

Artifact G

Case Study of a Non-Native English Speaker

Yang Zhang

Peabody College, Vanderbilt University

“Can I seat beside you?” This is the first and the last sentence I talked spoke to my leaner Lena Yuan on the first day we met. I was so depressed and afraid that I could not finish my project if she did not want to work with me; however, with the deepening of our relationship, she began to trust me, talk with me, and study with me. Working with her provides me an opportunity to see how an ELL child studies in her classroom. The days we spent together witness not only her growth, but also the changes in my views concerning how to work with English learners. In this paper, I will present my analysis of Lena’s English competency and her English acquisition. Afterwards, I will give my reflection on this project and how I will do in my future teaching.

Introduction to the Learner

Lena is an eight-year-old Chinese girl. She is in the 3rd grade. She came to Nashville one year and a half ago without any English background, but now, she can read, write and speak in English. Lena still has difficulties in understanding her teacher. Sometimes, she tries to follow her teacher but fails. School is the major place where she learns English.

The first impression Lena gave to me was that she was a shy girl and did not like talking with others. In fact, she is actually an outgoing girl in front of familiar people. When she feels comfortable and safe, she becomes talkative and cannot wait to share everything she finds interesting. Lena is an independent learner. Every time she encountered problems, instead of directly asking me, she would think about it and tried to figure it out by herself in the first place. She feels anxious to speak in public. When she speaks, she prefers short sentences to longer ones.

Lena's parents can speak both Chinese and English, but at home, they mainly talk with her in Chinese. She did not start learning English until she arrived here since she would study in an English-only classroom.

Description of the Learner's Oral and Written Language Abilities

Given her non-English background, Lena has made great progress since she arrived here. From the perspective of phonetics, her pronunciation is not an obstacle to expressing herself. As a matter of fact, her tone and accent are like native speakers'. But she still has difficulties in pronouncing several phonemes, especially those which are difficult for Chinese English learners such as,.... In terms of morphology, Lena is, to some extent, aware of subject-verb agreement, but in most cases, her verb does not agree with the subject. From her writing, I can tell that she knows the regular pattern to make past tense and even some irregular patterns. Yet, sometimes she cannot employ the right tense in a proper situation. Regarding syntax, most of the time, Lena uses simple sentences. However, in her writing, she begins to use coordinate sentences and complex sentences. Her oral English only consists of simple sentences, which is inconsistent with her writing. Lena's vocabulary is basically at Tier One. Usually, she uses common and everyday words in her writing and speaking. But, she does know some words from higher tiers such as predator, balance, and steer. She learns those complex words from her textbooks and classroom readings. In light of pragmatics, Lena is able to perform several kinds of speech acts, such as request, apology and order. When making a request, she knows that she can be polite by using interrogative sentences instead of imperative ones. For example, once when she borrowed a pencil from her classmate, she asked, "Can I use you pencil?"

Phonetics

Generally speaking, Lena performs well in pronunciation. Most of the time, she pronounces words correctly. She places the stress in the right place, which enables her to express her meaning accurately. Her accent and tone are like native speakers'. From her reading, I can tell that Lena grasps some phonetic rules. When encountering unfamiliar words, she tries to predict their sounds according to these rules. For example, she knows the letter u has a /ʌ/ sound. Though she did not know the word “pup”, she still pronounced the sound of /pʌp/(see Appendix A, line 208). Another example is that she spoke the word “unicorn” as /'ʌnɪkɔrn/ rather than /'jʊnɪkɔrn/ (see Appendix A, line 211). Like most of Chinese English learners, Lena has difficulty in pronouncing /θ/ and /ð/ because we do not have interdental sounds in Chinese. She uses alveolar sounds /s/ and /z/ to replace them.

Lena tries to spell words according to their pronunciation. “Though there is no perfect correspondence between spelling and sound in English, there is at least some connection” (Justice, 2004). This sound-based spelling strategy allows Lena to express herself in writing. For instance, she knew how to pronounce “second” and its meaning, but she did not how to spell it. So she wrote the word “saknd” in accordance with its sound (see Appendix B, line 15). Another example is that she is aware of the sound of “sh” is /ʃ/, so when she tried to spell “protection”, she replaced “ti” with “sh”, writing “pertecshon” (see Appendix B, line 51).

On the other hand, Lena’s errors in spelling reflect her flaws in pronunciation. From her writing, I can tell that she mixes the front vowels. For instance, when she intended to write “will”,

she wrote “well” (See Appendix B, line 30, 38 & 51). It seemed that she could not distinguish /ɪ/ from /ɛ/. I went back to her oral sample and found that she actually pronounced /wɛl/ instead of /wɪl/, which is consistent with her writing. When saying “We don’t have a test”, she pronounced /tæst/ instead of /test/, corresponding to her spelling “tast” (see Appendix B, line 24).

