

Capstone EFL Portfolio

Ying Tang

Peabody College, Vanderbilt University

March 1, 2013

Abstract

This portfolio showcases my comprehensive understanding of how to teach English as a Foreign Language (EFL) internationally. As my future teaching will be mainly practiced in China, I reflect upon many accommodations concerning teaching Chinese English language learners (ELLs).

The portfolio is made up of three parts. The **first part** is my statement of teaching philosophy. In this part, I thoroughly review the relevant language acquisition theories, especially Lev Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, and develop my coherent professional interpretation about teach English as a foreign language practically in China. The **second part** is to demonstrate my understanding towards the TESOL standards supported by artifacts I've created for my graduate study at Peabody College. Each domain is illustrated by one or two artifacts, such as lesson plans, fieldtrip reflections, and presentation slides. I further describe the relevance of each artifact to the designated domain, focusing on the four major areas—learners and learning, learning environment, curriculum and assessment. In the **third part**, I critically consider my future teaching, exploring how to best bridge theories and practice, make adaptations for Chinese learners, and continue my professional development as a competent EFL teacher.

Table of Contents

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Statement of Teaching Philosophy | 4 |
| TESOL Standards for EFL Teachers of Adults..... | 16 |
| Domain: Planning | 16 |
| Artifact A: News Reading Lesson Plan | |
| Domain: Instructing | 20 |
| Artifact B: Unit of Three Genre Lesson Plans | |
| Domain: Assessing | 23 |
| Artifact C: Assessment Analysis Project | |
| Artifact D: Assessment Mid-term | |
| Domain: Identity and Context | 27 |
| Artifact E: Fieldtrip Experiences | |
| Domain: Language proficiency | 30 |
| Domain: Learning | 32 |
| Artifact F: Case Study for Linguistics | |
| Artifact G: Reflective Teaching Journals | |
| Domain: Content..... | 35 |
| Artifact H: Immigrant Lesson Plan | |
| Domain: Commitment and Professionalism..... | 37 |
| Artifact I: Scoop it! E-magazine | |
| Artifact J: Presentation at 2012 Southeast TESOL Conference | |
| Reflection..... | 42 |

Statement of Teaching Philosophy

"If we are to achieve a richer culture, rich in contrasting values, we must recognize the whole gamut of human potentialities, and so we weave a less arbitrary social fabric, one in which each diverse human gift will find a fitting place"

(Mead, 1963)

I believe that teaching, especially foreign language teaching, is all about empowerment. Every student, regardless of his/her social economical background, should be given equal opportunities to showcase their strengths and explore their potentials. They should not be undervalued by being different; instead, we teachers should embrace and appreciate the numerous resources such diversity brings to the classroom. By implementing this idea into practice, as a prospective EFL teacher in China, I set my overarching goal as empowering my students with not only the knowledge of the most widely used language—English, but also the confidence to communicate with the outside world in English. They will be ready to start the lifelong process of developing their individual identities as successful second language users, from this foreign language learning experience.

Lev Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory

Reflecting upon all the theories on foreign language study I've learned in the past two years, I find Lev Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory (SCT; as cited in Johnson, 2004) about language acquisition is the most fundamental one that has initially prepared me both theoretically and pedagogically, and continue to steer my interpretation towards what effective teaching is.

Studying the SCT is a turning point in my understanding of how to really help my Chinese students achieve higher English proficiency. The traditional English teaching pedagogy in China is highly behaviorism-based; people believe that language learning occurs through trial and error with the stimulus-response pattern (Skinner, 1938). Thus so, grammatical drills and memorization of structures are the two main components of English instruction in Chinese classrooms (Peng, 2007). Although such pedagogy has been dominant for years, it doesn't prove to meet the current global challenges adequately, considering the appearance of "mute" English learners (Liu, 2006). Those students who can hardly produce meaningful sentences to fulfill daily communicative purposes after years of learning, while the efficiency of communication is attached more and more significance nowadays. In this sense, Vygotsky's theory resonates with me well in terms of its focus on interaction and collaboration in the language learning process. It reminds me of that language learning is for language use (Scott, 2010). The destination is learners can really use the language one day in meaningful social events, and in turn, they can also attain more language skills in the communicative interactions than simply sounding out grammatical structures in the classroom.

Originally, the SCT was only discussed in the realm of children's first language acquisition, but it was later applied to L2 development and becomes more and more influential nowadays. Vygotsky (as cited in Johnson, 2004) believes that language is the mediator between the interpersonal communication and the intrapersonal psychology, constantly facilitating the meaningful negotiation between human brains and the outside world. In other words, children's full linguistic and cognitive development not happens naturally in their brains. They actively conduct the interpersonal interaction with the world, and then internalize the external information to support their intrapersonal psychological development (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006).

Personally speaking, two focal points in SCT have most profoundly inspired my teaching philosophy. One is the role of meaningful interaction in successfully developing second language, and the other is the construction of Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)—the span between a learner’s actual level and potential level where Vygotsky (as cited in Johnson, 2004) believes the real learning happens. Proceeding from these two points, I look forward to creating an as-authentic communicative classroom where students will be exposed to various authentic materials and assigned with meaningful tasks (Brandl, 2007). I will look into students’ sociocultural heritage (Gregory & William, 2000), and purposefully incorporate the unique resources they bring to the classroom, in accordance with the purport of culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1992). I will also carefully assess my students, not only about their weaknesses, but more about their strengths, on which I could actively co-construct the ZPD with my students, provide effective scaffolding, and realize a more targeted and meaningful instruction.

Understanding Students and Communities

Many countries around the world, including America, are experiencing an unprecedented surge in the number of English Language Learners (Blumenthal, 2002; Rumbaut & Portes, 2001; Skinner, Wight, Aratani, Cooper, & Thampi, 2010). For countries like China, even though it is comparatively homogeneous in ideology and ethnic background, it is still facing the problem that students are from different social and economic backgrounds. Therefore, understanding students and their communities is the preliminary step for ELL teachers in both America and China before conducting efficient instruction.

First, I will make the cultural disparity an explicit part in my curriculum (Nieto, 2000; Ogbu & Simons, 1998), letting CLD students know that being different is no guilt. As Corson (2001) and Gutiérrez (1995) indicate, school is a microcosm of society—the mainstream cultural practices are unintentionally valued, while the other languages and cultures are underestimated. As an EFL teacher, I will strive to realize the unnoticed tie between language and social powers (Pennycook, 2001), making efforts to re-empower the marginalized group by intentionally incorporate their cultures into instruction, and affirmatively teach them within a multi-cultural framework (Nieto & Bode, 2011). Also, I will hold the same expectation for ELLs and mainstream students (Nieto, 2000; Samway & McKeon, 2007). This attitude of fairness will be naturally reflected in my teaching practice and finally interpreted by students that they are not intellectually inferior, and they can also be successful learners.

