for academic purposes. By formal standards, Victor's school has deemed his English proficiency to be enough to opt out of mandatory ESL courses for international students, but he is always welcome to seek additional language support from the school's ESL tutoring services. Since Portuguese and Spanish are very similar (seventy-five percent the same in lexicon according to Victor's estimate), he claimed to be able to understand spoken Spanish, but he cannot read, write or speak it.

**2. In what circumstances do you use the languages that you know, respectively? Do you listen, read, speak, and/or write in those circumstances?**

To further understand Victor's linguistic background and practices, I asked for clarification of when and where he uses each of the languages that he is familiar with. These questions aim to determine whether the learner has a preference for using a certain language in a certain context. Such preference can predict whether the learner needs to improve his or her command of the target language in order to communicate in all sorts of situations, which helps inform the teacher's instructional decisions. It can also showcase the learner's linguistic flexibility and awareness of the pragmatic values of each of the languages that he or she is familiar with. He reported using English for all academic communications and school-related activities and using Portuguese with his parents and siblings, as well as roommate and school friends who are also from Brazil. Notably, his family and Brazilian friends are all proficient in English, but they prefer to use their L1, which is understandable. Since there is not a large Portuguese-speaking community in the city where his school is located, his use of and exposure



to Portuguese besides talking with family and friends are relatively limited. He sometimes listens to Portuguese news but everything else from reading for leisure to watching movies is more or less in English. When spending time with his Hispanic friends, he can still participate in their conversations by listening to his friends' Spanish utterances and responding in English, which according to him "seems a little odd but is actually fun and interesting."

**3. What cultures are you a part of/familiar with? Name some cultural practices, activities, and/or artifacts that are meaningful to you.**

Compared to language, culture is more difficult to name and describe considering it encompasses a wide range of tangible and intangible things. Thus, I chose these two questions to probe into Victor's cultural background rather than trying to entirely uncover the background. By focusing on one or two specific cultural things to discuss in detail, I will get more depth rather than shallow breadth in his answers. When asked about his cultural background, Victor mentioned that his family is of Italian descent, so in addition to mainstream Brazilian culture he is also influenced by Italian culture. Although none of his family members can speak Italian, they have kept some culinary and religious traditions passed down from their great-grandparents. If given the chance, Victor would like to learn some Italian and live in Italy for some time to honor his heritage.

To my surprise, he highlighted American popular culture as a big part of his childhood and teenage years. He talked about the immense popularity of American songs, movies, and TV programs in Brazil and claimed that even though by his estimate ninety percent of Brazilians are not proficient in English, with the help of subtitles and translations Brazilians are able to consume American entertainment with easy accessibility. Victor himself started listening to American music and watching Hollywood movies since he was only five years old and his

interest in American popular culture continues to this day. American entertainment also helped him gain insights on the American way(s) of life and familiarized him with cultural concepts and practices that would otherwise confuse him upon first arriving in the U.S. Because of his early and consistent exposure to American culture through entertainment, Victor developed not only a familiarity with but also a fondness of American culture, which helped him adjust quickly to life in the U.S.

In addition to American entertainment, Victor is also highly interested in soccer, which according to him is the most popular sport in Brazil and one that the Brazilian national team excels in. Soccer not only serves as a hobby that connects him to his friends and family but also reminds him of his Brazilian roots as he is studying abroad in the U.S. Unfortunately, COVID-19 has made both playing soccer and watching professional soccer games difficult and dangerous. However, it remains an activity that is culturally meaningful to him.

Finally, Victor talked about the Portuguese language as a cultural artifact that is meaningful to him. He compared English to Portuguese and concluded that English is an efficient language that “lacks personality.” He said, “I appreciate English grammar because it is simple and straightforward. Compared to Portuguese, English requires less verb conjugations and does not assign gender to words.” However, Portuguese allows him to embed more feelings and emotions into the words precisely because it includes the extra stuff that is absent in English. He specifically mentioned the wide use of metaphors as a distinct feature of Portuguese discourse and one that he missed dearly.

So far, I have presented valuable information on Victor’s linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Next, I will present information on his move to the U.S. and previous English

learning experiences to connect to the previous section and prepare for the discussion on the learning context in which he operates.

**4. What motivated you to move to the U.S.? Can you provide an outline of your English learning experiences?**

These questions are important because reason(s) for moving to an English-speaking country and prior English learning experience(s) can either positively or negatively impact an ELL's language learning in the country. Some people such as refugees and young children have no say in their immigration and may have a harder time adjusting to English and U.S. culture. Prior learning experience also sheds light on how instructors can continue what worked before and improve what did not work. In Victor's case, he moved to the US in 2016 to attend university. He had already passed Brazil's college entrance exam with an outstanding score that could take him to an excellent school there, but he chose to study abroad in the U.S. because he believes a degree from a prestigious American university will distinguish him even more. This is his first time living in America, but he had visited Los Angeles and other cities when he was younger and had a good impression of the U.S. Also, he has a brother who attended college and now resides in LA. An overall feeling of familiarity with the U.S. encouraged him to make the decision to study in America, and he made the decision without familial pressure. After arriving in the U.S. and starting school, he quickly adjusted to academic and social life thanks to his advanced English proficiency as well as interest in and familiarity with American culture. His Brazilian roommate and friends also provided comfort and connection to his home language and culture. Overall, Victor considers his move to the U.S. a success.

In terms of prior English learning experiences, Victor started taking English classes offered by his school as well as after-school English courses at a private learning center since he

started middle school. He was not fond of those classes because he deemed them ineffective but studied diligently anyway because he wanted good grades. When he was in high school, he voluntarily went to London for six months and enrolled in a local school to learn English through submersion. Although there was limited to no ESL support and he was treated like a domestic student, he survived, and his oral communication skills as well as reading and writing skills greatly improved. He highly recommends the submersion experience to others who are determined to master English. He did not remember much else about his English learning experiences and thus we shifted to the next topic, learning context.

**5. What does your learning environment look like? Is it all virtual? Do you still have opportunities to practice English? What resources are available to you when you need English language support?**

Because of COVID, the learning context has undergone drastic changes for many students and for ELLs in particular, I am concerned that they will lose opportunities to practice English in a meaningful way due to the shift from in-person classes to online classes. Also, social distancing means ELLs are not going to have as many opportunities of naturally occurring conversations with native speakers of English. In Victor's case, all classes are online and he reported that indeed there has been a drastic decrease in opportunities to engage in oral communication as a result of less synchronous meeting time and more asynchronous tasks. Conversely, there has been an increase in reading and writing assignments, which can sometimes be challenging considering the amount of time and effort that are required. Victor appreciates these challenging opportunities though, explaining that he could use more practice with reading and writing since frankly he feels a bit more confident with everyday oral communication than

academic reading and writing. In terms of resources, Victor's school still offers ESL tutoring services despite it also being virtual.

