

ELL Capstone Portfolio

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Abstract

This portfolio consists of my philosophy of teaching both generally and in the ESL classroom, as well as artifacts demonstrating my professional knowledge of the TESOL standards. The picture that this portfolio paints is that of a teacher who values students' unique identities in curriculum planning and differentiation, student collaboration and critical thinking toward social action, the building of an open and supportive learning environment, and ongoing growth as a professional educator. Overall, this portfolio demonstrates who I am, why I am a highly qualified teacher, and what my vision is for the future.

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Philosophy of Teaching**Overarching Philosophy: Social Reconstructionism**

My overarching philosophy of education is closely aligned with that of social reconstructionism, which posits that learning is most meaningful when it is used to provide experiences that allow students to actively make positive contributions to society. Social reconstructionism values real-world problem-solving, the application of lessons to authentic and relevant societal issues, and the instilling of a genuine enjoyment of learning in students. George Counts, a leader of this viewpoint, "viewed education as an important tool to counter social injustices," and Bell Hooks, another prominent figure of the movement, believed in "develop[ing] a critical consciousness of race, gender, and class biases," issues that impact students today (Sadker & Sadker, 2005, p. 342). In short, as a social reconstructionist, I hope to provide opportunities for students to develop both the passion and critical thinking skills necessary to communicate and collaborate effectively about societal problems they wish to solve.

Developing students' passion for solving the complex problems facing our world first requires that they see such enthusiasm for both learning about and thinking through such problems modeled and normalized by their teachers; therefore, I strive to practice what I preach inside and outside the classroom by talking to students and other teachers about my own causes and ones that interest them. Students must also be allowed a large degree of freedom in topic choice in the classroom, as opinions and interests vary and students may want to engage in discourse about something highly controversial, or even something I personally disagree with. Finally, students will also need exposure to a wide variety of topics and issues in the classroom in addition to the ones they choose, as there are thousands of issues plaguing the world. By reading and viewing widely, both the students and the teacher can learn about issues that they

may find compelling enough to devote time and effort to helping with. Designing a curriculum that allows for both freedom of topic choice and exposure to new topics students may be interested in requires a deep understanding and trust of learners' interests and of what they can handle.

Once a passion for a topic is established through the curriculum, students can then explore it and add to it through communication, collaboration and critical thinking skills. These are imperative for the exchange and evaluation of ideas, which are key to transforming society. Students must learn the art of taking in information from many sides through careful reading, listening and viewing, as well as engaging with that material analytically through the creation and sharing of their own works and projects in response. This process is vital for students' intrapersonal growth as well as their ability to think about and contribute to social change; it guides and enables students to take an active role in monitoring their responses to information and to develop their own rational capacities to apply what they've learned to the real world in order to improve it.

Typically, inventions and solutions to pressing needs and problems are created through collaboration rather than by a single individual. Likewise, students in a social reconstructionist classroom work together to deepen their understanding of complex issues and to create a response, analysis, or solution toward the problem. Students need time in class to brainstorm in groups and construct creative representations of their ideas. They need the freedom to react to and process the sometimes troubling information social issues can bring forth. At times, this sort of learning may be complicated to assess in a traditional points-based manner, since it is often highly personal, unconventional, loud and messy. Nonetheless, taking the time to thoughtfully construct authentic assessments of discussions and social actions is worth it; students are highly engaged when they question, challenge, and fight for something rather than passively listening or

completing easily-assessed worksheets. In my classroom, this has taken many forms, such as heated debates and mock trials about topics students felt strongly about—from feminism to animal testing. On several occasions, students engaged in simulations and empathy exercises, sometimes ending in quite emotional or outraged responses that motivated students to spontaneously suggest taking actions such as writing letters to prominent public figures. That is the kind of learning I strive to facilitate in my classroom: learning that makes students desire to act, argue, and change. This is also learning that could not effectively take place with students working by themselves in class or at home. Since the classroom has the unique advantage of a couple dozen minds inhabiting the same room, this immense and diverse resource should be used to accomplish collaborative feats that would not otherwise be possible.

Since a social reconstructionist classroom involves collaborating closely with others about often touchy or serious subjects, it requires the creation of a highly safe and welcoming environment where students are well-acquainted with one another and are not simply comfortable with, but excited about sharing their ideas and hearing those of their peers. Such an environment or learning context needs to be established at the beginning of the year as part of the curriculum, but also reinforced and continually developed throughout the school year. One way to do this is to take occasional breaks from academics. If a class period ends up with three extra minutes before the bell rings, use the extra time to do something silly and interpersonal to build community, rather than trying to fill the gap with busywork. Talk one-on-one or in small groups with students. Pull out board games, virtual reality goggles, or a beach ball during testing week as stress reducers. Even small activities and moments like these add up, boosting teamwork and confidence by helping students feel comfortable with the teacher and each other over time.

By creating a comfortable and open classroom community where all ideas are encouraged, students will more willingly and effectively collaborate with one another to think

critically about and create solutions to pressing social problems. This is my general education philosophy and approach to teaching.