Apart from students' cultural heritage, I will also involve parents and communities as a vital part of my instruction. Students took their first lessons in the communities they grew up, and these lessons have shaped the way how they receive, process and produce information in every facet during learning. Therefore, in order to improve my instructional proficiency, I will actively bridge students' "funds of knowledge" (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992)—the sociocultural values and practices shared by community members, with classroom curriculum content. As García (2005) noted, learning are mostly enhanced when it is socioculturally, linguistically and cognitively connected. Specifically speaking, I will often arrange activities to collaborate with parents and communities, including parent meetings, home interviews, and lead fieldtrips to accumulate multi-cultural community literacies (Jiménez, Smith, & Teague, 2009). I believe for well-prepared teachers, diversity is more a resource than a problem, as long as

teachers can positively recognize the diversity directly, and build our instructional pedagogy upon it.

Instructional Practices

I will base my discussion of instructional practices on the theoretical understanding of communicative language teaching (Brandl, 2007), and approach it from two perspectives: seeking common understanding, and implementing meaningful instructions

1. Seeking common understanding:

According to Gillette's study (as cited in Johnson, 2004), learning will be more effective if students regard it as a positive factor of personal growth. Stephen Krashen's (1981) also indicated that acquisition occurs when affective conditions are optimal, i.e., low anxiety and stress, and high motivation and confidence. Therefore, I will make sure that students are given explicit explanations about what are valued in my EFL classroom. I believe such common understanding is the pre-condition for active and vigorous learning atmosphere.

First, I will acknowledge the role of Chinese in the English class. To be a proficient language user means to realize effective information exchange in daily activities and real communication, in which meaning always takes priority over form (Brandl, 2008). Therefore, I will incorporate Chinese as needed in my instruction, especially with novice learners, such as explaining abstract concepts, or providing directions of tasks. I believe meaningful instruction is essential to create a supportive language classroom, and sometimes L1 is essential to realize fully comprehensible input (Coelho, 1994; Krashen, 1981).

Second, I will not judge my students simply by their accuracy of using English. As Scott (2011) stated, grammar is not the end of learning English, but only the carrier of information in

daily conversations. Making mistakes is no guilt—it is so natural for every foreign language learners, especially for beginners. My hope is that in the end my students view language learning as an aspiring endeavor, rather than a frustrating mission to complete. To learn grammar, I am for an inductive acquisition from semantic structures, like meaningful phrases or sentences from authentic texts, so that students can see how it really operates and know how to use it in real communicational events (Lightbown & Spada, 2006). Remembering every dry paradigm is absolutely not my emphasis.

2. Implementing meaningful instruction:

Meaningful instruction is based on well-chosen materials. I will carefully and purposefully choose materials, making sure they are culturally relevant, authentic, and multi-modal. These three criteria are of equal importance for ELLs to learn the language. First of all, the study of Feger (2006) shows culturally relevant materials will help students increase their engagement in reading and promote the comprehension at the same time. When students are reading, they are actively in search of their prior existing knowledge and trying to find connections to fit their understanding into the existing intellectual “files”, which is systematically explained in the schema theory (Anderson & Pearson, 1984). Second, authentic materials produced and consumed by native English speakers will make sure that students are learning the real-in-use language, rather than the language that has been obsoleted in the outdated contexts. Third, multi-modality is an incentive for students to develop multimediating competences required by this new era (Alvermann, Hinchman, Moore, Phelps, & Waff, 2006), and can also optimistically engage the underachieving students in literacy development (Beers, Probst, & Rief, 2007).

For the instructional model, I will mainly draw ideas from the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol model (the SIOP model; Echevarría, Short, & Vogt, 2012), which aims to develop ELLs' content and language learning simultaneously. According to the principles of SIOP, I will prepare my ELLs with necessary academic language skills for a specific lesson first, and proceed to the content learning, i.e., language arts, with ample scaffoldings and enrichment activities. I will build on students' background knowledge to activate their brain, involve them into my instruction, and provide more comprehensible input and meaningful interactions. In this way, I hope my ELLs will be able to develop their cognitive and linguistic abilities at same time, just like the mainstream students.

Besides, English has four core skills to develop, namely listening, speaking, reading and writing. As language itself is a unitary unit as a tool for communication, I believe it will be beneficial to integrate the four skills in everyday English class as naturally as possible (Brandl, 2007). But sometimes, the conditions do require special trainings on some aspects over others. For example, most Chinese students are good at writing, yet experiencing challenges in their oral proficiency, because of the linguistic differences between Chinese and English, and the insufficient English exposure in a Chinese context. When providing special help with one particular aspect, I will carefully design my classes with consideration of the focuses of different skills. Typically, writing is to see how cohesively and adequately students can express their ideas, not to overly emphasize the mastery of grammar and vocabulary; listening is to check the global comprehension towards the materials, as we do in daily communication; speaking is to prepare students to construct dialogues effectively and efficiently, rather than to correct the inaccurate utterances; reading is to provoke critical thinking, and to actively interpret the texts as from various perspectives, rather than to practice speaking—we don't need reading aloud in reading!

(Scott, 2012) These are my guiding principles to really help students with targeted skills, not to confound them.

Conclusion

It is a great opportunity to review my teaching philosophy and sort the techniques I've learned at Peabody College systematically. Even though I will work as an EFL teacher in China in the future, those theories and techniques will still guide my instruction in the long run. For me, teaching English is no longer merely about lecturing and drilling, but also about creating opportunities for my students to fully express their ideas and develop their potentials, regardless of their socioeconomically diverse background. Students' family and community knowledge is not only something I will make full use of in the classroom, but also something I can constantly learn from, defining me as a responsive teacher to support every learner's success.

Another important focus of my career is to help my students build connections with the world through the lens of English. The 21st-century's globalized world brings opportunities and challenges at the same time. Students must have the ability to understand other cultures and people, and know how to communicate with them proficiently. Learning English is a dynamic and open process, and the language itself develops simultaneously with the sociocultural facts. Therefore, incorporating cultures as a base of language is another key point in my instruction. As a language teacher, I hope my students can break stereotypes, tolerate and respect differences, embrace the changes, and communicate actively beyond their comfort zone. As pointed out in the ACTFL Standards (1996), especially the "communities" goal, I hope learning English in my classroom becomes a starting point, from which my students can perform their solid roles in multiple communities comfortably, confidently and competently throughout their lives.