**6. What are some pros and cons of the learning environment that you are in? Do you face any technical challenges such as lack of stable internet or unfamiliarity with online learning tools? What would you like to change?**

Using these two questions as a follow-up to the previous set, I hoped to get more details on what Victor liked and disliked about his learning context. Right off the bat, Victor declared that he prefers in-person meetings because they offered more authentic ways of social interactions. He disliked how talking to classmates is impossible unless in a breakout room and as a result of the forced lack of communication, classes become boring and a little demotivating. He wished that the library or study halls are still open, so he can study with friends. He did not encounter technical challenges on his end but complained about professors and staff who understandably but also frustratingly require more training and practice with using online teaching tools. The only thing he liked about the new learning context is online ESL tutoring sessions. Since he signs up for tutoring sessions only occasionally before COVID anyways, he found the lack of in-person interaction more bearable than classes that occur on a weekly basis. Also, online sessions are more efficient since he does not need to get to campus for a short 50-minute session on weekday nights or weekends, when tutoring usually takes place but there are fewer shuttles available.

**7. Overall, regardless of before or after COVID, do you feel like your school creates an environment that is conducive to your learning of English? How accepting are faculty, staff, and your peers of international students and ESL students?**

I wrapped up the interview with these last questions that aimed to get Victor's opinion on how his school is doing regarding accommodating the learning needs of ELLs. Providing ESL classes and tutoring services are certainly positive indicators, but whether international students truly feel welcome and comfortable in the learning environment also depends on how they are viewed by others. Victor shared some positive things about the measures that the school have taken to ensure a welcoming environment for international students, including pairing international students with domestic students for academic advice and cultural exchange, but he pointed out that there seems to be a disconnection between faculty and ESL students. Because of services such as ESL tutoring and the writing center, faculty feel like there are readily available resources for ESL students to use, so the language barrier should not be a problem. While he does not think international students should be given a more lenient rubric, he wishes for more direct support from faculty themselves because they are the ones most familiar with their assignment expectations and the content knowledge.

To sum up, Victor is an advanced ELL who comes from a rich linguistic and cultural background. He is highly meta-cognitively aware of his linguistic repertoire and shows a promising progress of acculturation into American society. His comparison of English and Portuguese was impressive, and he showed no signs of distress over leaving his homeland to live and study in a foreign land using a foreign language. Simultaneously, he is able to hold on to his native language and culture and feel comfortable with both his Brazilian and American identities. I believe a big part of his success may be attributed to his fascination with American popular culture since a young age, which primed his uptake of English linguistic and cultural knowledge later on. Sadly, due to COVID-19, the learning context in which he is trapped sounds less promising. Without a choice, he has to study in an environment where he feels removed from his

friends and classmates. Although his current learning context sounds better than previous ones where he found the instruction ineffective or where he received no language support, it is still far from the perfect environment that promotes learning as well as socioemotional positivity. The good news is that despite his advanced English proficiency, he still finds the asynchronous part of his classes challenging and thus worthwhile, and there is ESL tutoring service that can support his learning and growth. A final thought: I reached out to Victor for this interview because he was a convenience sample for me, but it turned out that he was such an interesting ELL.

## Appendix C

### **Artifact C Investigating Local Practices: ELL Support at John Overton High School**

Throughout this semester, we have learned about various pedagogical philosophies and principles, including constructivism, funds of knowledge, and de Jong's (2011) Four Principles. We have also learned about various language development and support program models for English Language Learners (ELLs), which differ in terms of language of instruction and class structure. In addition, we have learned about a series of educational laws and policies that shape school and teacher practices. Such an abundance of theoretical and conceptual knowledge has helped me envision what ELL education should look like, but do pedagogical practices in real life really match what we have learned in class? To find out, I visited John Overton High School, a local high school with a large ELL population.

Through a class observation and interview with an assistant principal, I got a glimpse of the school's ELL support system. What I saw differed from what I had envisioned, which disappointed and even confused me at first. Gradually, I began to realize that what we learn at Peabody represents what education should be while what is being practiced in real life is largely what education can be at the current moment. Realistically, we can only try to better our practices so that they resemble the ideals more, but it does not mean we do not have to keep the ideals in mind to help us strive toward them. In this paper, I will demonstrate how I have come to this realization by introducing Overton, describing the observation and interview, connecting Overton's practices to relevant pedagogical philosophies and principles, and evaluating the connection based on theoretical as well as practical considerations.

According to the school fact sheet found on Overton's school website, Overton is a part of the Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools (MNPS) system. With a little under 70% of its



student population made up by minority students, Overton is the most diverse high school in Nashville and even in Tennessee. There are more Hispanic/Latinx students than white students. According to the assistant principal who I interviewed, 57 countries and 43 languages are represented within Overton's international student body, which the school defines as including newly arrived immigrants as well as second and third generation immigrants. As MNPS has been receiving an influx of immigrants and refugees in recent years, its number of incoming students classified as ELLs has been increasing as well. Out of Overton's 1953 students, 590 are current ELLs and there is also a substantial number of former ELLs. Many of Overton's ELLs speak Spanish as their first language, and Overton also has the highest concentration of Kurdish-speaking students in MNPS. Overton uses sheltered English instruction as its ELL program model.

As a major component of my school visit, I observed a 10<sup>th</sup> grade English class with exclusively ELLs. The class was conducted entirely in English, and the teacher seemed to be monolingual. However, she allowed her students to use Spanish to communicate among themselves, both during class and during breaks. Relying on my limited knowledge of Spanish and the occasional sprinkles of English words, I figured that the students were discussing task-related things such as borrowing school supplies and clarifying page numbers for their assignments. They talked more freely in Spanish during breaks, but they still codeswitched between Spanish and English. I was glad to see the students' home language being permitted in the classroom to facilitate their learning and social bonding, but I was also disappointed at the English-only instruction. Knowing that bilingual instruction is at least as effective, if not more effective, than English-only instruction and can impart benefits on metalinguistic awareness and family cohesion (August et al., 2010), I wondered why Overton did not implement bilingual

instruction. Moreover, I noticed that a few students remained silent throughout the class session, even during breaks, presumably because they do not speak Spanish (they do not look Hispanic/Latinx) and consequently cannot interact with their peers. This seemed problematic to me because it violated de Jong's (2011) principle of affirming identities, which states educators should "create spaces for diverse student voices" (p. 174). In this case, only the Spanish-speaking students benefited from the teacher's permission of home language usage in the classroom—the use of Spanish actually alienated some students. It is worth figuring out what should the teacher do when there is more than one home language represented in the classroom but one appears to dominate the others.