ESL Philosophy: Incorporating Identity into the Curriculum

Helping students feel comfortable and confident communicating with each other to solve societal issues can be particularly challenging for students who are still learning how to speak English. These students are likely to experience language barriers, cultural clashes between home and school, and internal conflicts about who they are and which groups they identify with. To help ease students' transition into an English-dominant culture and to carry out a social reconstructionist philosophy requiring large amounts of communication, English learners' unique needs, experiences, and identities must be considered, and even serve as the center of teaching. Therefore, my specific philosophy of teaching English learners revolves around putting their unique identities at the forefront of planning and instruction. In other words, the learners drive curriculum and assessment. There are many ways to accomplish this, such as capitalizing on their strengths, targeting interventions for their specific weaknesses, aligning the curriculum with their needs and with the support of research, creating a social-emotionally safe and welcoming environment, and collaborating with others to make all of this happen both in my own classroom and within the school or district.

English learners enter the classroom with many strengths and resources that can be leveraged for learning. For example, these students are most likely fluent in a language other than English, and they should be proud of this linguistic skill and be able to utilize it to further their English language acquisition as well as for its own sake and its own development. A person's native language is the one they most likely think, feel, and learn best in. One thing to be especially careful of is not sending the message that the only reason to use their native language is to help them learn English, as this places English as the end goal and thus the more valuable

language. English learners should be told explicitly that the classroom is a place where they can talk to each other and to the teacher in any language, whether it is for practice or even just for fun. Starting casual conversations with them in their native language is one way to show this. Another way is to design activities and assignments that require or highly encourage multilingualism, such as asking students to write a story in all the languages they know (either interwoven or translated side-by-side). Practices like these will help students feel comfortable improving all of their language skills, which will benefit them most in the long run as society and thus job requirements begin shifting toward bilingualism. In addition, students who leverage their native language via a process such as tranlanguaging benefit from increased cognitive flexibility, metalinguistic awareness, and self-esteem (August, 2010).

Besides their multilingualism and other strengths, English learners also come into the classroom with cultural and individual identities as well as community influences that impact their motivation, engagement, and learning. If learners are truly the center of the curriculum, then so too are their communities and identities. Affirming, developing, and utilizing students' identities in the classroom seems fairly equivalent to incorporating student interests into the curriculum (primarily by using culturally and personally relevant texts and themes). Therefore, teachers should use rich, complex literary texts that celebrate and play with language and come from multicultural authors and perspectives, so that students can identify with authors and illustrators like them and with texts that have familiar linguistic and cultural features (Rowe, 2013). It is important to research students' cultural backgrounds to get a general sense of what beliefs and worldviews students may be coming from, though individuals may not fit the generic cultural descriptions. Although cultural information can be used by teachers as a backboard for conversations with English learners, students should take the lead in discussions of their cultures. It is theirs, and hearing their own description of their cultures through discussions or surveys will

be more valuable than the teacher coming in with preconceived ideas and asking yes or no questions to confirm them. This puts the students in the position of power and positions the teacher as a learner—something very powerful that can quickly show students that the classroom is about them and their learning. This relates to the idea of constructivism because it allows for learning to build on students' own interests and experiences, and to apply knowledge for authentic purposes that students see a reason for and that will be useful to them in their life outside of school (Windschitl, 1999).

Incorporating students' communities into the classroom is a bit more of a project requiring the collaboration of many people to turn the classroom or school into a community center of sorts. We are talking about the powerful influence and learning context that is students' homes—where they live and sleep and possibly work, and where the people they love reside. How can this be done? Involve parents, siblings, and family friends. Send regular communication home and encourage communication from home to school, such as by having students bring in community literacy samples. Invite families to participate in class, to attend events, to work on a project with the teacher and their child. Create opportunities for the families to teach and show their own expertise and experiences, such as for a career day or cooking contest. The more of a presence the community has in the school, the more the school will feel like an extension of the community—of home. English learners should not have to feel like they must switch between two completely contrasting worlds. Creating this home to school connection requires collaboration with not only the parents, but also other teachers as well as administrators, so if such an environment is not already established at the school, it is the passionate teacher's responsibility to advocate for why this is so necessary for English learners. The teacher can start with their own classroom, but also needs to think long-term about pervasive, school-wide efforts rather than an isolated one by structuring for integration (DeJong,

2011).

Besides incorporating learners' communities, identities, interests, linguistic skills and other strengths into the curriculum and school, teachers can also ensure that students are the focus of instruction by taking care of their social and emotional well-being, showing them that the adults in the building value them and are invested in them as people. Caring for students is of high importance; valuing the students' input so that they feel valued and heard is part of culturally responsive caring (Gay, 2010). Students' basic emotional needs must be nurtured before students will be able to concentrate on the content (Maslow, 1954). Some examples of ways to accomplish this are to tell jokes and personal stories, share shortcomings, converse with students informally about their lives, refer to students by name consistently, attend their after-school activities, and ask them to talk about their language or something else they know with genuine curiosity. These are all things that help build relationships and trust, which can boost students self-confidence, general happiness, and even academic motivation and therefore success. Although controversial, teachers of English learners can also consider playful gestures of caring such as tousling students' hair jokingly, depending on the school's policies and students' comfort levels with touch. For some students who need more socialization or more informal interactions, this can be a highly beneficial way for them to engage with the teacher.