References

- Alvermann, D, Hinchman, K. A., Moore, D. W., Phelps, S. F., & Waff, D. R. (Eds.). (2006). *Reconceptualizing the literacies in adolescent's lives* (2nd ed.). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Language. (1996). National standards for foreign language education. [Webpage]. Retrieved from <http://www.actfl.org/advocacy/discover-languages/advocacy/discover-languages/advocacy/discover-languages/resources-1?pageid=3392>
- Anderson, R. C., & Pearson, P. D. (1984). A schema-theoretic view of basic processes in reading comprehension. In P. D. Pearson (Ed.), *Handbook of Reading Research* (pp. 255-291). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Beers, K., Probst, R.E., & Rief, L. (2007). *Adolescent literacy: turning promise into practice*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Blumenthal, A. (2002). English as a second language at the community college: An exploration of context and concerns. *New Directions for Community Colleges*, 117, 45-53.
- Brandl, K. (2008). *Communicative language teaching in action: putting principles to work*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Coelho, E. (1994). Social integration of immigrant and refugee children. In F. Genesee (Ed.), *Educating second language children: The whole child, the whole curriculum, the whole community* (pp. 301-327). Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Corson, D. (2001). *Language diversity and education* (pp. 16-35). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Echevarr á, J., Vogt, M. E., & Short, D. J. (2004). *Making content comprehensible for English language learners: The SIOP model*. (4th edition). Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

- Feger, M. V. (2006). "I want to read": How culturally relevant texts increase student engagement in reading. *Multicultural Education*, 13(3), 18-19.
- García, E. E. (2005). *Teaching and learning in two languages*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Gay, G. (2002). Preparing for culturally responsive teaching. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 53(2), 106-116.
- Gregory, E., & Williams, A. (2000). *City literacies: learning to read across generations and cultures*. New York: Routledge.
- Gutiérrez, K., Larson, J. & Kreuter, B. (1995). Cultural tensions in the scripted classroom: The value of the subjugated perspective. *Urban Education*, 29(4), 410-442.
- Jiménez, R., Smith, P., & Teague, B. (2009). Transnational and community literacies for teachers. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, 53(1), 16-26.
- Johnson, M. (2004). *A philosophy of second language acquisition*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Krashen, S.D. (1982) *Principles and practice in second language acquisition*. Oxford, England: Pergamon Press.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (1992). Reading between the lines and beyond the pages: A culturally relevant approach to literacy teaching. *Theory Into Practice*, 31(4), 312-320.
- Lantolf, J. P., & Thorne, S. L. (2006). *Sociocultural theory and the genesis of second language development*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.
- Lightbown, P.M., & Spada, N. (2006). *How languages are learned* (3rd ed.). Oxford, England : Oxford University Press.

- Liu, D. (2006). On mute English. *Journal of Guizhou University for Ethnic Minorities (Philosophy and Social Sciences)*, 5, 3-8.
- Mead, M. (1963). *Sex and temperament in three different societies*. New York, NY: HarperCollins.
- Moll, L., Amanti, C., Neff, D., & Gonzalez, N. (1992). Funds of knowledge for teaching: Using a qualitative approach to connect homes and classrooms. *Theory Into Practice*, 31(2), pp. 132-141.
- Nieto, S. (2000). *Affirming Diversity* (3rd ed.). New York, NY: Longman.
- Nieto, S. & Bode, P. (2011). *Affirming diversity: the sociopolitical context of multicultural education* (6th edition). Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- Ogbu, J., & Simons, H. (1998). Voluntary and involuntary minorities: A cultural-ecological theory of school performance with some implications for education. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, 29(2), 155-188.
- Peng, J. (2007). Willingness to communicate in the Chinese EFL classroom: a cultural perspective. In Liu, J. (Ed.), *English Language Teaching in China: New Approaches, Perspectives, and Standards* (pp. 250-269). New York, NY: Continuum International Publishing Group.
- Pennycook, A. (2001). *Critical applied linguistics: A critical introduction*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Portes, A., & Rumbaut, R. G. (2005). Introduction: the second generation and the children of immigrants longitudinal study. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 28(6), 983-999.
- Samway, K. D., & McKeon, D. (2007). *Myths and realities*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Scott, V. M. (2010) *Double talk: deconstructing monolingualism in classroom second language learning*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall

Scott, V. M. (2012) Listening, speaking, reading and writing. [PowerPoint Slids]. Retrieved from Vanderbilt University OAK site.

Skinner, B. F. (1938). *The Behavior of organisms: an experimental analysis*. Oxford, England: Appleton-Century.

Skinner, C., Wight, V., Aratani, Y., Cooper, J., & Thampi, K. (2010, June). English language proficiency, family economic security and child development. *National Center for Children in Poverty*. Retrieved from http://www.nccp.org/publications/pdf/text_948.pdf

TESOL Standards for EFL Teachers of Adults

The TESOL standards have eight domains concerning teaching English to adult learners. They are: planning, assessing, identity and context, language proficiency, learning, content, commitment and professionalism. In the following part, I will demonstrate my professional knowledge as an EFL teacher by providing one or two artifacts from my graduate work to explain each domain. I will start with a brief description of each artifact, followed by substantive analysis about why this artifact is directly relevant to this domain, and how it supports my professional knowledge about the four focuses of the domain and standards, i.e., 1) learners and learning, 2) the learning environment, 3) curriculum and 4) assessment.

Domain: Planning

The artifact I choose to illustrate this domain is **a news reading lesson plan** designed for Chinese college juniors (see Artifact A). Language teaching and learning is an interactive process. Students' prior educational experience, learning abilities and sociocultural background play are factors ELL teachers cannot neglect when planning our instruction. Therefore, a competent EFL teacher should be able to fully realize the relationship between teacher and students, comprehensively take all the possible influential factors into consideration, and get ready to modify the plan in order to promote students' learning to the largest degree. By looking at this news reading lesson plan, I will explain how it shows my competence of successful lesson planning.

1) Learners and learning

The learners are all native Chinese college juniors who have received the complete prior education in China, and have comparatively high L1 literacy levels. Therefore, they need

materials that can promote their language proficiency, yet still scaffolds their cognitive development. By taking into consideration of both learners and their learning requirements, I planned this news reading lesson. I will assign the students with two pieces of news with the same central ideas, but from two perspectives: a leading Chinese newspaper (China Daily) and an influential American online media (CNN). In reading and discussion, my students will be working on examining how two different news media of the two countries deliver the same message—What are the differences in their wording and attitudes? What are the reasons for these differences?

I think this lesson provides students with a special experience of learning. As college students, they are not only in need of language instruction, but also the improvement on their critical thinking ability (Handsfield, Dean, & Cielocha, 2009), in order to deal with the explosion of information nowadays. This lesson plan aims to engage the students in the meaningful tasks of penetrating the cover to examine the essence, and guide them to look at the world through different lens critically.