The teacher included many activities in that class session: reviewing irregular verbs, listening to a story read aloud by the teacher, completing reading comprehension questions based on the story, and reviewing the plot diagram. There were plenty of individual teacher-student interactions, such as the teacher calling on a student to answer a question or answering a student's questions about an assignment, but there were limited pair and small group interactions. The students mainly worked on assignments by themselves. Once again, I developed mixed feelings about what I observed, which is that the teacher did most of the talking and the classroom dynamic seemed to be teacher-centered. On the one hand, I appreciated the vast amount of high quality linguistic input the teacher provided as she carried out the lesson. Hoff (2018) alludes to an advantage in English input from a native speaker over input from a non-native speaker on bilingual children's language development. On the other hand, I thought the teacher should have created more opportunities for students to practice speaking English so that her students do not end up like Lilian in Valdes's (1998) article, whose oral proficiency stagnated as a result of limited practice. Also, I thought the teacher could use more

constructivism in her instruction and let the students take the lead in acquiring knowledge.

Although Windschitl (1999) argues that constructivism should be “a systemic classroom culture” rather than “a set of discrete instructional practices” (p. 752), I believe it is easier to make use of a few constructivist practices as a starting point rather than transforming the classroom culture overnight.

When I looked around the classroom, I noticed the walls are decorated with posters and diagrams that clearly indicate important things such as classroom expectations, learning objectives, and learning tools such as thinking maps. Two things in particular caught my attention. In the center of one wall I saw pictures of people from different cultures and the words “many cultures, one people.” I thought these pictures reflect de Jong’s (2011) principle of affirming identities and serve as a reminder that even though ELLs come from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, their differences should be celebrated. On another wall, I saw pictures illustrating key vocabulary words from the unit that the class was studying. Although pictures alone are effective visual aids, I thought the teacher could have labeled them with translations in Spanish and any other language(s) that the students speak to make a connection between English and the students’ home language. It has the potential of facilitating the acquisition of new English vocabulary as well as maintaining the retention of the same vocabulary in the home language. I also noticed a bookshelf in one corner of the classroom. It contains few books and everything is in English. Remembering our class discussion on the kinds of books we would like to include in our class library, in which many mentioned books in students’ home language and stories that celebrate diversity, I wondered how come this class only has a limited collection.

Altogether, I was dismayed by what I had observed. I wanted to know why what I saw is so different from what I have been learning about in our class. Because de Jong (2011) strongly

advocates for additive bilingualism and the scholarly works we have been reading all seem to favor bilingual education, I had assumed Overton would adopt what has been determined as best practice by research and at least introduce some bilingual elements into the ELL curriculum. I thought perhaps it was just one class session where the teacher did not use bilingual pedagogy, but from my interview with Mr. Vaughn, the assistant principal who is in charge of the ELL program, I learned that English-only is the rule of thumb at Overton. When I mentioned that the teacher who I observed allowed her students to speak Spanish among themselves, he seemed surprised and stated that usually teachers do not encourage the use of students' home language in class. He also specifically gave an example of one English-Spanish bilingual ELL teacher who discouraged students from speaking Spanish in her classroom precisely because she could understand Spanish. Mr. Vaughn emphasized that the English-only approach is meant to maximize students' exposure to and production of English. He acknowledged the existence of research in support of bilingual education but did not mention any potential for changes in Overton's current practices.

Moreover, I felt the curriculum is not just watered down but not even on grade-level for ELLs, as the 10<sup>th</sup> grade class I observed seemed more like a middle school class to me. It matches Robinson-Cimpian et al.'s (2016) description of a weak curriculum for ELLs with less rigor and lower expectations. Although the teacher was passionate about what she was teaching and cared for her students, I just could not pretend to believe that they were receiving the same education as their English monolingual peers in mainstream English classes. During a class break, the teacher told me the class is classified as a beginner's English course with English language support. All of the students scored between 1 and 2.2 on the WIDA, which is on the lower end of the spectrum. Some of them have been in the U.S. for a year; others have just

arrived. In the interview, Mr. Vaughn further explained the reason why the 10<sup>th</sup> grade beginner's English curriculum may seem watered down is that students simply do not have enough English proficiency to keep up with a more challenging curriculum. They are still learning the basics and adjusting to a new language, culture, and learning environment. While this rationale reminded me of what de Jong (2011) labels as a subtractive attitude toward ELLs and a language-as-problem view on their limited English proficiency, it also made me realize how difficult it must be for schools to see linguistic diversity as a resource when they are struggling to teach with the presence of a language barrier. Of course, the language barrier is not the student's fault, but given the dominance of English in the U.S. and the strong correlation between English proficiency and academic success, it is simply practical for schools to prioritize ELLs' English language and literacy development over grade-level content knowledge development.

On a brighter note, I found more evidence demonstrating that Overton offers great school-wide support to ELLs and their families. On Overton's website, one can find the supply list in many languages, including Spanish, Kurdish, Somali, and Nepali, and Arabic. In the main office, I saw an English-Spanish bilingual receptionist working alongside an English monolingual receptionist, handling matters in Spanish. Mr. Vaughn mentioned that interpreters and translators are available in many languages to help facilitate communication with the ELL student population and their family. He also mentioned that he personally conducts home visits to get to know the students and learn how Overton can better serve them and their families. Although these home visits are limited to students who require special attention, such as health issues, I believe they have the potential of evolving into a greater initiative to learn about students' life outside school and tap into their community literacies (Jimenez et al., 2009) and funds of knowledge (Moll et al., 1992). I was also pleased to learn that Overton offers English

and math tutoring sessions twice a week to ELLs. To make it even better, dinner is served so students can socialize and form closer relationships with one another as well as with the support staff. Last but not least, Overton provides college preparation and general academic advising to ELLs through both an in-house counselor who speaks Spanish as well as community partners such as Conexion Americas. Overall, Overton seems to be honoring its ELL student population's linguistic diversity and trying its best to provide support services tailored toward ELLs' unique needs. Of course, there is room for improvement: Spanish services are more readily available when there are 42 other home languages represented at Overton. Understandably, from a practical point of view, it is impossible to provide a range of support services in all 43 home languages. I recommend Overton hiring a long-term English-Kurdish bilingual staff member to facilitate matters concerning the school's second largest minority language group.