In short, my specific philosophy of teaching English learners is that they are always the center of teaching, which requires building solid relationships with each of them by taking care of their physical, emotional, and academic needs and incorporating their interests, strengths, homes, and identities into the curriculum.

Analysis of Artifacts Demonstrating Professional Knowledge of TESOL Standards

Standard 1: Planning

The first TESOL standard for teachers of English learners states that teachers must "plan

instruction to promote learning and meet learner goals, and modify plans to assure learner engagement and achievement." In other words, teachers should be able to plan meaningful and effective instruction that engages and challenges a diversity of learners, helping them achieve their unique goals. To develop such plans and differentiate for individual students, teachers must possess a solid understanding of the strengths, needs, experiences, and interests of students and adapt the plans according to that data. Thus, this first TESOL standard echoes my specific philosophy of teaching English learners, which, as explained in the previous section of this portfolio, emphasizes that the curriculum should leverage and develop students' identities. This ensures that students will be interested in the content and will therefore derive something meaningful from it. As stated in my overarching philosophy of social reconstructionism, a natural way to differentiate for students and create meaningful and engaging lessons as Standard 1 requires is to construct interesting, authentic activities and to allow for student topic choice with a focus on real world issues.

Artifact 1 (Appendix A), which consists of two sample lesson plans from my teaching experience, demonstrates my understanding and application of TESOL standard 1, in alignment with my teaching philosophy. My racially diverse and economically disadvantaged eight-graders at the time had consistently shown a keen interest in problems of injustice and inequality, topics which naturally lend themselves toward authentic activities and high student engagement. Drawing on my students' passion for these types of issues, I designed an introductory unit on rights movements to allow students to dabble in a range of topics from Native American rights to BLM (black lives matter). Thus, students with strong knowledge of the oppression of one group could have days to shine as well as days to learn about another group they had not previously considered. Throughout the unit, and especially in the animal testing lesson plan included in Artifact 1, students were exposed to multiple sources expressing diverging viewpoints on the

issues and thus learned to "analyze the effectiveness of different arguments so that they can make informed judgments they can support with valid reasons" (Appendix A). This promotes the critical thinking so essential to changing one's own beliefs and behaviors for the betterment of society, and is a vital skill in academic achievement in general.

Given students' high interest level in the material and the clear connections between the content and their real-world actions, engagement throughout this rights movement unit was phenomenal. Every single student participated in a mock trial about animal testing, and testified before the faux court with genuine enthusiasm and conviction. During the lesson on Mexican-American rights, students were quite literally on the verge of an uproar when I briefly ran class in Spanish and refused to help students in English in order to simulate what it might be like for English learners in immersion environments, and many were on the verge of tears when they bent down and tied knots over and over again to simulate what it might be like for low-wage workers picking strawberries all day. After such empathy exercises and reading a few texts expressing different opinions, students began vehemently proposing solutions to the problems presented, with little prompting from me. However, I guided their energy toward a productive free-choice action, where students could write a letter, create a poster, or construct some other tangible and proactive response to their learning.

Free-choice responses are an organic way of adapting the content to meet the needs and leverage the identities of all students, as they essentially differentiate for themselves by creating a product that represents them and their abilities. The lesson plans in Artifact 1 also differentiate for diverse learners by allowing for a combination of assigned and chosen roles for the mock trial. Some roles in the trial were more challenging than others or required a certain kind of personality; for example, those who served as lawyers ideally needed to be convincing and confident as a major speaker, while the judge mostly listened but carried the burden of

pronouncing the final decision. I quietly suggested roles to students, but ultimately they were able to pick (with some adjustments from me). For students who needed more support when preparing for the mock trial, it was helpful that they were able to work in groups with their peers to prepare (e.g. the lawyers and witnesses worked together to piece together their case). All students were also provided with an optional guide/template for how they might go about their role, so students who needed it could use it if they wished. Of course, I circulated around the room during their preparation time and helped students with special needs, such as translating for English learners and providing materials in their language for the newcomers.

Differentiating for all learners, selecting real-world topics that interest students, and designing engaging activities that motivate students to think critically and take social action are all elements of effective instruction. Thus, my sample lesson plans on animal testing and Mexican-American rights, which are included in Artifact 1 (Appendix A), demonstrate my professional knowledge of TESOL Standard 1 and the influence of social reconstructionism in my teaching.

Standard 2: Instructing

It is one thing to plan and execute instruction, and quite another for it to actually work, given the specific mix of personalities and dynamics present in the classroom. Developing a learning environment conducive to the goals of planning and instruction (i.e. the curriculum) is imperative for successful teaching. The second TESOL standard demands that "teachers create supportive environments that engage all learners in purposeful learning and promote respectful classroom interactions." A classroom culture in which students feel supported and comfortable with taking risks and sharing their ideas with others is especially important in a social reconstructionist curriculum that delves into potentially difficult topics and requires collaborative problem solving. Although a supportive, respectful, and engaging learning environment needs

established explicitly as the norm at the beginning of the year (such as with big concepts like accountable talk procedures for academic conversations), it is also reinforced with even the smallest of actions throughout every lesson; for example, by consistently using students' names, suggesting books and shows to a student, or constructing activities that help students get to know each other better. It also involves intriguing, questioning, and challenging students to establish a proactive community of learners (teacher included), and the physical room should match the desired dynamic (i.e. seating in groups for a collaborative environment).