2) The learning environment

In this class, students will have different experiences of learning in a supportive and interactive learning environment. According to Vygotsky's sociocultural theory (as cited in Johnson, 2004), it is essential to develop students' linguistic and cognitive proficiency through effective communication (Brandl, 2007; Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). Therefore, my students will be first with a partner making predictions, and then read the assigned part of the story by themselves before moving into a group as an expert of his/her part of reading (i.e., Jigsaw Reading strategies), followed by whole-class discussions over essential topics. I also intentionally incorporate interactive Web 2.0 tool (Google Docs) in my planning to help my students enjoy

efficient informational exchange and cooperation (Gonzalez & St. Louis, 2008). They will be able to express themselves anonymously and read others' comment instantly in a safe and free learning environment created with the help of technology.

3) Curriculum

This lesson plan is inspired by the requirements of the U.S. National Standards for Foreign Language Education (ACTFL, 1996). Students are able to understand the relationship between language and culture, acquire information of different cultures by comparison and contrast, and recognize the distinctive viewpoints through the lens of language and cultures. With this objective in mind, I take the backward design approach (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005) to start and cultivate my whole planning.

Students' prior knowledge will be activated in the warming up discussions. By predicting the content of the news before reading, they will be engaged in cognitive reading strategies, which will positively improve the reading comprehension levels. The Jigsaw reading activity is an implementation of differentiated instruction, in which students at various literacy levels could all be encouraged to shoulder the responsibilities of "experts", and make contributions to the group readings. Peer scaffolding and collaborative learning are also prove to be effective pedagogical practice in Vygotsky's theory (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). Vocabulary will be taught in an explicit way and supported with authentic text, as being conscious is the key difference from adult foreign language learning and children's second language acquisition (Scott, 2010).

Besides, this lesson will integrate the four core skills of English: listening, reading, speaking and writing. Students will watch one piece of the news, and read another one from the paper, discuss the content in groups, and write down a short summative paragraph and their own

opinions. Such a unitary integration will help students improve English proficiency as a whole in a natural and meaningful way.

4) Assessment

This particular lesson is characterized by a large amount of formative assessment. The students will gradually demonstrate their understanding towards the materials in group discussions and use the language to realize active participation. For Chinese ESL teachers, such discussions also give us the opportunity to see how well the students can apply their language abilities into higher-order thinking and also create effective exchange of information.

For the summative assessment, I ask my students to continue extensive exploration for additional information, and come up with a comprehensive presentation with supportive materials and personal interpretation. This is an open-ended assignment, which requires students to work individually to find necessary information, organize it around a central topic and also be able to demonstrate it in a class presentation. It also serves as a conclusive indicator for me to see how well students have understood the content and applied their knowledge.

Domain: Instructing

I designed a **unit of reading scaffolding lesson plans** (see Artifact B) with three sequential lessons, aiming to help my students improve literacy skills, especially critical digital literacy under the increasing influence of new media in this generation. This set of lessons is unified around a common topic “work ethics”, but built up with materials from three different genres, such as photos, songs/lyrics, and children’s literature (a picture book). Although this set of class is originally designed for 8th graders, it still demonstrates the major techniques to teach students in all age groups, such as building on prior knowledge, choosing multi-modal materials, providing comprehensible input, and facilitating interactions and communications. With sufficient understanding of my students, this unit of lesson plans can demonstrate my ability of structuring effective instruction in a supportive environment.

1) Learners and learning

The learners are 8th graders, who are the digital natives (Brown & Czeniewicz, 2010), immersed with new media cultures since they were born. The majority of students now, both kids and adults, spend considerable time and energy on social media websites, video games, or websites surfing. Therefore, what they need is no longer restrained in printed form; multi-modal literacy is exerting more and more influence on students’ learning process. As a competent EFL teacher, I think it is essential to recognize such characteristics of learners in the 21st century, and help students find their right position in this new culture, and purposefully develop their new media literacy levels. In this unit of lesson plan, through exposure to different materials (photos, lyrics and literature texts), group discussions and critical analysis, students will develop their language abilities (learning new words, understanding lyrics and comparing different genres), as

well as find a way to think critically towards the non-traditional curriculum materials, and become competent members of multi-modal literacy communities.

2) The learning environment

Because of the introduction of new media, the traditional lines-and-rows learning environment is not beneficial for effective instructing. The class atmosphere for this lesson unit will be relaxing and diverse, quite the opposite of traditional Chinese classrooms. Students will sit in tables to facilitate discussion and peer support, and they are also allowed to leave their seats, in order to get access to more resources. Because of the colorfulness of the materials used in the lessons, including videos, pictures, songs, and printed materials, I hope my students will be cheerful about learning this set of lessons. Moreover, I will expanded my classroom to the virtual communities on the Internet, where students could instantly store their thoughts, share ideas on our class blog, and also finish some of the homework online, using Web 2.0 websites like Pinterest.

3) Curriculum

This set of lessons has reminded both teachers and students that this information world now is full of ready-to-use English materials. Not only must we teach students how to improve digital literacy abilities, also students really love the multi-modal materials over the traditional print books. With the focus of teaching reading, the lesson plans also fit into the EFL curriculum with regards to the overall improvements of analyzing skills. Students will practice interpreting the insinuating meaning in pictures. Their conjecture will be either refuted or confirmed by moving on to read the text. In the second lesson with lyrics learning, students' will improve their word consciousness (Diza-Rico & Weed, 2006) by listening to the rhyming sentences, and also

develop the skill of reading and analyzing poems. Besides, they'll learn how to improve comprehension by finishing graphic organizers (Echevarría, Vogt, & Short, 2004).

4) Assessment

The final assessment will be an integrated essay about students' understanding towards working ethics. This is an opportunity for me to see where they are in content learning, and also evaluate their writing ability with the target language.

Since this is a unit of lessons, formative assessment is all along my instruction, and the result of every tiny assessment will probably inform my instruction of next class. My purpose is making sure that every student will have their unique understanding of our core topic.

Particularly, I will observe students' participation and attitude in-class discussions, examine their personal Pinterest picture critiques and blog posts, and find evidence from other classroom tasks, such as the story pyramid and the TPCASTT sheet. I will also assess students' prior knowledge every time I introduce new materials to them, because a lot of authentic English resources are highly context-involved.