My biggest takeaway from the school visit was something Mr. Vaughn said. He made a distinction between what Vanderbilt (and some other schools) teaches and what many teacher education programs taught previously. He implied that the current practices in ELL education reflect the latter. He also stated he had learned both and implied he could see why I felt a discrepancy between what I learned in school and what I observed that day. Although there was no detailed discussion on the distinction and its implications, I gained a little clarity about the things that I had been wondering during and after the observation. I realized it is impossible to incorporate everything research suggests in everyday practice. Research findings and educational theories and concepts simply evolve at a faster pace than policies that guide practice. Instead of hoping for synchronization between theory and practice, it will be more fruitful and less frustrating to steer practice in a direction that follows theory. Looking back at my observation, I developed a new perspective. By allowing her students to speak Spanish even though the school

adheres to an English-only policy, the teacher who I observed may have been taking baby steps toward a more bilingual approach. Perhaps we should celebrate these baby steps instead of fixating on the gap between theory and practice.

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## Appendix D

## Artifact D Questions for Doctor

| Lesson Plan  |   |
|--|---|
| Topic: How to Ask Your Doctor Questions  | Class: GES<br>Date:   |
| Lesson Objectives:<br>1. Students will be able to apply supplied questions to different doctor-patient communication scenarios.<br>2. Students will be able to classify modal verbs according to their use in different situations and use modal verbs to generate questions for the doctor. | Materials:<br>YouTube Video<br>Questions for the Doctor Introduction handout<br>Creating Questions for the Doctor Worksheet<br>Doctor-Patient Communication Scenarios handout<br>Doctor-Patient Communication Homework handout  |
| Time:  | Activity  |
| 15 min.  | <p>Warm-up:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Show students a YouTube video entitled "Questions YOU Should Ask Your Doctor" (<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D1GZrZKaw0o">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D1GZrZKaw0o</a>) in which a doctor recommends and explains the importance of 10 questions that he thinks patients should ask their doctors.<br/>NOTE: video length 6:48, recommend stopping at 5:49<br/>Could be given to students prior to class as homework, particularly with lower-level learners.</li> <li>Group discussion: Which of these questions have you asked your doctor before? Which of these questions are new and potentially useful to you? What additional questions would you add to this list?</li> <li>Invite all the groups to share. Point out that modal verbs appeared 6/10 times in the list, so they must be important language items in asking questions.</li> </ol> |
| 20 min.  | <p>Grammar review:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Start with a brief review of modals (purpose, structure, use) using the PPT modal review slides. Engage students by asking them questions like "What different roles do modals play?"</li> <li>Go back to the 10 questions from the video and explain how modal verbs are used in the 6 questions that feature modal verbs.</li> </ol>  |
| 25 min.  | <p>Guided practice:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Distribute the Questions for the Doctor Introduction handout, which provides more example questions for the doctor. Model pronunciation and intonation first and then ask students to practice reading the questions aloud in pairs.</li> <li>Ask students to highlight all the modal verbs in the handout and identify the situation in which the modal verbs are used. Then, as a whole group, have students take turns reading the questions aloud and sharing their identified situations. Pause after each question to show the correct answer on the PPT and answer any questions students may have.</li> </ol>  |
| 20 min.  | <p>Application:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Distribute Creating Questions for the Doctor Worksheet, which includes a list of doctor's responses. Students need to come up with patient's questions individually for each of the responses using modal verbs. After filling in the questions, have students take turns sharing their formulated questions with their table group and helping each other correct any mistakes.</li> <li>Show students example questions that teacher has come up with using the PPT slides.</li> </ol>   |
| 30 min.  | <p>Evaluation: Creating a dialogue</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Distribute the Doctor-Patient Communication Scenarios handout, which describes various scenarios in which patients need to ask their doctors questions and provides potential vocabulary words to help students formulate questions.</li> <li>Have students create a patient-doctor dialogue with a partner based on the scenarios and vocabulary words on the handout. (Each student will play the patient once and the doctor once. If time allows, students can practice more of the different scenarios.)</li> <li>Ask student pairs to find another pair and act out their dialogues for one another and get peer feedback.</li> <li>Invite volunteers to share their dialogues with the whole class.</li> </ol>   |
| 10 min.  | Homework explanation + wiggle room  |

### Questions for the Doctor Introduction

Below are example questions that you can ask your doctor.

#### I. Questions about an illness or symptom:

1. Will there be any long-term effects of this problem?
2. Can I give this illness to someone else?
3. Are there any activities or foods I should avoid until I'm better?
4. When can I return to school or work?
5. How can I prevent this from happening again?
6. Is there more than one disease or condition that could be causing my symptoms?

#### II. Questions about medicines:

1. Should I stop the medicine if I feel back to normal?
2. What side effects can I expect?
3. What will happen if I accidentally miss a dose?
4. If I don't notice any improvement, should I take more?
5. Can I get this over the counter?

#### III. Questions about tests and treatments:

1. Will it hurt? If so, is there anything we can do to lessen the pain?
2. Can you perform the test or treatment in your office, or will I need to go to a lab or other facility?
3. How should I prepare for the test or treatment?
4. Could I delay the treatment?

#### Practice:

For each question above, highlight the modal verb and identify the situation in which the modal verb is used. Refer to the table below on how to identify the situation.

| Modal      | Situation          |
|------------|--------------------|
| Can/could  | possibility        |
|            | permission         |
|            | ability            |
| should     | Advice, obligation |
| Will/would | Future, intention  |

#### Example:

**Will** there be any long-term effects of this problem?

Situation: future

## Creating Questions for the Doctor Worksheet

Based on the doctor's answers given below, write questions that use modal verbs. Keep in mind that there are many possible questions. After you have finished creating the questions, read them to a partner and ask for feedback on your use of modal verbs.

## Example

Q: **How often should I take this medication?**

A: You need to take this medication before every meal.

1. Q: \_\_\_\_\_

A: You may experience headache and/or nausea after the treatment.

2. Q: \_\_\_\_\_

A: You can't eat or drink 3 hours before the test.

3. Q: \_\_\_\_\_

A: Please let me know if you experience any strong side effects so that I can determine whether you should continue this treatment.

4. Q: \_\_\_\_\_

A: Under normal circumstances you should be able to return to work in a week.

5. Q: \_\_\_\_\_

A: You will have to visit a specialist for this problem.

6. Q: \_\_\_\_\_

A: Do not take the medication on an empty stomach.

7. Q: \_\_\_\_\_

A: In place of surgery, we could try physical therapy and see if it helps you recover.

Doctor-Patient Communication Scenarios

What questions would you ask the doctor if you were the patient?

1. A patient is trying to decide whether to try a new treatment.

*Vocabulary to consider: benefits, side effects, alternatives...*

2. A patient is trying to understand what caused her illness. The doctor suggests a test that will confirm the actual cause.