Artifact 2 (Appendix B) details many of the ways that I established a positive learning environment during a unit per my philosophy and TESOL Standard 2. The artifact is an excerpt from the edTPA, where I break down several small rapport-building moments across two video-taped lessons (note that the videos are not included in the artifact; just the commentary). For example, I remember and bring up students' comments later in discussions, such as when I invite a student to share with the class a great point he had told me during small group discussion. This student is typically on the quiet side, so specifically prompting him using praise encouraged him to participate in a lower-stress way. Another rapport-building strategy noted in the edTPA environment commentary is rewording responses when beneficial for learning. Paraphrasing or extending learners' comments lets students know that I am listening and also helps ensure other students heard and understood what their peer said. Having developed an understanding of students' unique identities and needs allows the teacher to know when this technique would be especially helpful; in the edTPA commentary, I explain that I take particular care to rephrase for a student with an IEP for speech. This creates "a positive learning environment because all students feel that their contributions are valid, valuable, and worth talking about" (Appendix B).

As described in Artifact 2, a third way I demonstrate rapport with and respect for my students is by "allowing myself to have a sense of humor and relax with my students, who need

that comfortable relief from the lesson at times... [M]any of my [seventh-grade] students can become fidgety or side-tracked easily, and have a desire to share their loosely related experiences and thoughts. If their comments are not acknowledged, or if they are chastised, some of my students have a tendency to shut down and feel unappreciated" (Appendix B). And so, as mentioned in the edTPA commentary, I laugh with students about their irrelevant, horse-shoe-shaped picture-response to a prompt while also trying to reel it back in. Although every effort should be made to connect students' side-tracked comments or jokes to the content, students should be trusted to get the job done while also enjoying themselves. Ignoring or punishing students for taking breaks and being silly shows a lack of understanding of their needs and a lack of trust that they can be productive while also being themselves. In a social reconstructionist classroom that values students' identities, virtually all student contributions are welcome and praised, silly or not.

Yet another strategy in developing rapport with students is demonstrating respect for students' needs by varying activities frequently (i.e. to avoid boredom), and believing in students' ability to push themselves to rise to a challenge (and to work productively together without constant supervision). A positive learning environment thus can be created by challenging and engaging students, such as through the pacing of the activities in the lesson described in the edTPA commentary: "the sequence of tasks changes every few minutes. Students spend 2 minutes watching a clip, 4 minutes working in groups with mini white boards, 3 minutes discussing as a class, and repeating the process again, so that my seventh graders, who need constant activity and stimulation, never have enough time to become bored or unengaged" (Appendix B). By respecting students' identities (time, space, intellect, and needs) as well as helping students develop rapport with one another and the teacher, a classroom culture based on solid relationships can emerge per TESOL Standard 2, in turn enriching the content instruction

that has been planned per TESOL Standard 1.

Standard 3: Assessing

Given the diversity among students, the differentiated instruction they receive, and the highly open-ended and collaborative nature of projects and assignments in the social reconstructionist classroom, assessment may seem like quite a complex undertaking. The third TESOL standard requires that "teachers recognize the importance of and are able to gather and interpret information about learning and performance to promote the continuous intellectual and linguistic development of each learner. Teachers use knowledge of student performance to make decisions about planning and instruction on the spot and for the future. Teachers involve learners in determining what will be assessed and provide constructive feedback to learners, based on assessments of their learning." In other words, teachers must conduct valid and reliable assessments that fairly represent and challenge students with diverse identities and abilities, and then organize and analyze the data both during and outside of class in order to determine the next steps for both on-the-spot adaptations and future instruction—all while also giving students useful feedback on their progress and performance.

Without assessment of students' strengths, weaknesses, and learning progress, instruction is simply unwavering dictation rather than a flexible process that takes into consideration what students want and need. Thus, effective assessment is actually an integral part of a classroom environment that values, respects, and appropriately challenges students. As has been emphasized throughout this portfolio, building a positive classroom culture is important for both my overarching philosophy and my philosophy of teaching English learners, and by extension, then, so is assessment.

Being so complex a process, assessment is still something I am experimenting with. I often design my lessons in much the same manner as the gradual release of responsibility model,

which allows me to assess students' progress during the lesson in clear-cut chunks and intervene as needed. For example, in Artifact 3 (Appendix C), a seventh-grade lesson on characterization, the first step is to hold a very informal discussion about the text in order to pre-assess students' ability to discuss and analyze characters. Satisfied that students can talk deeply about character motivations and interactions, I then introduce academic language for them to use in such discussions about character (i.e. direct and indirect characterization, inference, etc.), but only if their discussion showed that students lacked such terms. After the explanation of new terms, if I had determined based on assessment of their body language or facial expressions that further clarity of the vocabulary was needed, I would have employed strategies such as using a video to help explain the terms or conducting a turn and talk. Once clear, the next chunk in the lesson is whole-group practice and guided small-group practice, where students use a graphic organizer and questions posed by the teacher to guide their thinking about the characters in a highly accessible video-text. Whether students' performance shows a need to backtrack to the explanation of terms, to continue further guided practice, to move on as planned, or to accelerate faster to the next step of gradual release, the chunked nature of the lesson makes this spontaneous decision easy to facilitate.