Domain: Assessing

I have chosen two artifacts to demonstrate my understanding of effective assessment and responsive instruction: **the ongoing analysis project** (see Artifact C) and **the mid-term** (see Artifact D) for the course of Assessment for English Language Learners. In the analysis project, I assessed the students' English proficiency with an observational protocol and a standardized test, and examined the accountability of the ESL program. Based on the evaluation, I will also provide assessment and instruction suggestions for her future learning. In the finished mid-term questions, my professionalism in assessment is improved by looking into the psychometric properties (i.e., validity and reliability) of the Bilingual Verbal Ability Tests (BVAT), as well as applying my assessment knowledge into a case analysis.

1) Learners and learning

As an EFL teacher, I truly understand what important roles students' prior educational history and background knowledge are playing in their learning. Therefore, in the analysis project (see Artifact C), I first observed the students for two classes, evaluating her linguistic and communicative performances in a natural class setting. Then I asked her to fill out a home language survey, so that I can know preliminarily her linguistic abilities. Furthermore, I chatted with her in a relaxing environment to have deeper understanding of her educational history, her personality, her social life in Nashville and the reason why she came to America. Such information will be highly important when I interpret her language assessment results and design her individualized instructional plan.

Apart from the student's prior knowledge, I think the learning expectations/goals are also unavoidable in both assessment and instruction. The student is now learning English in the General English for Employees and Spouses program (GEES) at the Vanderbilt English

Language Center (ELC). Almost all the students in the program are housewives who are taking care of their families while their husbands are working at Vanderbilt University. Therefore, these students have specific needs in English learning. They don't want to pursue any academic goals; instead, they are only in need of communicational language skills, especially practical oral skills to perform effectively in daily conversations.

2) The learning environment

The GEES class has only 12 students, which is really small-sized compared with the large EFL classrooms in China. Small-sized class is very effective and convenient to arrange small group discussions and pair assignments. The GEES instructor has designed ample communicative activities so that students can have opportunities to speak English. He also tailored the content in the textbook so that it is more relevant to students' needs. One drawback I noticed is that students English proficiency levels are too diverse—from beginner to intermediate high, which is not beneficial for effective scaffolding. Also the GEES only provided a two-hour session every week, which is far less from the sufficient instructional time to learn a foreign language, because most of the students said they only spoke English in the classroom.

3) Curriculum

Being familiar with curriculum design is vital to conduct meaningful assessment. If the assessment is not included as a part of the whole curriculum, it will not effectively reflect the program efficiency and inform instructional choices. The GEES program administered a group oral English test with the SOLOM protocol at the beginning, and the instructors at ELC will arrange another SOLOM when the program comes to end. The first SOLOM test successfully helped the instructor know more about his students, and adapt his instructional methods accordingly. The last assessment will be not only the indicator of the program accountability, but

also for the students to know more about their English proficiency and continue future learning. This is a good example of integrating assessment into curriculum decisions. Besides, in the second question of assessment mid-term (see Artifact D), according to the assessment results, the student obviously needs more support in academic language skills, like vocabulary, literacy genre knowledge and paragraph transitions. If the teacher could recognize the student's specific needs and intentionally provide targeted instruction, this assessment will play a substantial role to help this particular learner.

4) Assessment

When choosing assessment, the decision makers should carefully look through various assessment tools in order to find the best, or the most suitable one. One criterion to choose a good standardized test is to analyze its psychometric properties (i.e., validity and reliability). In Artifact C and Artifact D, I respectively looked at the validity and reliability of the Michigan English Test (MET) and the Bilingual Verbal Ability Tests (BVAT). Such practices enable me to have a more thorough and comprehensive understanding about how assessment tools are developed and inspected.

As to interpreting assessment, teachers should not rely on the result of one single assessment, especially the result of standardized test. Students usually experience high affective filters in standardized tests (Herrera, Murry, & Cabral, 2007), which means the standardized test will not be always reliable to indicate students' real language abilities. Therefore, we need multiple assessment tools to get the as accurate conclusion. In artifact C, I adopted the home language survey, the SOLOM, the Expressive Communication Rubric as well as the Michigan English Test to comprehensibly assess the student's English proficiency levels. In the case analysis part of artifact D, I used the Level of Acculturation Observation Rubric, the

BICS/CALP checklist, the SOLOM protocol, and the Characteristics of English Language Proficiency Development developed by Dr. Pray at Peabody (unpublished). By comparing all the results, I am more confident to base my instructional decisions onto the final conclusions.

Domain: Identity and Context

I choose my reflections on **a set of fieldtrip experiences** (see Artifact E) to Nashville State Community College (NSCC) and local Middle East communities. This artifact comes with written reflection, PowerPoint slides, pictures and audio records. By elaborating on the fieldtrip experiences, I want to prove my understanding of how to recognize students' cultures and identities, bridge their community life into school experience, and implement a truly effective education for everyone. In this set of field trips, we interviewed the coordinator of the ESL program at NSCC, looked through the history of bilingual education in a telephone seminar, observed a real ESL class and went on a fieldtrip to collect cross-cultural community literacies.

1) Learners and learning

Unlike mainstream native students, ELLs usually need additional help concerning their acculturation process and language acquisition. On my field trip to interview the ESL program coordinator at Nashville State Community College (NSCC), I was impressed by the diversity of students' cultures—NSCC has students from 61 different countries. In order to accommodate students' different needs, NSCC offers flexible class schedules, including daytime classes, evening classes, and Saturday classes, because students have jobs or families to take care of. In the second fieldtrip, we explored the history of bilingual education. Thanks to this experience, I knew more about students' immigration stories, as well as the pressure and struggle they were experiencing in schools. ELLs also deserve quality education, and they could definitely benefit from teachers' positive attitude and mutual respect.

What I have also learned from the field trip to NSCC is that for immigrant students, they have more motivation to learn English well. Teachers do not need to spend too much time and energy to mediate the contradictions between cultures. As long as they are given enough respect

and understand they have a common goal—to have a better life, students from different sociocultural backgrounds will actively solve conflicts, and minimize the differences as they are actually now living in the same country.

2) The learning environment

The affective filter is an essential factor to impact ELLs learning. Therefore, learning in a satisfactory, relaxing and supportive environment will be a great stimulus. At NSCC, the classroom is decorated with world maps, that every one of the students could be able to find his/her hometown. There are no specifically culturally-relevant decorations, so no one will feel being marginalized. Such recognition from others and the realization of self-identity will help reduce the anxiety, nervousness or depress, and thus so promote the learning efficiency.

Students were grouped together for class activities, regardless of their skin colors, ethnic groups or nationalities. They cooperated with group members and encouraged each other. I also noticed the teacher paid special attention to tailor her talking speed and articulation, making sure ELLs would fully understand the lesson. These are all beneficial measures to build a pleasant and effective learning environment.