*Vocabulary to consider: cost, pain or discomfort, reliability of the test*

3. A patient is preparing for surgery tomorrow.

*Vocabulary to consider: dietary restrictions, doctor's experience...*

4. A patient wants to switch to a healthier lifestyle and is asking the doctor for general nutrition and exercise questions.

*Vocabulary to consider: how, what, and why questions*



## Appendix E

### Artifact E Curriculum Design

#### Curriculum Design

**Diana Cao and Zijiang Ding**

One challenge many international students face when they first enter U.S. universities is that there is a gap between the kind of English language they have learned through formal EFL education back in their home countries and the kind of academic English required by university-level coursework. Especially in the area of academic writing, international students who have not attended secondary school in the U.S. may be unfamiliar with the writing style and conventions that are unique to the U.S. For example, from personal experiences and observations, we found that international students may need explicit instruction on different citation styles and the concept of academic integrity or intellectual ownership as it is practiced in the U.S. International students may also need explicit instruction on how to make a clear argument and structure a coherent paper in a way that follows U.S. expectations (e.g. thesis-driven and writer-responsible). To help bridge the gap between international students' limited experience with English academic writing and U.S. universities' rigorous expectations, we plan to create an academic writing curriculum that aims to prepare international students for university-level writing tasks.

This curriculum was designed in response to the previously mentioned challenge. We designed this course to be offered at a private learning center during summer or winter break for Chinese high school students who are admitted to an American university and want to get a head start on getting familiarized with U.S. academic writing. Class meets 3 times per week for a total of 6 weeks. Each class session will run for 60 minutes. We believe students should already be motivated to take our class since it is completely voluntary and also potentially costly. To enhance their learning experience, we want to tailor the course toward their individual needs and interests by allowing a large degree of flexibility in what they choose to write about as long as they demonstrate adherence to U.S. academic writing conventions. We think this flexibility will be a motivating factor.

The 6-week course has 6 major topics for each week to guide our lectures and workshops. In lectures, we expand the major topic from the guiding questions, have lectures over sub-topics through discussions and analysis of conventions and examples, and introduce useful linguistic

tools (e.g. useful expressions and phrases) with examples and in-class practice. In workshops, students are expected to apply what they learn in the week to their own project, where the final paper is broken down into manageable pieces for students to practice. In addition, peer-review of drafts and real-time feedback from the instructor will take place. For the first four weeks, we set up two lectures to build background knowledge for students, and one workshop for the application of takeaways of the week. Starting from Week 5, we shorten the lectures and place more time on workshops in order to empower students in collaborative work and revisions and assist them with the final project. Alongside pre-class readings and post-class homework, which are left for instructors who choose to use or adapt this curriculum to decide, students are required to produce a 3-5 page final essay. Our weekly course progression is designed to gradually prepare students to accomplish this task. Rather than quizzes and tests, students will be assessed through teacher's evaluation of students' application of newly learned knowledge during workshopping time and demonstration of adherence to US academic writing standards in the final essay. Our teaching goal is to familiarize Chinese students with US academic writing and provide them an opportunity to try writing in the US style.

By the end of our course, students should be able to:

- 1) Have a good command of a citation style that is commonly used in their intended field of study (e.g. MLA for English Literature, Chicago for History, and APA for Psychology) and be able to use reference tools such as the Purdue OWL;
- 2) Show understanding of academic integrity and intellectual ownership by giving credit to ideas taken from other authors and complying with instructor's directions regarding collaborative work;
- 3) Produce clear and cohesive arguments, support arguments with relevant examples and reliable data, and link arguments in a coherent and reader-friendly fashion;
- 4) Consider different purposes, contexts and audiences of each writing task before and during the writing process and revise their drafts accordingly;
- 5) Critically evaluate the ideas of others, namely recognizing bias in writing, assessing source reliability, and engaging in academic conversation with other scholars through writing.

### Scope and Sequence

#### Week 1 Introductions

**Lecture 1** What are our course objectives? What are the expectations of U.S. academic writing at the college level? How are U.S. writing conventions similar or different from Chinese writing conventions? What are your goals in this course?

- Go over course syllabus and main project (final essay)
- U.S. academic writing style and conventions
- Needs Assessment Survey/Questionnaire and writing sample

**Lecture 2** Why should we conceptualize writing as a process? What does academic integrity mean in the U.S. context? What do you need to consider before making an argument?

- Writing as a process
- Academic integrity

**Workshop** Evaluate student's own analytical writing in Chinese using U.S. academic writing conventions. How can argument(s), paragraph structure, transitions, etc. be modified to align with U.S. standards? Students will share 3-5 things.

**Rationale** Chinese and U.S. writing conventions differ due to cultural differences. To help students understand the U.S. style, we introduce in addition to a list of differences relevant concepts such as academic integrity ('knowledge is a private property' is a foreign concept to many Chinese students; there are cases of plagiarism by Chinese students in the U.S. where students were unaware of U.S. expectations), which will be supplemented by an introduction of different citation styles in a later week.

#### Week 2 Rhetorical Situation

**Lecture 1** What topics/issues interest you? Do you read or write about them?

- First project discussion: Students will write an essay that either informs or persuades people on a topic of their interest that is relevant to their intended field of study in university. Students can choose whomever to write to, meaning the essay is not simply a writing assignment designed for the instructor to read and grade. The topic must be a contemporary issue and the essay will be shared



among members of the class. Students are welcome to post their final product online or distribute to people outside the class.

- Students will individually think and then discuss within small group topics that they want to write about, bouncing ideas off each other
- Elastic Circle: an introductory activity to get students thinking about argumentation in writing
- Students will be asked to bring a piece of writing related to their topic of interest that they think is well written for Lecture 2

**Lecture 2** Why is it important to analyze the rhetorical situation both as a reader and writer?

- Purpose, audience, context, medium
- Analyze the rhetorical situation in authentic writing samples together as a class (instructor will use Martin Luther King's I Have a Dream speech as the first example, then student-selected pieces will be analyzed)
- In addition to rhetorical situation, guide students in examining the argumentation techniques used in these authentic writing samples to help them discover what makes an effective argument

**Workshop** Students will bring a list of three or more topics that they are interested in writing their final analytical essay on and narrow down to one topic through individual thinking time and group discussion. After a topic is chosen, students will think about how to appeal to the rhetorical situation of their essay and share with group members.

**Rationale** Having a clear understanding of the rhetorical situation of a piece of writing is an important skill not only for ESL students but for any writer. Given that rhetorical situation is also taught in the U.S. in college courses such as ENG101 to prepare domestic students for varied writing tasks later in upper-level courses across disciplines, we decided to dedicate one week to this topic.