Morphology

Lena is, to some extent, conscious about subject-verb agreement. When she writes sentences with a plural subject, she usually uses the right form, such as “Plants live down lower in the forest, have large leaves to collect sunlight(see Appendix B, line 49-50)” and “they use their fins for balancing, steering, braking to move quickly (see Appendix B, line 57-58).” But, when sentences begin with a singular third person, sometimes her verb agreed with the subject, but sometimes it did not. For example, on the same day, Lena wrote two sentences. In the sentence “The biggest fish in the world is 50 feet long (see Appendix B, line 68)”, she used “is” which was in the right form. Yet, in the other sentence “Water sneak live in water too, just like fish (see Appendix B line 65-66)”, her verb “live” is in the first person form instead of in the third person. I think the reason is probably that Lena is not clear about how to change the verb to reflect the person. For the most of her writing, only when the copula was “be”, she would use “is” to agree with the 3rd person subject. For instance, “What is fish’s life cycle? (see Appendix B, line 63)” “Some water is cold some is not (see Appendix B, line 58).” and “Cougor is looking for deer (see Appendix B, line 51).”

In terms of verb tenses, Lena knows that the regular pattern of making past tense is adding

the suffix “-ed” (Justice, 2013). For example, she used “learned (see Appendix B, line 37)” and “landed (see Appendix B, line 42)”. She is also aware of some irregular patterns such as “was (see Appendix B, line 14)”, “got (see Appendix B, line 8)” and “made (see Appendix B, line 47)”. However, one problem is that she is not that clear about the situation where she should use past tense and where she should not. In a composition where she tried to describe how she felt after a test, she used the present tense in the whole passage except for one sentence that “It was hard (see Appendix B, line 24)”. When writing about the biggest fish in the world, she wrote “it was very long, longer than a parson and a usual shark”, which should be in present tense (see Appendix B, line 68-69).

Syntax

Considering the amount of time she has been learning English, I think Lena performs well in employing a variety of sentences. Although for the most part, she expresses herself by simple sentences, she is capable of using some coordinate and complex sentences. In her writing, she uses conjunctions “and” and “but” to connect two independent clauses. For example, when she described a fish’s life cycle, she wrote “Fish’s life cycle is first it was an egg, and then the fish get out of the egg, and it grow bigger and bigger, and then it lay eggs (see Appendix B, line 64-65).” To state whether all the fishes live in lakes and rivers, she wrote “Lots of fish in rivers and lakes, but some didn’t (see Appendix B, line 58-59).” In this sentence, she not only used the conjunction “but”, but also employed the elliptic sentence in the second clause even though she forgot the verb “live” in the first clause.

From the perspective of complex sentences, Lena can use adverbial clauses and nominal clauses. When she explained why her favorite art tool was paper, she used the conjunction “because” to make the sentence that “My favert art tool to use is paper because it is easy to use and fun too (see Appendix B line 26)!” In another case, she gave the reason why fish need to live in the water by writing “Fish live in water, because they need to breathes in water (see Appendix B, line 61).” In fact, when her classmate asked her the same question, she also initiated her answer with “because”. Besides, Lena makes use of adverbial dependent clause to describe the time, which is proved by the sentence “Fish don’t make sounds when they swim (see Appendix B, line 59).” She also uses nominal clauses such as “Then they well think what this book size will be (see Appendix B, line 30-31).”

Assessment of Learner’s Current Stage

As a whole, Lena is at the stage of productive use of new language (Collins, 2013a, pp. 2). She can speak and write a lot in English. From different aspects of language acquisition, she is at different stage. However, Lena does not completely leave behind one stage and enter into another. She uses sentences typical of different stages (Lightbown & Spada, 2013). From the samples I collected, I see Lena’s developmental sequences most clearly in forming negation and questions.

In terms of negation, Lena is generally at the third stage where learners begin to place the negative element after auxiliary verbs such as “do”, “is” and “did” (Lightbown & Spada, 2013). When describing how she felt about her test, Lena wrote “I don’t really like it (see Appendix B line 24).” In her prediction of a story, she wrote “They well not see the cloud again (see

Appendix B, line 43).” Within her conversations with her classmates, she used sentences such as “You don’t have to do that (see Appendix A, line 41).” and “I don’t know (see Appendix 1 line 72).” Yet, she confuses tense, person and number. In her description about where fish lives, she wrote “Lots of fish in rivers and lakes, but some didn’t (see Appendix B, line 58-59).” The whole passage should be in present tense, but in this sentence, she used past tense phrase “didn’t”.

As for forming questions, Lena’s writing can be considered at the fifth stage where an inversion in *wh*-questions with both an auxiliary and a main verb takes place (Lightbown & Spada, 2013). She made sentences such as “Why do fish need to be in the water (see Appendix B, line 60)?” and “How do pictures help tell a story (see Appendix B, line 28)?” Regarding her oral English, Lena does make sentences which can be characterized at the fifth stage. During her conversation with her classmates, she asked a boy, “How many leaves do you need (see Appendix A, line 50)?” There were both an auxiliary and a main verb in her questions and they were in the right order. However, under some circumstances, Lena asks yes/no questions in declarative order with a rising intonation in the end, which is the feature of the second stage (Lightbown & Spada, 2013). For example, in one class, her partner and she were working on their poster. She asked the boy, “You want me to write all of them upside (see Appendix A, line 145)?” and then “You will color all these word red (see Appendix A line 165)?”