The next step in the sample lesson is for students to work in differentiated groups (based on previous assessment data and personality considerations/how well students would work together) using differentiated graphic organizers but with characters in a complex print text instead of a video. As discussed earlier, since students' identities and needs are quite diverse, and respecting their needs is important both for developing a positive learning environment and for pushing them to achieve their individual goals, assessments can and most often should be differentiated to match students' needs. In this lesson on characterization (Artifact 3), each homogeneous group of students received graphic organizers with character analysis questions

appropriate for their level, and were also asked to analyze an appropriate character from the text (i.e. with more advanced students being asked to discuss a complex character and struggling students to discuss a more straightforward character). After having spent time as a whole class, and then in small, differentiated groups, the final release of responsibility in the chunked lesson requires students to work independently and without a graphic organizer to write a paragraph about a character of their choosing from the print text.

Overall, structuring lessons in the flexible way seen in Artifact 3 provides the teacher with several points at which to conduct an assessment and adapt instruction, and also provides comparative data (i.e. how do students perform with peers vs. alone, with a video vs. a print text, and with vs. without a graphic organizer). This lesson structure is just one example of how planning and instruction intersects with assessment, as that determines when, how, and even whether assessments will be used spontaneously as well as designed-in. Using assessment data to make spontaneous as well as long-term adjustments to the curriculum based on students' needs (and planning for differentiated instruction) as suggested by TESOL Standard 3 is imperative to good teaching and exemplifies my philosophy that students' identities must drive the curriculum.

Standard 4: Identity and Context

The fourth TESOL standard states that teachers need to "understand the importance of who learners are and how their communities, heritages and goals shape learning and expectations of learning. Teachers recognize the importance of how context contributes to identity formation and therefore influences learning. Teachers use this knowledge of identity and settings in planning, instructing, and assessing." In alignment with my teaching philosophy, this portfolio has thus far heavily explored the importance of students' identities in creating relevant and meaningful plans, building rapport with students by showing interest in their identities, and crafting assessments that are appropriate for students with a diversity of identities.

The concept of identity is often associated with a specific individual's interests, strengths, choices, and so on, but it also is strongly influenced by broader forces: context, community, culture, and home. Creating a strong, two-way home-to-school connection is key for students. It helps them see the purpose in learning, as they can bring their unique perspective to the table at school and can likewise utilize their learning at school to collaborate with peers for social action in their communities. Therefore, teachers must help students see the ties between their academic and personal lives so that information and experiences can be transferred most efficiently between the two, allowing students to leverage as many resources as possible in both contexts.

One way to solidify this connection is through culturally relevant texts shared between home and school, ideally with parents participating in reading such books with their children. Artifact 4 (Appendix D), a video I created with my peers at Vanderbilt, explains to parents how and why to use culturally relevant texts. As the video states, culturally relevant texts allow students to more easily identify with the characters and situations within them because they see themselves and things familiar to them represented in the texts. Minority students such as English learners reading rich, culturally relevant texts that represent them will have their identity affirmed and likely be more interested in deriving meaning from the text than from books that they cannot relate to. Of course, as I point out in the video, although everyone should read at least some books that are culturally relevant to them, no one should read such texts exclusively because it is important to be exposed to texts that represent people who have experiences that differ from our own. This is reminiscent of my overarching social reconstructionist philosophy, which encourages exposing students to a wide variety of perspectives and topics they might not be familiar with. By including texts by and about people from diverse backgrounds into the curriculum as one way to leverage and develop learners' identities, students can both learn about others and about themselves; this will help them become more well-rounded, socially conscious,

and self-confident in both their home and school contexts.

Standard 5: Language Proficiency

For students who are English learners, the bridging of home and school (and the resulting identity affirmation and other benefits) can be challenging, as the differences between the two contexts and their norms may be quite vast. One significant disparity that may arise is language use. In alignment with the standards and philosophies previously discussed, it is apparent that teachers must value students' languages, whether Spanish, Arabic, or black vernacular. In order to be as successful as possible, students should be able to leverage all of their cultural and linguistic resources. Although it would be unrealistic to expect teachers to master every language spoken by their students, I believe that to best serve students and affirm their identities, teachers should try their best to learn what they can about students' languages (possibly from students themselves) and should strive to be proficient in at least one foreign language. In fact, the ESL endorsement in Tennessee requires teachers to demonstrate proficiency in one non-English language. According to the fifth TESOL standard, it is important that "teachers demonstrate proficiency in social, business/workplace and academic English. Proficiency in speaking, listening, reading and writing means that a teacher is functionally equivalent to a native speaker with some higher education." I propose that this TESOL standard be revised to include a non-English language proficiency as well. In my field experiences, it has been apparent that English learners who had a teacher that spoke their language felt more comfortable participating in the classroom and had more support and assistance from the teacher who could translate for them. To help build rapport with students, best serve their needs, and bridge the home and school contexts, foreign language proficiency or at the very least an understanding of how to leverage students' native languages as a resource is important to my teaching philosophy.