3) Curriculum

Students' cultural heritage is a priceless resource to develop culturally responsive curriculum and involve all the students into active learning. On the fourth fieldtrip, we collected community literacy practices (Jiménez, Smith, & Teague, 2009) in a local Middle East community. It was fascinating that we saw a lot of multi lingual literacy practices, which reminded me the “funds of knowledge” those immigrant students bring to the classroom (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992). Such invaluable asset could be perfect resource for ELLs' curriculum design. By asking questions like who do these words aim for, how and why are these

works created like this, and how could we adapt these literacy practices and make them ready-to-use classroom materials, we are be able to approach to students' communities and take advantages of their heritage resource to promote their learning.

4) Assessment

Assessment for ELLs has a lot of differences from that for mainstream students. As Herrera, Murry and Cabral (2007) put, we must take into consideration students' sociocultural, education and language history when assessing them. Never make assumptions for a certain group before we really look into their cultures and values. When there are misunderstandings or confusions, never rush into conclusions, but try to be tolerant and flexible, and find the reasons and solutions afterwards.

As to the standardized test, the key point to consider is to exclude the culturally biased items from the assessment, so that ELLs from various sociocultural backgrounds will be treated equally as other mainstream students. Even though teachers are not the test designers, I can at least make sure that I will not assign my students with culturally-biased tasks.

Domain: Language proficiency

As an EFL teacher in China, where English is not the dominant language, the proficiency of English demonstrate special importance, because a large part of students' communication in English will be with their English teacher. Therefore, a qualified EFL teacher must master proficient academic language, and be able to function fluently in daily communications. Only in this way, can we be reliable and helpful guides for our students in their journey of language learning.

Before coming to Vanderbilt as a graduate student, I was majoring in English language and literature. I've read a lot of classic works, finished many translations projects and accomplished a large amount of academic writings. During the year of 2008, as a volunteer for the Beijing Olympic Games, I provided English language service to travelers, athletes and their coaches, as well as Olympic officials. It enabled me to test my English in authentic contexts, and further improved my language use naturally. And in my senior year of undergraduate, I worked in a well-known intensive English training institute, and practiced my English teaching language and techniques. These experiences help me build a solid foundation for my academic literacy skills and also communicative abilities.

The experience at Vanderbilt gives me the chance to experience the authentic academic environment. I improved, and still improving my English ability, especially the academic language ability through a large amount of academic readings, journals, oral presentations, classroom discussions, and writing projects. I learned a lot from my professors and American classmates, in terms of professional knowledge, teaching languages in English, and efficient ways of communication. The teachers at English Language Center also helped me with the utilization of correct academic writing styles, the grammatical accuracy and oral presentation

skills. Thanks to all the help, I have received sound evaluation for every course I have taken in the past one and half years.

Besides developing my language skills as a student, I also practiced my teaching language in my extra-curriculum time, by actively participating in various tutoring programs, refugee support services, and teaching Chinese as a foreign language. The practicum at the Vanderbilt University English Language Center has tested my qualification as an ELL teacher. I've learned a lot from my mentor and supervisor, who are both experienced ESL teachers.

By far, I think I can confidently and effectively communicate in both conversational and academic English settings. I can read with efficiency and comprehension, and also fulfill the requirements of accomplished writing. I believe my English language proficiency is qualified enough to be a good EFL teacher in China.

Domain: Learning

In order to prove my professional knowledge about how adult learners acquire a second language and how to teach them most effectively. I choose my **case study project** (see Artifact F) for the linguistics course and **the reflective teaching journals** (see Artifact G) kept weekly for the Second Language Study course,

In the case study project, I collected linguistic data of an adult ELL, analyzed her English proficiency levels and provided an individualized English learning plan based on her personal situation. The reflective journals have recorded how my understanding about teaching adult learners has developed over the 12 weeks in a semester.

1) Learners and learning

In Artifact G, I kept notes on the focal points to teach adult learners. In fact, different from children, learners after puberty mostly relied on their conscious memorization and rational analysis when learning a foreign language, according to Ullman's memory model (as cited in Scott, 2010). That is to say, explicit instruction and meaningful contexts to facilitate understanding and memorization are essential parts in adult ESL/EFL programs.

Knowing learners' background is equally important, because adult learners usually have settled habits and learning styles. In Artifact F (the case study), I began the project with several interviews with my partner Jane. During our friendly talking, I gathered a lot of information concerning her personality, educational background, learning motivations, class schedules, as well as her current English levels. I also collected her written samples, and as expected, I noticed a huge gap between her oral and written English proficiency. All the information above is very important to help me design an individualized study plan for Jane.

2) The learning environment

I believe in a communicative learning environment, which originates from the theories of Vygotsky (as cited in Johnson, 2004) and Brandl (2008). Specifically in the case study, Jane is now living in Nashville, so she has a lot of opportunities to communicate with others in English within authentic contexts. I encouraged her to be exposed to more English input by watching TV, reading magazines, listening to the radios, to increase her language awareness. I also suggested her going out of her Arabic community and being an active participant in American society, such as doing grocery shopping by herself without the help of her husband, and making more friends with native English speakers, such as her teachers, her mailman, or community other workers.

I believe this individualized plan will work well for Jane, but it is not necessarily applicable in China, because Chinese students rarely use English in daily communication situations. I will definitely modify the plan for my Chinese adult learners, such as providing as many chances to be engaged in authentic communicative tasks in the classroom.

3) Curriculum

My interpretation about the highlights to develop a successful adult EFL curriculum is mostly decided when I was taking the second language study course. As stated in Artifact G, adult learners need to be involved in meaningful tasks with authentic materials. They must be given the chance to use language in communicative context, to experience how it negotiates and mediates meanings, even between people who speak different native languages. For adult learners, grammatical accuracy is as important as successful delivery of meanings (Scott, 2011). The form-focused instruction is not beneficial in adult language learning—it only kills interest.

The possible success of such curriculum is well supported in Jane's case (Artifact F). The discrepancy of her oral English level and written ability shows that she is in possess of

grammatical rules, but not able to produce meaningful sentences orally. Such unbalanced development between writing and speaking skills also happens to more and more Chinese English learners now. Therefore, we should abandon the overemphasis on grammatical structures, and pay attention to developing the real communicative skills.

4) Assessment

As I have decided the English language proficiency level of Jane is early stage 2, which is a beginner level, an accurate assessment is especially important for both teachers and students, because the modification of instructional plans heavily rely on the result of language assessment. Teachers should be well aware of the main characteristics of language production at each stage. There are many language proficiency frameworks, including the ACTFL proficiency guides, which teachers can make good use of. Teachers should also notice that students will demonstrate strengths and weaknesses in different areas, just like Jane and other Chinese students. The imbalance of development in different areas requires competent ESL/EFL teachers to demonstrate a professional mastery of knowledge about second language acquisition, assessing students carefully to make the most appropriate decisions. As students will gain progress every day, periodical assessment is necessary for active instruction delivery.