Discussion of an SLA theoretical framework

Lena’s first language (Chinese) has an impact on her English acquisition. She draws on some patterns of Chinese to learn and explore English (Lightbown & Spada, 2013). One aspect is how she defines a sentence or how to use punctuation. Looking at her writing samples, I found

that sometimes, Lena combined several independent clauses together, connected them with a comma and ended them with one period. For example, she wrote sentences “At first there is a little egg, warm come out from the egg, it eat a lot of leaves, during growing up, it takes off skins for several times (see Appendix B, line 2-3)”, “Today I have a tast it was hard, I feel tirde(see Appendix B, line 24)” and “The biggest fish in the world is 50 feet long, it was a whale shark, it was very long, longer than a parson and a usual shark (see Appendix B, line 68-69) .” At first, I thought she did not know how to use punctuation. However, after analyzing, I found if I translated these sentences into Chinese, they could be grouped into one complete sentence in the Chinese way.

Another aspect is that in some ways, Chinese phonetic rules influence Lena’s spelling of words. On Nov. 15th, Lena read an article to me. There was the word “pollution” in that paragraph. Although she did not know the word, she pronounced the sound /ʃən/ of “tion” accurately, which showed she knew the pronunciation of “tion” in English (see Appendix A, line 205). However, on a certain day after that day, when Lena tried to spell “protection”, she actually spelt “pertecshon” (see Appendix B line 46). In Chinese, the combination of “sh” has a similar sound to / ʃ / in English. So, when there are two representatives of a sound, Lena prefers the one which is similar to Chinese alphabet.

From my observation, Lena’s English acquisition can be explained from the cognitive perspective. In terms of information processing, according to cognitive psychologists, language learners must focus on learning or producing one aspect of language at first. At the earliest stage,

they make great efforts to understand the main meaning in a message instead of the grammatical forms (Lightbown & Spada, 2013). Through working with Lena, I found that she cares more about meaning than patterns. She would ask me questions whenever she did not know how to express herself, but she never asked me whether there were grammatical errors in her sentences. Also, according to Lena's teacher, Mrs. Asbell, when correcting Lena's homework, she was reluctant to correct her grammatical errors. Rather, she paid more attention to helping Lena express herself more clearly, which I think also exerts an impact on Lena's attitude towards meaning and form.

Lena did not get systematic instruction in grammar, but she has already expressed herself by a variety of sentence structures which include complex sentences. This phenomenon is consistent with usage-based learning. Through working with her, I found that the books she read were not that simple. There were many complex sentences in them. In addition, Lena loves reading science books though they have many specialized words which are difficult for her to understand. Every time when I asked her why she understood those things or why she knew she could write a sentence like that, she told me that she read them in a book. The frequent encounters of sentence structures and vocabularies enable Lena to make a connection between the linguistic features and the context so that these features activate in her mind when she employs them (Lightbown & Spada, 2013).

One interesting thing I found is that in November, when Lena wanted to write "it is", she would write "it was", even when the sentence should be in present tense (see Appendix B, line

64, 68 & 69). However, in her previous works, she used “it is (see Appendix B line 24 & 26-27)”. I think it is probably because recently, the class was working on retelling stories and she was exposed to “it was” more than “it is”. I am not quite sure since I did not accompany her all the time. If it is so, Lena’s language behavior conforms to restructuring which “explains the apparent backsliding when a systematic aspect of a learners’ language incorporates too much or incorporates the wrong things” (Lightbown & Spada, 2013).

The interaction hypothesis can account for Lena’s English learning. This hypothesis maintains that interactional conversation with negotiation for meaning is an essential condition for second language acquisition” (Lightbown & Spada, 2013). In her classroom, I noticed that Lena’s teacher and her classmates invested time in negotiating meaning with Lena. When she encounters a problem and asks her teacher the question, Mrs. Asbell would explain it to her by paraphrasing or simplifying her languages. For instance, in one class, Lena did not understand her test question and Mrs. Asbell tried to explain it to her by repeating the question and changing the original sentences (see Appendix A, line 1-8). Sometimes, Mrs. Asbell would circle the important information for Lena to attract her attention. In addition, the negotiation for meaning happens between Lena and her classmates. Lena still has difficulty in completely understanding her classmates. Sometimes, during their teamwork, she does not know what they want her to do. She would ask them directly and her classmates would give her an explanation or just show her how to do it. For example, once, in her classroom, Lena and her partners were going to make a poster for their group. During the process, Lena did not know what the boy meant. She asked

him and then the boy changed his words and told her how to do it (see Appendix A, line 143-160). Through these modified interactions, the language input are more comprehensible for Lena, which helps her participate in the conversations and understand the meaning in English (Lightbown & Spada, 2013).