### **Week 3 Critical Evaluation of Others' Ideas**

**Lecture 1** How do we know if what others are saying is factual and reliable? Is it possible/preferable to be unbiased?

- Source reliability
- Bias (both reader and writer's)

**Lecture 2** How does our personal view affect our perception of evidence and statistics?

- Evidence and data
- Interpretation and perspectives

**Workshop** Students will begin background research on their topic. They will evaluate source reliability, bias, and use of evidence and statistics in their sources and decide on a list of 4-5 preliminary sources, which will serve as an opportunity for assessment. Students will go through the list and explain its effectiveness through conversations with the teacher.

**Rationale** Given that the Chinese education system does not encourage students to criticize teachers, textbooks, and other educational/written materials, many may find it difficult to be a critical thinker and writer when they arrive in the U.S.

#### **Week 4 How to Write about What “They Say”**

**Lecture 1** How do we give credit to other people’s work?

- Review academic integrity: why is it important to give credit
- General introduction to common citation styles (MLA, APA, Chicago)
- In-text citations vs. references page
- Reference tools (e.g. Purdue OWL)

**Lecture 2** How to introduce others’ ideas in your own writing?

- Direct quotation
- Paraphrasing
- Useful expressions and phrases
- Verb tense

**Workshop** Using the strategies taught in Week 4 Lecture 2, students will practice writing about the main ideas/arguments of the sources (4-5) obtained in Week 3 Workshop and giving proper citations.

**Rationale** There are salient differences in writing when it comes to using others’ ideas from the U.S., due to cultural ideology, linguistic features and other factors. Unaware of those contrasts may lead to academic dishonesty. To further strengthen students’ understanding of academic integrity in the U.S., this week teaches not only why but also how to avoid plagiarism and give credit to others.

**Week 5 How to Write about What “I Say”****Lecture 1** What does good writing consist of?

- Thesis statement and topic sentences
- Writer-responsible discourse and signposting language

What makes an argument effective? How can you state your opinion in a scholarly fashion?

- Clarity and Concision
- Useful expressions and phrases

**Workshop 1** In the first task, students will identify the structure of the assigned reading material/mentor text, namely, articulate its thesis statement and supporting arguments. In the second task, they will practice arguments revision under the standard of clarity and concision, and eliminate the subjective factors, such as quotations and sayings with cultural ideological color. Homework: write the first draft of analysis outline on chosen topic in Week 2 with a thesis statement and develop 3-5 effective supporting arguments from it.

**Workshop 2** Peer review and give feedback from four perspectives: the consistency of the thesis statement and the supporting arguments, clarity, concision, and objectivity of their writing. They will work in class to finish the second draft of outline and submit for assessment. Homework: go back to the source list in Week 3 for evidence and develop paragraphs of argumentation.

**Rationale** This week’s topic reemphasizes differences between Chinese and U.S. writing styles. Chinese ESL students may be excellent writers in Chinese, but if they don’t adapt to U.S. conventions they might not be considered a good writer in the U.S. For example, the idea of a thesis statement may be foreign to Chinese students because Chinese writers tend to reveal the main argument/idea in the concluding paragraph rather than in the introductory paragraph. We not only point out the differences but also provide students with examples and linguistic tools to help them write in the U.S. style.

**Week 6 Scholarly Conversation****Lecture 1** How can we weave “they say” and “I say” together? How can we synthesize across and respond to multiple others?

- Quotation sandwich (quote, interpretation, argument)
- Agreement/disagreement

- Expansion/qualification (in addition to what they said..., I agree with two out of the five things this author argued...)
- Verb tense and useful expressions
- In class practice: sample activity (see below)
- Homework: first draft of final essay

**Workshop 1** Brief presentation on how to format paper in APA, MLA, or Chicago style, peer review of first draft, class review of any topics that students would like to go over. Students will incorporate formatting rules in the second draft using notes from the presentation and online resources such as the Purdue OWL.

**Workshop 2** Peer review of second draft, final reflection discussion.

**Rationale** Academic writing is all about responding to others' ideas and bringing up one's own ideas in a coherent fashion. After students have learned how to write about what 'they say' and what 'I say' in Weeks 4 and 5, this final week serves to tie everything together to produce a 'conversation'. During the workshopping time, students will give and receive feedback from peers on items that have been covered throughout the course, such as clarity in writing, transition between ideas, reliability of cited examples and statistics, general formatting, etc. At the end of the course, students will reflect on their learning experience and celebrate their accomplishments.

### **Potential Materials**

#### **Week 1**

Lamott, A. (1994). *Shitty First Drafts*. In *Bird by bird: Some instructions on writing and life*. New York: Anchor Books. pp. 21-27.

Lamott, A. (1994). *Perfectionism*. In *Bird by bird: Some instructions on writing and life*. New York: Anchor Books. pp. 28-32

Yang, Y. (2001) *Chinese Interference in English Writing: Cultural and Linguistic Differences*. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED461992.pdf>

Yang, Y. & Chen J. (2013) *Differences of English and Chinese as Written Languages and Strategies in English Writing Teaching*. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 4, pp. 647-652 <http://www.academypublication.com/issues/past/tpls/vol03/04/13.pdf>

#### **Week 2**

Lane, B. (2016). *After the end: teaching and learning creative revision*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

King, Martin Luther (1963). I have a dream.

**Week 3**

Interactive Media Bias Chart. (2020, February 1). Retrieved from

<https://www.adfontesmedia.com/interactive-media-bias-chart/?v=402f03a963ba>

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**Week 4, 5, 6.**

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Students will be asked to read Parts 1, 2, and 3, which specifically address Week 4's topic "they say", Week 5's topic "I say", and Week 6's topic "conversation", respectively. We think this book is appropriate for our student population even though it's used at the graduate level here at Peabody because this book was also used in English 101 classes at Emory University.

## Appendix F

### Artifact F Assessing Oral Language Proficiency

Oral language proficiency is important to assess because it allows teachers to directly gauge a language learner's speaking ability and also indirectly get a sense of the learner's listening ability. Like any other type of assessment, an assessment of oral language proficiency needs to be well designed both in the assessment protocol that will produce a representative sample and in the rubric that is used to judge the sample. In this paper, I will describe and explain my attempt at assessing an English language learner's (ELL) oral proficiency level using an oral language sample provided by the Purdue College English Language Learner Language Portraits (ELLPS) and the Student Oral Language Observation Matrix (SOLOM).