Domain: Content

Teachers need to purposefully design the content of lessons so that students are willing to learn. What's learned in classrooms must resonate with students' real life experiences, so that they can use it in genuine communicative situations.

I choose **a lesson plan related to immigrant identities and experiences** (see Artifacts H) to demonstrate my understanding about this domain. The lesson is based on the National Book Award winner—*Inside Out & Back Again*, which depicts a Vietnam girl's immigrating story from Saigon to Alabama. Students will provide rich opportunities to talk about their life experiences, and at the same time, improve their English skills.

1) Learners and learning

For ELLs, especially for the immigrant students, their identity will be well related with the girl in the book. Bringing an authentic immigrant story into classroom will be a great encouragement for ELLs, especially immigrant students. On one hand, they'll feel welcomed and respected; on the other hand, they can see that the curriculum is related to their life, and their voices can be expressed and heard in an academic setting. I think what has been talked about in this lesson will continue to be discussed in students' future communicative situations. It's something they have the background knowledge to connect with.

This inspiring story will not only support students' English learning, but also help them learn to respect other cultures and discuss their own process of collision and assimilation. I believe as long as students find such connection, they will be greatly motivated to learn.

2) The learning environment

In the lesson, students will either read individually or discuss in small groups. I will intentionally group ELLs and native English speakers together, in order to facilitate language

peer scaffolding and culturally mutual understanding. Besides, the learning environment for this particular lesson will be very culturally-responsive, because students from different cultural backgrounds will all get the opportunities to talk about their home cultures, and share their immigrant stories. I will provide language help as needed during the process. In this lesson, I strive to create a multi-cultural and supportive language learning environment.

3) Curriculum

The four skills of English are well integrated in this language arts lesson. Students will read part of the story silently, listen to their classmates in the discussion, orally present their individual thoughts, and write down their opinions about the theme of the book as take-home assignment. There will also be a specific section for words instruction, as vocabulary is an essential part to consider in an English language arts class. Second, students' background knowledge and cultural heritage are two main elements that run through the whole lesson. My intention to design this lesson is to provide students with something meaningful to learn during the class and continue to talk about after the class. That's why I choose the book and other supplementary materials to support my instruction. I hope such a culturally responsive teaching is a shortcut to let students communicate genuinely using their second language.

4) Assessment

The assessment will be mainly formative going through the instruction. I will observe closely students' discussion and emotions, and give them appropriate guidance to make sure the lesson is on the right track. This lesson will also be an assessment tool itself. I can evaluate my students' acculturation levels, and to see how well they can convey their ideas about life experiences in an academic context.

Domain: Commitment and Professionalism

In this final domain, teachers are taking the role of students. A good teacher should never stop learning, both from colleagues and students. In order to supplement the understanding of this domain, I choose **a snapshot of the e-magazine on “Scoop. it”** (see Artifact I) collaboratively created by all my classmates in the Print and New Media course and **the presentation handout and Prezi slides for the 2012 Southeast TESOL conference** (see Artifact J). These two artifacts show how I am actively involved in the broader teaching community, and the determination to continuously polish my teaching theories and techniques.

1) Learners and learning

Students today are different. They are constantly exposed to abundant information, and involved in complicated information exchanges every minute. New media brings us opportunities, resources, and also challenges. As teachers, most of us are not accustomed to this new learning style. We received our educations almost 20 years ago, when new media was not a prevalent topic as it is today. Therefore, it would be best if all teachers could gather together to share our ideas to tackle with the problems and make best use out of the new technology. On the Scoop.it e-magazine (see Artifact I), my classmates and I posted various topics, ranging from general teaching techniques, to potential problems and corresponding measures. We discussed under each post to exchange our opinions. We even worked with our peers from New York University to curate this magazine collaboratively. It becomes a ready-to-use resource folder that is permanently stored online.

Teachers are learners—we can always learn from our colleagues if opportunities provided. This is my reflection after presenting on the 2012 SETESOL conference (Artifact J). As the students we taught share a lot of things in common, it will be unwise if teachers just work

alone and fight in his/her battle zone. The TESOL conferences are the most immediate approach to hear other teachers talking about their valuable teaching experiences, which I can selectively incorporate in my own practice. This experience has deepened my understanding of how to teach ELLs, and my commitment to be a good EFL teacher in the future.

2) The learning environment

In Artifact I, the virtual internet community is a very flexible and easy learning environment. We are not restrained by time or place to make contributions. We can stay at home or the coffeehouse, either in the morning or during midnight. Also, the internet provides us a secure and pleasant learning environment. The fact that we cannot see each other's faces gives us a sense of protection and freedom. It decreases the possibility of embarrassment, which will make the discussion more effective and profound.

3) Curriculum

The involvement within the broader teaching communities has broadened my horizon about what good teaching is for English language learners. The theme for the 2012 SETESOL is *connecting and reflecting*. My understanding towards this theme after attending the conference is that, students' identities and attitudes will reflect directly on how they learn, and teachers must find ways to connect with students' extra-curriculum life, in order to promote their learning within curriculum. Besides, many teachers shared their opinions on the conference, such as how to utilize visual aids to teach grammar, the application of hand-on activities to improve literacy proficiency, and the discussions over how to meet the common standards when teaching students from multi-cultural background. Such communication with other teachers enable me to reflect what and how to teach ELLs, which I will absolutely bring back to China, and apply into my future instruction.

4) assessment

In the discussions over assessment, I have explored my attitude and methods to assess ELLs about their English language proficiency and literacy levels. Specifically in this domain, I think it will be very beneficial if teachers can be devoted into a collaborative work, and make our assessment on one particular student more inclusive and reliable. In other words, we should not only rely on multiple assessment tools, but also listen to each other's opinions, to gain a more comprehensive understanding and reach the most beneficial instructional decisions for the student's development. As I understand assessment is a vital component for effective instruction, I will definitely continue to refine my understanding and practices about it in the future.