From sociocultural perspective, Lena's English acquisition is scaffolded by talking with others. According to Lena's teacher, Mrs. Asbell, apart from the communications within instruction, she also has private conversations with Lena. Sometimes, she invites Lena to have lunch with her. During the lunch, they would talk about something familiar to Lena, leading to Lena's more oral output. Also, her cooperation with another Chinese ELL girl in her class promotes her English development. When they work together, she would produce more output, even though sometimes, she is "forced" to do that (see Appendix A, line 101-108). In these situations, Lena is within her zone of proximal development (ZPD) where she performs at a higher level because of the external support from her interlocutors (Lightbown & Spada, 2013).

The Specific Instructional Plan for My Learner

In my opinion, Lena needs special instruction to correct her pronunciation, especially the sounds which are influenced by Chinese. Her teacher would only help her pronounce unfamiliar words without correcting mistakes. I understand that Mrs. Asbell believes that the constant exposure to native speakers would unconsciously correct Lena's problems. However, I talked with Lena and knew that her family would move back to China next year. If she meets an English teacher who is not able to accurately pronounce the sounds which are difficult for Chinese speakers, such as /θ/, /ð/, her pronunciation mistake may be fossilized. Therefore, during

their interaction, the teacher should consciously correct Lena's phonetic errors. For example, Mrs. Asbell can tell Lena to imitate her mouth shapes including the place where she puts her tongue. She can tell Lena to pretend to be the "Mrs. Asbell in the mirror" to make learning much fun.

Considering the mistakes Lena made on subject-verb agreement and the employment of past tense through the whole project, I think she should get grammatical instruction to correct her errors gradually. At present stage, Lena focuses more on meaning than form, so her teacher can plan meaning-based activities to draw her attention to form (Collins, 2013b, pp. 3). When Lena finds that the incorrect grammatical forms are obstacles to her comprehension or expression, she might correct her mistakes consciously. For example, the teacher can give Lena sentences in different tenses to ask her to explain when the event described in the sentence happened. Or in her homework, when the teacher finds that Lena misuses the tense, she can ask her to make the time specific and tell her which tense she should use. The method of forcing students to rely on a specific linguistic for interpretation can also increase their chance to use these features in their own second language production (Lightbown & Spada, 2013).

Reflection on this Project

Working with Lena allows my views concerning English acquisition to change dramatically. One of the biggest changes is that I begin to realize that some errors learners make are natural procedures during their second language acquisition. Before this project, I believed that once an aspect of English was taught, it was inappropriate to make a mistake. I still remembered that when I learned future tense, I made a question which began with "Will I can". My teacher was

mad at me and rebuked me that I did not pay attention to the class. However, after reading our materials and analyzing Lena's oral and writing samples, I find that mistakes are actually the evidence that she is developing her knowledge of language (Collins, 2013c, 2013). She is trying to make a connection between what she is learning and what she has known. As a matter of fact, learners' errors are best resources for teachers to pinpoint and analyze students' problem and help them make better progress. As I mentioned before, Lena misspells "will" with "well" because when she tends to pronounce "will", she replaces the /ɪ/ with /ɛ/. If I did not dig into the relation between the spelling and pronunciation, and just forced Lena to remember that the right form should be "will", I would miss the opportunities to correct her pronunciation.

Witnessing Lena's learning, I learned, for the first time, that second language acquisition can happen unconsciously. Even when we are not sure about the form or the grammar, we can still employ what we hear or what we see to express ourselves. In October, when I saw Lena write the word "favert" (see Appendix B, line 26) which she wrote as "fevret" (see Appendix B, line 14) in August, I was curious about why she wrote this. I asked her and she told me that she had read this word and remembered the first two letters should be "fa". She did not consciously memorize the vocabulary, but she did learn something and made improvement. Another thing I was amazed at is that she wrote complex sentences such as nominal clause "I think it tell me what it looks like" (see Appendix B, line 29). In fact, her teacher did not teach her the structure. She learned the pattern from her textbooks. Looking back to my English learning experiences, I did not use nominal clauses until I was taught in senior high school.

For my graduate paper, I did research about the impact of peer interaction in second language acquisition and believed that when interacting with their peers, ELL children would under less pressure to speak. However, after the conversation with Lena's teacher, I began to challenge myself. She told me that Lena was unwilling to speak in the whole class, because in the very beginning, she was laughed at by her classmates. Yet, she would speak more English when she is with her teacher, because she feels safe and comfortable. At first, I thought it might be resulted from Lena's character. However, when I watched their presentation of their research, I found that all the ELL children in that class were afraid to speak in front of the class. The two Chinese boys lowered their voice even though their oral English has been fluent enough. Afterwards, Lena told me that her friend, another Chinese girl was nervous because she was laughed at when she did a presentation last time. From this, I can tell how important a healthy learning environment is for ELLs, especially in the earliest stage. I believe that other kids did not laugh at them purposefully, but the unconscious action can hurt their confidence. This is probably the reason why sometimes, ELL children remain silent in class even when their English proficiency has reached to a certain level.