Standard 6: Learning

Leveraging students' native language is just one possible strategy of many in helping students acquire English proficiency. TESOL standard 6 explains that teachers of English learners need to "draw on their knowledge of language and adult language learning to understand the processes by which learners acquire a new language in and out of classroom settings. They use this knowledge to support adult language learning." Language learning is a complex process that can be quite challenging, especially for older students or those dealing with significant emotional obstacles such as culture shock. Teachers who care for students' well-being (which, as we have established throughout this portfolio, helps build a safe environment that makes social reconstructionism most effective) should try to make language learning as painless as possible, so that students can thrive and feel comfortable in an English-dominant context. To do this requires that teachers possess a deep understanding of linguistics as it relates to language learning.

Artifact 5 (Appendix E) demonstrates my application of linguistics to the case study of an English learner. In the document, I collect English language samples for assessment, analyze the data, note influences from the student's native language, and recommend appropriate instructional goals and strategies based on the student's needs in the key linguistic areas of phonology, syntax, grammar, semantics, and pragmatics. For instance, as the case study artifact describes, I recorded a casual conversation with an English learner and then listened to the video for phonological strengths and weaknesses. Based on the audio sample and my understanding of linguistics, I determined that "[o]ne of her strengths is her highly accurate pronunciation of English vowels, which can take on several different sounds according to complex phonics rules. For example, Zelda correctly pronounces college, month, worked, one, do, and Hollywood studio, where the letter *o* represents the phonemes /a/, /ə/, /ʌ/, /u/, /ʊ/, and /oʊ/" (Appendix E). On the other hand, I found that "she consistently pronounces /ð/ and /θ/ like the phoneme /d/"

and used my understanding of language learning to hypothesize that "Zelda may have difficulty with the /ð/ and /θ/ phonemes for two reasons: first, these phonemes do not exist in Mandarin, and second, /d/ has a similar sound and manner of articulation to /ð/ and /θ/ (i.e. the mouth is open to about the same degree and the tongue performs a similar motion but in a different location)" (Appendix E). Finally, I planned instruction based on the linguistic assessment data of the student, stating in the case study document that Zelda should "practice in distinguishing place and manner of articulation for the /ð/, /θ/, and /d/ phonemes. She could listen to audio of those sounds, examine diagrams modeling accurate mouth movements, and practice those sounds with someone providing direct feedback" (Appendix E).

Of course, teachers cannot realistically conduct such an in-depth study of each and every student, but it would be wise to conduct a scaled-down evaluation of students or to at least embed linguistic assessments into tasks already planned in the curriculum. As suggested by Standard 6, applying an understanding of second language learning to classroom assessments allows teachers to collect data for planning and adapting the curriculum for the very specific needs of learners and to select research-based approaches to improving specific linguistic skills. Using linguistic assessment data to drive instruction is a way to put students' learning needs first, thus establishing a productive classroom environment where students know that they are respected, cared for, and appropriately challenged.

Standard 7: Content

Besides leveraging students' native languages and applying knowledge of linguistics to make instructional decisions and learning goals, another important piece of helping students acquire a second language is to have students use language for authentic tasks. The seventh TESOL standard asks that "teachers understand that language learning is most likely to occur when learners are trying to use the language for genuine communicative purposes. Teachers

understand that the content of the language course is the language that learners need in order to listen, to talk about, to read and write about a subject matter or content area. Teachers design their lessons to help learners acquire the language they need to successfully communicate in the subject or content areas they want/need to learn about." When the curriculum focuses on communicative competence and teaching language skills that will be useful to students in real life, it is not perfect accuracy that matters, but rather, their ability to communicate meaning. Thus, as social reconstructionism suggests, the curriculum should center around real-world or simulated real-world problems and situations for students to practice using language for authentic purposes.

Artifact 6 (Appendix F), a third-grade lesson on text structure, is an example of having English learning students work through imagined real-world scenarios to develop their communicative competence. In the lesson, students had to think like writers, matching five scenarios about people wanting to write something to which text structure (e.g. compare and contrast, cause and effect, etc.) they would use to accomplish that purpose most effectively. For example, in one scenario, one needed to tell their mother what shoe to buy at the store. Students would determine it would be most effective to use a descriptive text structure in a note to the mother; after deciding this, students simulated actually describing the shoe with their chosen text structure. This process was repeated with four more scenarios. Students completed this task in small groups so that they would have the opportunity to negotiate with one another and use accountable talk to agree or disagree with each other and explain their thinking. Through their discussions, students were able to develop the specific language skill of talking/writing using a certain text structure appropriate for the situation, and, more generally, to develop the core skills of academic conversation: elaborating, supporting one's ideas, responding to others' ideas, and so on (Zwiers, 2011). Thus, the text structure activity contained in Appendix F exemplifies the

importance of constructing authentic real-world or simulated real-world tasks that allow students to engage with many aspects of language for the purpose of fluently conveying meaning and purpose, rather than having to worry about accuracy per se (Brown, 2007).