The assessment protocol used to obtain the oral language sample is a brief, four-minute question-and-answer session between Kenji, a high school exchange student from Japan, and an interlocuter who sounds like a native speaker of English and presumably is a teacher or researcher. Although the sample also resembles an interview, I believe question-and-answer is a more accurate classification for this sample. According to Brown (2010), a question-and-answer task aims to assess a learner's responsive speaking, which produces shorter utterances that often lack creativity. Telling time and date in complete sentence is one example of such utterance. In contrast, an interview can assess interactive speaking, which produces longer and more elaborate utterances (Brown, 2010). An example of such utterance would be recalling a meaningful life event and elaborating on the details. More details on the sample will be given below, which will demonstrate that it indeed is a question-and-answer session with short and simple utterances.

The interlocuter started off by asking Kenji how many siblings he has, what languages he speaks, and whether he likes living in the U.S. These are very simple questions that can be

answered using only one word or a few words, so the interlocutor followed up by asking Kenji how- and why- questions that will elicit longer responses. The questions include why does Kenji like living in the U.S., how does school in Japan differ from school in the U.S., how do teachers in Japan differ from teachers in the U.S., and how do teachers in the U.S. help Kenji learn. The first set of questions are simple and have definite answers, so rather than targeting Kenji's productive language use (speaking) I believe they target his receptive language use (listening). While the response can simply be one word, he needs to comprehend what exactly is the interlocutor asking in order to provide a sensible answer. With the second set of question, the focus shifts from eliciting mainly receptive to eliciting both receptive and productive language use. Kenji needs to understand the questions first, think about his response since there is no definite answer, and verbalize his thinking in English. Due to the complex nature of explanations, Kenji needs to produce at least one complete sentence instead of just a few words to convey his thoughts, which provides more opportunities for assessing his speaking ability.

While the question-and-answer elicited both receptive and productive language use, it was too brief to produce an extended and varied sample. As previously mentioned, question-and-answer is meant to assess responsive speaking, which is inherently not lengthy. The topic of the conversation also restricted varied language use. The questions centered around facts about Kenji and his opinions on his living and learning experience in the U.S., which allowed little to no chance for Kenji to demonstrate his oral proficiency in areas other than daily conversation about familiar topics. His language use is likely to differ if he was asked to talk about a topic he is learning in class or if he was asked to roleplay a professional, for example. On a similar note, the question-and-answer also did not elicit discipline-specific language use because the conversation did not venture into any school subjects or professional areas. That is not to say the question-

and-answer was a poorly chosen method of eliciting an oral language sample in this case. Brief linguistic exchanges can still provide valuable information about a learner's proficiency level to an assessor, especially an experienced one (Brown, 2010). One can also use question-and-answer alongside other methods to get a more holistic picture of a learner's linguistic repertoire and proficiency level, for it is unreasonable to expect any method or protocol to account for all possible scenarios of language use. In Kenji's case, the question-and-answer dutifully captured his listening and speaking abilities in answering general questions about himself and his experiences living in the U.S.

Using the SOLOM rubric, I assessed Kenji's oral proficiency level as demonstrated by the question-and-answer. The SOLOM assesses oral language from five aspects: comprehension, fluency, vocabulary, pronunciations, and grammar. For each aspect there are five levels of proficiency with one being the lowest and five being native-like. I will provide details on Kenji's performance in each aspect and explain my decision for the level that I assign. For comprehension, I gave Kenji a five because he seemed to understand everything that the interlocutor asked and commented on. The interlocutor spoke at a normal speed, and Kenji seemed fine with the pace. There was no request for repetition or clarification, and Kenji provided relevant answers to all of the questions the interlocutor asked, indicating that he had indeed correctly comprehended the interlocutor's utterances. Especially with questions that only required a few words, Kenji was quick to respond and did not pause or hesitate to think about what he had heard. For questions that required more oral output, he showed some hesitation, but I believe it was due to difficulty with finding words to convey his thoughts, not with understanding the question. Since slower-than-normal speed and repetitions are the two factors



that lower a learner's level on the SOLOM and Kenji did not require either accommodation, I believe level five is the most suitable score for him with regards to comprehension.

For fluency, I gave Kenji a three because he showed considerable struggle trying to articulate his answers to questions that require more elaboration. The most prominent example is when the interlocutor asked Kenji to explain how school in Japan differs from school in the U.S. Kenji started off by saying "We have one...uh I don't know what to say..." I think what he really meant was he did not know *how* to say it, because when he finally answered the question later, it was clear that he had an idea and he just needed to work on how to articulate it with more ease in English. Both the "uh" filler and the open admission of "I don't know what to say" demonstrated his need to search for the correct manner of expression. There was a long, very noticeable pause after he admitted not knowing how to say what he wanted to say, and then he repeated "We have one...[pause]" to fill the silence and buy time to think about the correct manner of expression. However, in other instances where he showed struggle with finding words and piecing them together, he did not pause for a long time and use repetition to buy time. I observed slight hesitations and delays in response but not to the point of prolonged silence, which makes level 2 an inaccurate description of Kenji's fluency. Level 4 is also inaccurate because Kenji showed more than *occasional* lapses in his answers, which leaves level 3 as the closest description of Kenji's fluency. He had to *frequently* search for the correct manner of expression.

For vocabulary, I gave Kenji a three because the corresponding SOLOM description states, "conversation somewhat limited because of inadequate vocabulary" and that is exactly the case. For example, Kenji mentioned size of property as a key difference between Japan and the U.S., so the interlocutor asked him whether he liked the big house that belongs to his American

host family, to which Kenji responded, “Yeah they have two cows and two donkey...Many animal, I like a lot.” How do cows and donkeys relate to the question is unclear, but I think what Kenji meant was because his host family had a huge property, it could house not only humans but also large animals such as cows and donkeys, and that made him happy and enjoy living in the big house. The causal relationship was unclear because Kenji lacked the vocabulary and lexical agility to explain that critical piece of information. Understandably, the interlocutor did not press for further explanation and moved on to the next question, which made the conversation limited. To make sure level three is an accurate assessment, I looked at levels two and four for comparison. Level two is not an accurate description because the interlocutor seemed to be able to understand what Kenji said, as the interlocutor frequently restated Kenji’s utterances and these recasts did not seem to contradict Kenji’s intended meaning. This makes level four also an inaccurate description because the interlocutor was doing the rephrasing, not the learner himself.