Implications for My Future Work with ELLs

To be a qualified ELL teacher, I need to equip myself with accurate and ample knowledge of linguistics and second language acquisition. On the one hand, since my students are English learners, linguistic should be my field. Accurate linguistic knowledge would allow me to avoid imparting them the wrong knowledge. I can provide my students with proper assistance by analyzing which stage they are on within the English acquisition. connecting different aspects of

language and analyzing students' errors can contribute to my understanding of ELLs. Before connecting Lena's performance in different linguistic aspects, I thought her mistakes were limited to one area. However, after linking her ability in different fields, I have a more comprehensive understanding of her English competency. Her spelling reflects how she pronounces the word. Her inconsistency between writing and oral English mirrors in which aspect she needs more help. From my stance, thorough linguistic knowledge is not only the foundation of being an ELL teacher, but also a great tool for teachers to detect students' errors and help them improve their English proficiency.

In my future work with ELL, I will dedicate myself to building a friendly relationship with them and create a healthy learning environment for them. When I first worked with Lena, she was unwilling to talk to me and did not ask me for help at all even though she knew I could speak Chinese. After the frequent contact, she became closer to me and asked me to explain what her teacher said. In our lasting recording, I was surprised that she voluntarily read more for me. Additionally, Lena's intimate relationship with her teacher makes her feel safe and comfortable, leading to more oral production in their private conversations. From this, I am informed that a positive teacher-student relationship encourages students to produce more language output. In my future teaching, I will strive to establish a good relationship with my students.

Besides the teacher, ELLs' classmates play a large role in constructing a welcoming environment. As I mentioned before, the mocking from her classmates made Lena reluctant to speak in public even after she made great progress. It is necessary for me to stop the behavior of

laughing and tell my other students to show respect to ELL children. At the same time, I would give my ELL students time to get accustomed to the new environment instead of harshly pushing them to speak in public before they are prepared. Only when they gain enough confidence can they cope with negative external elements.

As a future ELL instructor, I also need to find my students' interests to motivate them to learn more. Through working with Lena, I witnessed how her interests in science kindled her desire to read and write more, contributing to her English development. Therefore, in the classroom, I will build my instruction on my students' interests and offer them support to explore the areas they like, motivating them to study and move forward.

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Appendix A (Oral Samples)

Conversation Samples

Date: 09/20/2013

Setting: Lena asked Mrs. Asbell what one of the questions on her test paper meant.

Participants: the teacher Mrs. Asbell (A), Lena (L)

- 1 L: What does this mean? (pointing at the question.)
- 2 A: What's the Congress' responsibility? (repeating the question.) What does Congress
- 3 do?
- 4 L: (shaking her head.)
- 5 A: What is Congress' job? Do you remember we talked about what Congress does in
- 6 our class?
- 7 L: I forgot.
- 8 A: Then you can just leave that.

Date: 10/01/2013

Setting: Mrs. Asbell asked Lena on which part of plant in their textbook they should put an X on.

Participants: Mrs. Asbell (A), Lena (L)

- 9 A: What takes in gases from the air? Wait. Let's remember. Over here, it says that the
- 10 leaves take in sunlight and gases from the air. So what do we put an X on?
- 11 L: Leaf?
- 12 A: That leaves. (stressing the -es sound.)

Date: 10/01/2013

The Whole Setting: Lena was working with her table partners to make a diagram of a plant which should have roots, leaves, stem and a flower.

Participants: Lena's classmates Hario (H), Joshua (J), and Sami (S), and Lena (L).

Excerpt 1

Setting: Lena and her partners were talking about the division of work.

13 H: Do you think so, Lena?

14 L: Ah ha.

15 H: Who's gonna make that leaves?

16 L: I will.

17 H: Who's gonna make the roots?

18 S: I will.

19 H: Who's gonna make that flower?

20 L: You.

21 H: I'm not gonna do.

22 L: You.

23 H: You. (pointing at another boy J)

24 J: No, I'll cut it.

25 H: Okay, I'm gonna take that stuff.

26 L: I'll make a leaves. Sami, I'll make ah ah the roots. You can make the flower

27 (laughing)

28 (waiting for a while.)

29 Do you make the flower? (laughing)

Excerpt 2

Setting: Lena and her partners were discussing to choose a person to pick up the tools.

30 H: Me. Me. Me. Me. Please. Me.

31 S: Who thinks I should go?

32 H: Me. Me.

33 S: Maybe I should go.

34 S: I'll go.

35 J: Okay. Lena, who do you go..for?

36 L: Ah...

37 H: Me. Me. Me. Please, Lena. Pleaaase.

38 L: I don't know. Which one are you doing for?

39 (looking at H.)