Standard 8: Commitment and Professionalism

As this portfolio has shown, effective teachers must design curriculum and assessments that are authentic, meaningful, and engaging. What is more, such teaching should be supported by the learning context or environment, and should be grounded in an understanding of learners' needs and identities. Clearly, teaching is a complex process requiring commitment and lifelong professional learning. As the last TESOL standard suggests, "teachers continue to grow in their understanding of the relationship of second language teaching and learning to the community of English language teaching professionals, the broader teaching community, and communities at large, and use these understandings to inform and change themselves and these communities." Teachers can continually improve in their practice by collaborating with other professionals and participating in professional learning communities. Teachers who specialize in a certain area of education, such as in the instruction of English language learners, should share their knowledge with other stakeholders in the school, and should likewise learn from other stakeholders how their areas of expertise affect English language teaching. One common way schools build in time for teachers to engage in such professional growth is through professional development (PD) sessions, where teachers can recommend instructional strategies based on the school's specific needs.

I have designed PD sessions for this very purpose as part of my reading specialist endorsement coursework and as a way to contribute to my practicum schools, as shown in the PD session presentation slides in Artifact 7 (Appendix G). To develop this professional learning opportunity, I considered the data available to me about the high school and about English

learning students specifically. Knowing that the high school team had been struggling to implement effective centers as required by administration, and that many English learners were unable to exit the program due to low writing and speaking scores on the TCAP and ACCESS standardized assessments, I decided to research effective speaking activities that could be easily used by teachers at the school with English learners during center time. As seen in the presentation slides, teachers were asked to practice some of the suggested activities, such as using a voice-to-text phone app, role-playing real-life scenarios (e.g. pretending to talk with a doctor at an appointment), or coming to a group consensus on a tough decision (e.g. deciding who to throw off a life boat). Teachers were also invited to share their own successes and ideas with other teachers, prompted by the following questions: "How are you currently supporting students' speaking skills in your classroom? During centers or small group reading instruction? Have you had any notable successes? Challenges?" (Appendix G).

Designing a PD session in response to a specific need in the school requires an understanding of students, teachers (i.e. how to coach adult learners), standardized testing data, and research-based practices, and it also shows a commitment to ongoing professional learning for both self and peers. Creating PD sessions, attending them, joining professional teaching organizations (such as NCTE, as I have), attending conferences, consulting fellow teachers for advice, and keeping up-to-date on best practices via professional literature or advanced coursework are all ways to continue growing and learning as a professional educator per TESOL standard 8.

Bridging Theory and Practice

As a first year teacher this coming fall, professional growth and learning will be especially important, as will putting all of the theories and experiences of the last five years into coherent practice. Although I have a multitude of related and unrelated ideas for my classroom

practice, my primary goal for my first year will be to consistently adhere to my philosophy of teaching—focusing on the principles of social reconstructionism as well as on the importance of students' identities in the curriculum. At the beginning of the year, I will establish a positive learning environment and solid relationships with students by planning open discussions, get-to-know-you icebreakers, and other bonding activities. I will use what I learn about students in such assessments (surveys, activities, and discussions) to decide what topics they are most passionate about and what skills they are strong and weak in—planning the curriculum accordingly, and consulting veteran teachers to navigate the logistics of doing so (e.g. what if some students are interested in topics incompatible with what other students care about?). I will push students to think through tough problems creatively and critically, and I will tell them boldly that I believe in them. I will strive to make learning both meaningful and engaging by constructing interesting activities as well as by connecting school and the real world. I will reach out to the community and to leaders to plan authentic social action opportunities for students.

McMurray Middle School, where I will be teaching fifth grade ESL, will be extremely conducive to my implementation of this philosophy and of the strategies found in this portfolio. It is an extraordinarily diverse school, with nearly half of the population being English learners, and many students having interrupted schooling. On the morning announcements, McMurray takes time out of the busy school day to make students' identities a clear priority: students are regularly invited to briefly share something over the intercom about their culture or language with the whole school. Further evidence of McMurray's dedication to serving students with diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds is the fact that the building has its own, exclusive ESL coach who dedicates her time to helping McMurray teachers continually improve their practice. What is more, McMurray's philosophy explicitly expresses a commitment to many of the same things I do: making learning fun for students, connecting home and school, building a

compassionate learning environment, and developing strong communication and critical thinking skills.

Although McMurray is an excellent match for my way of thinking and teaching, I will still face challenges that will test my ideas. For example, standardized testing may essentially dictate a portion of the curriculum, potentially limiting my freedom to plan lessons around social action, which is, of course, not on the tests. Another possible challenge is that, with such a diversity of languages, language levels, academic skills, cultural backgrounds, and schooling experiences among my students, the thought of differentiating curriculum and assessments so extensively for the needs and identities of all learners as indicated in my philosophy is a bit daunting. In fact, although this portfolio stressed the importance of it in the respecting of students' diverse needs, experiences, and identities, differentiation is something I still have ongoing questions about. How can teachers differentiate without it altering expectations (or hurting feelings)? I cannot simply provide easier and harder materials to different groups of students with different ability levels, nor can I forgo planned differentiation and only rely on spontaneous opportunities to provide differentiated questions to groups or individuals as I informally assess their progress throughout the lesson.