References

- American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Language. (1996). National standards for foreign language education. [Webpage]. Retrieved from <http://www.actfl.org/advocacy/discover-languages/advocacy/discover-languages/advocacy/discover-languages/resources-1?pageid=3392>
- Brandl, K. (2008). *Communicative language teaching in action: putting principles to work*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Brown, C., & Czerniewicz, L. (2010). Debunking the “digital native”: Beyond digital apartheid, towards digital democracy. *Journal of Computer Assisted Learning*, 26, 357-369.
- Diaz-Rico, L. T., & Weed, K. Z. (2006). Oracy and literacy in English-language development. In Ramos, A. M. (Eds.), *The cross-cultural, language, and academic development handbook: A complete K-12 reference guide* (pp. 74-101). Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.
- Echevarría, J., Vogt, M. E., & Short, D. J. (2004). *Making content comprehensible for English language learners: The SIOP model*. (4th edition). Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- Gonzalez, D., & St.Louis, R. (2008). The Use of Web 2.0 Tools to Promote Learner Autonomy. *Technology*. Retrieved from <http://www.learnerautonomy.org/gonzalezstlouis.pdf>
- Handsfield, L. J., Dean, T. R., & Cielocha. (2009). Becoming critical consumers and producers of text: Teaching literacy with web 1.0 and web 2.0. *The Reading Teacher*, 63(1). 44-50
- Herrera, S. G., Murry, K. G., & Cabral, R. M. (2007). *Assessment accommodations for classroom teachers of culturally and linguistically diverse students*. Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

- Jiménez, R., Smith, P., & Teague, B. (2009). Transnational and community literacies for teachers. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, 53(1), 16-26.
- Johnson, M. (2004). *A philosophy of second language acquisition*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Lantolf, J. P., & Thorne, S. L. (2006). *Sociocultural theory and the genesis of second language development*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.
- Moll, L., Amanti, C., Neff, D., & Gonzalez, N. (1992). Funds of knowledge for teaching: Using a qualitative approach to connect homes and classrooms. *Theory Into Practice*, 31(2), pp. 132-141.
- Scott, V. M. (2010) *Double talk: Deconstructing monolingualism in classroom second language learning*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Wiggins, G., & McTighe, J. (2005). *Understanding by design*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Reflection on Problems and Implications

I have learned a lot about how to be a good ELL teacher from the two years' study at Peabody College. In these two years, I've developed a solid understanding towards the theory of second language acquisition and effective culturally relevant pedagogies, which I explored at the beginning of the portfolio in my statement of teaching philosophy. Also, as a pre-service teacher, I have been reading a lot of educational research papers, practicing designing lessons, learning about my students and their communities, and actively reaching out for more available teaching resources, such as from the Internet. I have combined these experiences with my understanding towards TESOL domains in the second part of this portfolio. All those valuable practices have prepared me with the attitude, knowledge and techniques to become a qualified English teacher in an international setting. However, when comparing all the artifacts I have finished during my graduate study with my overarching goal stated in my teaching philosophy—empowering my students with the knowledge about English and the competences to communicate with the outside world in English, I find there are still problems and challenges to tackle and continue my professional development as an EFL teacher in China. I will identify these questions and explore the direction and plan to accomplish my future goals.

1) The application of theory into practice

Theoretical understanding is the foundation for purposeful practice. In my statement of teaching philosophy, I demonstrated my comprehensive understanding of the major theoretical studies in second language acquisition and favorable instructional accommodations to effectively teach English language learners. After thoroughly digesting these theories, I developed my personal interpretation of teaching philosophy. However, there are always gaps between theories

and practices, which need the practitioners, i.e., teachers to actively find ways to minimize such gaps, and achieve the desirable results.

The biggest challenge for me in this area is how to fully practice the multi-cultural pedagogy with students from various backgrounds. Building on students' cultural heritage and socio-economical background is a solid and feasible suggestion to teach ELLs, but it requires substantive preparation on knowledge and strategies. Teachers usually don't have the opportunities to gather enough information before real teaching after getting the students' name list. Apart from culturally specific knowledge, students' personalities, educational history and other influential factors also add up the difficulty to fully implement the culturally responsive teaching. In order to better know my students with higher efficiency and accuracy, I will attentively heeding the students' voices, and begin to compile my culture knowledge files from the first day on. I hope this will play a constructive role to in better understanding different cultures and communities in the long run. Also, I will strive to develop a sound collaborative relationship with other professional personnel, such as librarians, community servers, the students' prior teachers, and other colleagues at school, so that we can share information, ideas and suggestions to seek the common goal of effectively helping ELLs with both academic and life support.

Another point worthy of deliberation is how to choose the most appropriate strategies and materials from all the ready-to-use resources. The graduate study at Peabody College has broadened my view with a considerable amount of professional teaching knowledge and skills. As it is a useful reserve for my future teaching practice, it also poses challenges for me to choose the most proper ones to fulfill my students' needs. For example, although communicative language teaching is beneficial to promote students' English proficiency in the long run, it might

not be a good idea to utilize group discussions if new-comer student is not ready to fit into the collaborative classroom atmosphere. Therefore, no panacea is suitable for every class. In order to choose the most suitable measures for different classroom, I will be attentive to weigh the possible outcomes of certain practices, and continue to gather experience in teaching. I will also pay special attention to the subtle changes and make adaptations accordingly and swiftly.

2) The modification of curriculum and pedagogies in the Chinese context

As informed in coursework, policy plays a vital role in curriculum design and pedagogy development, and China is no exception. In order to achieve higher academic success, every Chinese student will have to pass the high-stakes college entrance examination. This examination focuses on differentiating confusing grammatical structures, listening to purposefully modified materials and writing within a pre-determined framework. That's the collision between the policy which favors exam-oriented language instruction, and my expectation that students will communicatively use English in authentic international interactions.

To be honest, I have no best solution to solve this problem, because Chinese students still need to struggle with grammar practices and test techniques, which is the only way they can be enrolled in a good college in China. What I can do as an EFL teacher is try to implement the best instruction in favor of students' long-term development. As they will be exposed to more and more multi-modal and multi-lingual materials in the future, I will intentionally bring such materials into the classroom and design meaningful tasks to involve every student in language use. Students are required to master accurate grammar knowledge, so I will still explicitly explain forms and structures in my class, but within communicative and authentic contexts, so that students can how language is really used in the exchanges of information, and also improve their sensibility and awareness towards English.

3) The continued development of my knowledge and skills

I am now in the intensive preparation to become a qualified EFL teacher, but after graduating, I will be devoted to the complicated yet trivial endeavor of teaching, which might cause the lassitude to continue my professional development. As the requirements and context of language teaching are changing day by day, it will be detrimental for students if the language teacher doesn't update his/her knowledge and skills. Therefore, as stated in the last domain of the TESOL standards—commitment and professionalism, I will stay involved in the active online communities co-curated by teachers of language learners around the world, following up the latest studies, and participating in the discussions about my concerns. I believe given enough alerts and attention, even after I leave the professional study area, I will continue to equip my career development with updated theories and more applicable techniques.