40 Okay, Hario.

Excerpt 3

Setting: Lena and her group members were discussing how many papers they would need.

41 L: Leaves? I'm doing the leaves. You have to. Uhm. You don't have to do that

- 42 H: How many paper do you need?
- 43 S: I don't know.
- 44 L: One people one. I think four.
- 45 H: I'm going to just give you...(picking five paper)
- 46 L: No, it's too much. Okay, we'll only needs four.
- 47 H: Let me give an extra one that you guys leave one.
- 48 L: What do you need two? What do you need five? I need four.
- 49 H: But (something, I didn't hear clearly) an extra one.

Excerpt 4

Setting: Lena and her group members were talking about the leaves she drew.

- 50 L: How many leaves do you need?
- 51 H: I don't need many leaves.
- 52 L: Yes, you do. You draw the flower. So, what? (hearing someone say something.)
- 53 L: You want me to do like this? Okay...
- 54 H: A little bit bigger.
- 55 L: What?
- 56 J: Yes. Perfect! Just draw others with those lines in the middle.
- 57 L: Okay.
- 58 S: Hario. (looking at the flower H drew.)
- 59 H:... You make me make that flower.
- 60 I: What is that?

61 L: What is thaaaaat?

Excerpt 6:

Setting: Lena and her team members were planning to color the stem.

62 S: Color. Color some green.

63 L: Make it a little fast.

64 J: What do you have for green?

65 S: Do you? (looking at Lena.)

66 L: Green what?

67 S: Green (some words. I didn't hear clearly.) or anything.

68 L: Yes, I do.

Date: 10/22/2013

Setting: I was talking to Lena about Halloween.

Participants: Lena (L) and I (Y)

69 Y: Do you like Halloween?

70 L: Kind of.

71 Y: Why?

72 L: I don't know.

73 Y: What did you do on last Halloween?

74 L: Trick or treat.

75 Y: Trick or treat. Anything else?

- 76 L: Uhm.. (shaking her head)
- 77 Y: Did you have any special activities at school? Like a costume party.
- 78 L: Uhm.. (shaking her head)
- 79 你说什么? (Chinese for, what do you mean?)
- 80 Y: A costume party. Like you pretend to be a ghost or....
- 81 L: No. (shaking her head)
- 82 Y: Or some other characters by dressing their clothes?
- 83 L: Uhm.. (shaking her head)
- 84 Y: Did you eat some pumpkin pies?
- 85 L: Uh.... I forgot.
- 86 Y: You forgot. And tell me something about your trick or treat. Is it funny or...
- 87 L: Uh.... I did it with my friend.
- 88 Y: Okay. Did you get some candies or....
- 89 L: Some, yeah.
- 90 Y: Did you play trick on others?
- 91 L: No.
- 92 Y: What will you do on this Halloween?
- 93 L: I don't know.
- 94 Y: Will you have some special activities at school?
- 95 L: I don't think so.

Setting: After watching a video clip, the teacher asked students to tell their partners what they learned from that

Participants: Lena's partner Cindy (C), Lena(L) and I (Y).

- 96 L: I learned what is underground.
- 97 C: Underground. (waiting for a while.) What is underground?
- 98 L: Your turn.
- 99 C: You can say a long sentences. You know...
- 100 L: Okay. I say one....Uhm...(thinking for a long time.)
- 101 C: You can say it a long sentences. Okay?
- 102 L: Uhm.... Some animal live underground... Uhm... But it's not Cindy. (laughing)
- 103 Uhm...
- 104 C: You can say it a small sentences, but you say three sentences.
- 105 L: Uhm.... (thinking for a long time.)
- 106 C: Say Cindy sorry. Cindy sorry. ...have many many pictures
- 107 L: I know that the...(laughing) Okay. Uhm.... There were hot cave and cold cave.
- 108 Uhm....
- 109 Y: What is about the environment?
- 110 C: She no idea. I know.
- 111 L: 什么是 environment? (Chinese for, what is.)
- 112 Y: Is it dark?
- 113 L: Oh, yes.
- 114 Y: Is it cold?

115 L: Some of them. Some of them were hot too. Uhm... Some of the water were bright.

116 Uhm... Some creature live in there.

117 Y: Are there many fish?

118 L: Yes. Fish.

Date: 10/22/2013

Setting: Lena was working with her partner Joshua to make their poster which included their group name.

Participants: Joshua (J), Lena (L) and I (Y).