For pronunciation, I gave Kenji a three because his utterances were mostly intelligible, but it required some effort to understand him. The SOLOM’s level three description of “necessitate concentration on the part of the listener” perfectly characterizes Kenji’s pronunciation. I am not qualified to conduct a thorough analysis of Kenji’s pronunciation like an accent coach, but as a fluent speaker of English I can tell Kenji’s pronunciation carries a non-native accent that is relatively close to standard English so it did not impede my comprehension most of the time. One specific utterance that I had trouble understanding was when he said “property” and I thought it sounded like “probably.” I think if he had spoken more loudly and enunciated words more clearly his pronunciation score would be higher. A level four on the SOLOM requires the speaker to be always intelligible and Kenji was not there yet. A level two

allows for constant repeating to make themselves understood, and Kenji did not have to do that to make the interlocutor or me to understand his utterances. Therefore, level three is the most fitting score.

For grammar, I gave Kenji a three because he made frequent grammatical mistakes, but they did not negatively impact my understanding of his utterances. I noticed a pattern of omitting prepositions, such as “I live [in] small small house,” “I stay [in] big house now,” and “three years to spend [in] high school.” I also noticed a pattern of omitting morphological markers such as the plural “s” in “two donkey.” Despite these mistakes, I was able to understand him without problem. In comparison, a level two on the SOLOM requires the grammatical mistakes to impede understanding, and a level four requires fewer mistakes, which makes level three the most fitting description.

To conclude the assessment, Kenji scored 17 out of 25 or on average a level of 3.4 on the SOLOM rubric. Because 3.4 is still below level four, Kenji has level three oral proficiency according to the SOLOM rubric. What level three means is that the learner is not yet proficient in the target language, as anything below or equal to three indicates limited proficiency. My interpretation of the result is that among those who are limited proficient in English, Kenji is at a more advanced level. In broad terms, he may be considered as an intermediate or even upper-intermediate learner.

Given that I did not personally design the language sample collecting protocol and match it to the SOLOM rubric, my assessment is bound to have validity and reliability issues. For example, the SOLOM rubric has statements like “speech in everyday conversation and classroom discussions generally fluent,” but I have no access to and therefore no clue about Kenji’s oral language performance in a classroom discussion. On a similar note, the question-

and-answer only showed four minutes of Kenji's oral language performance in one particular setting. He could be more proficient or less proficient in other settings. For example, he might know more art-related vocabulary and be able to talk about cartoon at greater length because it is his hobby. He might be more fluent in describing a historical event or biological process than talking about the differences between Japan and the U.S. because as a high school student he is exposed to more subject matter-related English. An enhanced version of the assessment that I conducted on Kenji's oral language proficiency should be more precisely designed to elicit language samples that are representative of Kenji's linguistic competence in a casual daily conversation setting *and* in a formal instructional setting. The rubric should also separate casual language from academic language and allow the assessor to evaluate the learner's performance separately in order to inform ESL instruction. Some ELLs are fluent in casual daily language but need support in academic language, while the opposite is true for other ELLs. If the rubric took this factor into consideration, it could produce more refined results that would allow teachers to differentiate ESL instruction.

Overall, the question-and-answer method allowed me to get a glimpse of Kenji's oral language performance and the SOLOM rubric helped me break down his performance into finer subcategories to gain deeper insights on his oral language ability. I learned that he has better receptive oral language ability than productive and he can be considered as an intermediate learner of English. A more tailored sample collecting method and a more precise rubric will make this assessment more accurate but given the circumstances, this attempt at assessing an ELL's oral language proficiency was still fruitful and a great learning experience.

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## Appendix G

### Artifact G Breaking Down Word Problems

Yesterday I taught my first online lesson. It was a math lesson on system of equations that focused on breaking down word problems, so my job was not teaching what a system of equations is or how to solve it but teaching students metacognitive strategies that will help them decode a complex word problem. The lesson objective was students will be able to break down a word problem into manageable pieces so they can understand what the word problem is asking and set up the corresponding system of equations. Due to technical difficulties and limitations with the video conferencing platform we were using, the lesson was cut short and full of unexpected hiccups. However, I still managed to stay calm and coped with the difficulties. Of course, there were many aspects of the lesson that I could improve on, but overall I thought it was an acceptable first lesson and I ended it feeling adequate, not defeated or frustrated.

To start off with the good things, I was able to adapt to the technical difficulties and limitations and start teaching despite not having access to the slides or the whiteboard as well as not being able to see the students. I think it was because I was familiar with and confident in my lesson plan and the contents that I could still teach even with very limited access to the materials that I had prepared. Because I hadn't known the students prior to the lesson, I felt unsure about whether the lesson will be too easy or too difficult for them. After the first encounter, I got to know their English language proficiency as well as level of math abilities a little better and now I believe my lesson plan is challenging but not too difficult and the sequence of activities can provide adequate scaffolding. I think my effort to get to know the students was a strength of the lesson. Even with just a brief introduction, I got a glimpse of the students' linguistic and cultural backgrounds, as all of the students talked about the languages that they can speak as the

interesting fact about themselves. Knowing students' rich backgrounds with different languages helped me plan for the next lesson, in which I will ask students to engage in a quick translation activity as an analogy for translating words from a word problem into mathematical representations.

Now onto the challenges and things I need to improve on. One major challenge, aside from technology, was silence from the students, and I really need to work on how to respond to the silence. I knew silence isn't always a bad thing: silence could mean students are thinking hard and teachers should learn to deal with the awkward but actually productive silence. On the other hand, silence could also mean confusion or lack of understanding. I actually missed a verbal cue from a student who explicitly told me the reason why they were silent was because they did not understand. To overcome this challenge, I plan to ask the students to turn on their cameras so I can have access to nonverbal cues that signal whether they are thinking or confused. I will also say things like "if you are still thinking about the question that's totally fine, take your time, but if you are confused and need help with this question I'm here to help you!" to encourage them to voice their concerns. I will also start volunteering the quieter students to make sure they also get a chance to speak, rather than only interacting with those students who are more willing to talk.

Another challenge I faced was not being able to keep students' attention on the word problem itself. Students were eager to give me an equation or numerical value when the focus of the lesson should be on deciphering the words and phrases that make up a word problem. I tried to steer the focus of the discussion back to the words by asking students to define key words from the word problem, but I think it is necessary to make it clear to them that the equations are not the focus of the lesson. To shift students' attention back to the textual information, I could

change the activity instruction from setting up a system of equations to explaining the meaning of the word problem. Hopefully, students will not focus too much on equations and numerical values since I'm not asking for them. Another way to do it could be taking out the numbers from the word problem. For example, instead of saying "the dog is 20kg heavier than the cat," the problem will say "the dog is  $x$  kg heavier than the cat," and hopefully students will focus on the word "heavier" instead.

Overall, my first online lesson went better than I expected despite the problems caused by technology. In my next lesson, I will focus on refining my teacher talk so I can encourage students to talk more but also be mindful of their need to stay silent in order to think. I will also try to write more clear activity instructions so students know what the expectations are.