119 J: Okay. Write the chicken nu...duggets.

120 L: I don't know how to spell it.

121 Y: How to spell what?

122 L: The neggets.

123 Y: What?

124 L: Neggets. (turning to J) How to spell it?

125 J: Or just do the chicken.

126 L: Group.

127 J: We are gonna be the chicken nugget.

128 L: Okay.

129 J: Nugget. (writing down the word "nugget".) Okay.

130 L: Okay. Oh, the chicken nugget group. Okay.

131 Y: What is nugget?

132 L: I don't know.

133 (looking at the paper for a while)

134 The chicken nugget group. (voice in delight)

135 J: Okay. Do you wanna... do you wanna write that big on this poster?

136 L: Oh, okay.

137 J: Right here.

138 L: You write this chicken you gets...

139 J: Nugget. The chicken nugget.

140 L: You have to write it.

141 J: Okay. (writing the word down)

142 Do you write this in bubbler?

143 L: Okay. In what?

144 J: Do you.... Here. Just... Copy this and write bubble letter.

145 L: You want me to write the all upside?

146 J: What?

147 L: You want me to write all of them upside?

148 J: No, don't write.... Okay, so, don't write this word. Not this word (pointing at the

149 word "group").

150 L: Okay.

151 J: But write these... write these two combined. Write this and this two combined. And

152 then write the roots.

153 L: Okay.

154 J: In bubble letter.

(Lena was writing the letters.)

155 L: Okay.

156 J: Okay. Now, let's color it.

157 L: Only the three colors?

158 J: No. All these.

159 L: Oh. Does.... Color on these letters?

160 J: Yeah.

161 L: You color one first.

162 J: Okay.

163 L: Oh.... You will color all these... And then, how about H?

164 J: Ah...

165 L: You will color all these word red?

166 J: How about I just color "the" red and then you can color whatever you want. This

167 red.

168 L: Okay.

169 J: I mean whatever you color you want this.

170 L: Okay and you color this and I'll color this.

171 J: Yeah.

172 L: Okay.

173 (They were working on their work.)

174 L: Okay. I'll color the "chicken"

Reading Samples

Date: 10/03/2013

Setting: Lena was reading a preface of a book to me.

175 Two thirds of our planet is covered with water. Every fragment of land, from the
176 great continent of Eurasia to the tiniest Pacific island, has a shore. The total length of
177 shorelines is huge. Yet the width is hardly measurable in comparison-it is often just a
178 few yards. Shores are strange places, being the edge of the land as well as the edge of
179 the sea. The sea level rises and falls with the tides dry. Winds drive unchecked across
180 the open ocean and hit the coast with great force. As they blow, they whip up waves
181 that endlessly crash into the land. No two stretches of shore are the same. Each is
182 shaped by many variable factors – the tides, winds, waves, water currents, temperature,
183 and climate and the types of rock from which the land is made. Along each shore a
184 group of highly adapted plants and animals – many of them strange to our land-
185 orientated eyes – make their homes. This book explores the world of the seashore and
186 described how its inhabitants adapt to their constantly changing surroundings.

Date: 11/05/2013

Setting: Lena was reading several paragraphs to me.

187 **Why do Orangutans need all the trees?**

188 Orangutans are rain forest animals that spend all their lives in the trees. When
189 trees are cut down, gaps are left in the forest, and orangutans can't cross the gaps to

190 find food or places to sleep.

191 **Which endangered animal is the shyest?**

192 The shy okapi is so hard to find that scientists didn't even know it existed until
193 1902. Today there are fewer okapis than ever, because their rain forest home is being
194 cut down.

195 **Why is it bad luck to be an aye-aye?**

196 Aye-aye feed at night in the rain forests of Madagascar. Some of the people of
197 that island think that aye-ayes bring bad luck, so they kill them. The animals are
198 extremely rare, but in some places they are now protected.

199 **Which fox flies to its food?**

200 The Rodrigues flying fox isn't a fox – it's a bat that lives on Rodrigues Island. It
201 eats fruit, so it needs lots of fruit trees. Sadly, most of its forest home has been cut
202 down and there are now only 400 of these bats left.

203 **Why are polar bears still at risk?**

204 Polar bears used to be hunted for their fur. That has stopped now and the biggest
205 threat to them is the planet overheating due to pollution in the air. If the Arctic ice
206 melts, the bears won't be able to roam freely in search of food.

207 **Why do seals get their fur dyed?**

208 In some areas of the Canadian Arctic, the pups of ringed seals are hunted for their
209 pure white fur. People trying to protect the seals sometimes spray them with colored
210 dye. It doesn't hurt the baby seals but it makes the fur useless to the hunters.

211 **Which endangered whale has a unicorn's horn?**

Appendix B (Writing Samples)

(The red letters are the right forms of those incorrect words which are obstacles to comprehension.)

Date: 04/24/2013

Setting: Mrs. Asbell, Lena's teacher asked her to describe the life cycle of butterflies in her journals. Lena answered this question in her letter of reply.

- 1 Dear Mrs. Asbell
- 2 At first there is a little egg, warm come out from the egg, it eat a lot of leaves, during
- (worm)
- 3 growing up, it takes off skins for several times. Then it makes a house to live, about
- 4 two week later it come from the house, then it is a butterflies.
- 5 Love
- 6 Lena

Date: 08/08/2013

Setting: She wrote a journal.

- 7 This is me in china, I was in du jiangyan.

Date: 08/12/2013

Setting: She wrote a journal

8 This raming me of china. China have lots of hoeses. I got this in china, so this

(reminded)

(horses)

9 raming me of china.

Date: 08/24/2013

Setting: Mrs. Asbell asked Lena whether she had a question to ask in her journal. This is Lena's reply.)

10 Dear Mrs. Asbell,

11 Were do aet lunch?

(Where)

12 Love,

13 Lena

Date: 08/28/2013

Setting: She wrote a journal.

14 I got my new shous, it was prupu, prupu was my fevret courl and it have witd on

(shoes)

(purple)

(favorite) (color)

(white)

15 it witd is my saknd fevret courl, it have blue on it, blue is my tird fevret courl.

(second)

Date: 09/27/2013

Setting: Lena was doing her classroom work. She was required to write what she had known before learning this chapter. The italic is the question.

- 16 a. *Jobs that plants* do make water.
 17 b. *Plant life cycles* is that life circle.
 18 c. *Animal life cycles* is life that circle.
 19 d. *Ways in which living things vary* Animal have teeth plant don't.

Date: 09/30/2013

Setting: Mrs. Asbell asked Lena whether she had a question to ask in her journal. This is Lena's reply.

20 Dear Mrs. Asbell

21 Were do you live?

22 Love,

23 Lena

Date: 10/24/2013

Setting: She wrote a journal.

24 Today I have a tast it was hard, I feel tirde. It is a little fun, I don't really like it. I

(test)

(tired)

25 use a lot of time to feshe it

(finish)

Date: 10/28/2013

Setting: She wrote a journal.

26 My favert art tool to use is paper because it is easy to use and fun too! I think it is
27 easy to use because you can just fuoded and it is fun. I like to use paper.

(fold it)

Date: 10/28/2013

Setting: She formed a question and answered it in her journal.

28 How do pictures help tell a story?
29 I think it tell me what it looks like. And it is telling me what are writing about.

Date: 10/30/2013

Setting: Lena was doing a reading task which requires students to describe what
illustrators do to make a book by using the example from the textbook.

30 First they well make a plan and show which pictures go with which page. Then
31 they well think what this book size will be.

32 Next they well make sketches of pictures. And then they well scribbles on tracing
33 paper. And they well decide what the clothes and the house wold looks like.

(would)

Date: Not clear, between 10/21/2013-10/30/2013

Setting: Lena did a reading task which required students to fill out the blank after

reading for 15 minutes. The italic is the question.

34 *Title:* Baby Bluebird

35 *Author:* Lisa Harkrader

36 *Amount of time read:* 21 minutes

37 *My favorite part was....* Baby bluebird learned how to fly.

38 *I predict this will happen next....* Baby bluebird well make a nest for herself.

Date: the day next "Baby Bluebird" day

Setting: Lena did the same reading task.

39 *Title:* Little Airplane

40 *Author:* Conor Wolf

41 *Amount of time read:* 22 minutes

42 *My favorite part was....* Little airplane and helicopter landed safely.

43 *I predict this will happen next....* They well not see the cloud again.

Date: the next day of "Little Airplane" day

Setting: Lena did the same reading task as above.

44 *Title:* Birthday cake Mix-up

45 *Author:* Sarah Toast

46 *Amount of time read:* 19 minutes

47 *My favorite part was:* Barry made a very big cake.

48 *I predict this will happen next....* Barry well make a very big cake

Date: between 11/05/2013-11/14/2013, not clear about specific date

Setting: She wrote a science journal.

49 Toucans have a big beak to help them eat nuts and fruit. Plants live down lower in
50 the forest, have large leaves to collect sunlight. Animals and insect colored to blend

(insect)

51 into the forest for protection. Cougar is looking for deer, if they find one, they will eat

(protection)

52 them.

53 All of the plants in the deserts can keep water, their roots grow deep, store water
54 and nutrients in their body.

(nutrients)

55 animals live close to the ground. Live under ground.

Date: 11/15/2013

Setting: Lena was doing a research project about fish. She needed to come up with
questions and then gave an answer.

56 Q: How do fish swim?

57 A: Fish swim sideways, they use their fins for balancing, steering, braking to move
58 quickly. Some water is cold some is not. Lots of fish in rivers and lakes, but some
59 didn't. Fish don't make sounds when they swim.

60 Q: Why do fish need to be in the water?

61 A: Fish live in water, because they need to breathe in water. Some fish live in rivers
62 and lakes, it has sea weed in it. Fish have to live in water.

Date: 11/21/2013

Setting: Lena was still working on her research about fish.

63 Q: What is fish's life cycle?

64 A: Fish's life cycle is first it was an egg, and then the fish get out of the egg, and it
65 grow bigger and bigger, and then it lay eggs. Water snake live in water too, just like

(snake)

66 fish.

67 Q: How big is the biggest fish in the world?

(biggest)

68 A: The biggest fish in the world is 50 feet long, it was a whale shark, it was very
69 long, longer than a person and a usual shark. It was 8 m.

(person)