Therefore, one learning goal I want to set for myself as a rising ELL teacher is to select appropriate designed-in differentiation strategies in order to adapt for students with different proficiency levels and identities (e.g. strengths, weaknesses, backgrounds), while also avoiding over-scaffolding or altering expectations for any student, or making it too obvious. To achieve this goal, I will need to find the balance between the two extremes, always double-checking that the adaptations I make still require students to ultimately meet the same expectations, just through extra help or alternative methods. Backwards planning may help me achieve this goal, as Wiggins suggests that curriculum design should start with the desired goal, move on to what

evidence or assessments students will produce to achieve that goal, and then to planning the experiences students will have to help them complete those tasks (Wiggins, 2005). That way, I would be thinking of scaffolds and differentiation separate from the tasks/assessments, which would prevent me from altering expectations. One way to keep myself accountable for this when I am teaching this fall will be to inform my first year mentor and team teachers about this goal and ask them to review and offer suggestions for my planning.

After I spend my first year of teaching dealing with my questions about differentiation as well as making my philosophy of education a daily habit, I hope to spend the next few years after that gradually adding more specific ideas and strategies into my practice based on the recommendations of colleagues and professional literature, noting how those integrate into my philosophy. I hope to consult this portfolio regularly in the coming years as a means to refresh and revitalize my commitment to and strategies for supporting English learners, leveraging students' identities, and helping them transform their lives and their society.

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Appendix A

Artifact 1 - Rights Movements Lesson Plans

Mock Trial: Animal Testing

Rights Movements Intro Unit

Grade 8

Day 3 of 7

Overview

- Today students will take the lead in running through a mock trial, where students will be debating animal testing after having read articles and prepared for the trial during the previous class period.

Rationale

- Students will be dealing with a relevant, modern topic that is a part of their everyday consumer choices. Students will likely feel very strongly about the issue and will thus be engaged in the lesson.
- It is important to know how to research both sides of controversial issues and analyze the effectiveness of different arguments so that they can make informed judgments they can support with valid reasons.

Learning Objectives

- SWBAT present an organized, whole-class argument via a mock trial.
- SWBAT evaluate the effectiveness of arguments on two sides of the same topic.

The Lesson

THE HOOK

Allotted Time: 5 minutes

- Today periods are shorter than usual due to a pep assembly, so we will skip typical daily procedures and get right into the lesson.
- Students will meet with their groups based on their assigned role in order to refresh and perfect their contribution to the mock trial before we begin.

CENTRAL LEARNING TASK

Allotted Time: 61-68 minutes

- We will review key instructions and procedures for the mock trial.
- Students will take the lead as they go through the mock trial using the procedure checklist given to them the day prior. The teachers will guide and prompt as needed, but today the students are their own facilitators.
- As part of the mock trial process and as a way to assess students, everyone will write a paragraph on a piece of paper stating who they believe won the argument and why (giving three reasons).
- If there's time: Students will discuss which roles represented which parts of an argument.

CLOSURE

Allotted Time: 7 minutes

- Review today (review of arguments) and preview next day (another rights movement focus).
- If time: Sticky Notes or hands to vote on which rights movements to focus on next.

Assessments

- Formatively assess students' ability to present an argument via the mock trial.
- Formatively assess students' ability to evaluate the effectiveness of an argument via the written paragraph.

Materials

- Paper & writing utensils
- Trial props
- Trial prep materials
- Sticky note for each group

Common Core Standards

- [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.8.6](#)
Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text and analyze how the author acknowledges and responds to conflicting evidence or viewpoints.
- [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.8.9](#)
Analyze a case in which two or more texts provide conflicting information on the same topic and identify where the texts disagree on matters of fact or interpretation.
- [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.1](#)
Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence

Academic Language, Syntax, Discourse

- Evaluate
- Explain
- Argument (& related terms)
- Trial (& related terms)
- Animal rights
- Discourse: Whole-class cooperation
- Syntax: Write a paragraph

Differentiation

- Roles assigned and/or chosen to fit individual students' needs
- Working in groups to practice roles before final mock trial
- Role-playing to learn
- Guided notes and procedures

Appendices

- Mock Trial Procedure
- Roles List

Mexican-American Rights

Rights Movements Intro Unit

Grade 8

Day 6 of 7

Overview

- Today we will discuss Mexican-American rights, specifically about work conditions and language expectations. We will read fiction and nonfiction and watch a drama about the topic.

Rationale

- Students in my class are very interested in social justice, so we have been reviewing point of view/purpose/arguments using social justice issues.

Learning Objectives

- SWBAT analyze theme, point of view, and purpose by discussing and writing about the texts and videos used in class.

The Lesson

THE HOOK

Allotted Time: 15 minutes

- ELL Simulation: Teacher will begin class in Spanish, with directions for the Daily Writing in Spanish as well.
- Discussion and Daily Writing: Students will discuss and write about how they think ELL students feel (via a list of adjectives) and what they think schools should do for ELL students. Should there be Spanish public schools? Should ELL students be thrown into classrooms, or isolated in separate classrooms?
- Teacher will explain the purpose and objectives for the day.

CENTRAL LEARNING TASK

Allotted Time: 61-68 minutes

- Students will read a very brief excerpt about working conditions of Mexican American workers and about Cesar Chavez in their textbooks, discussing it with guided questions from me about purpose and point of view.
- Students will work in heterogeneous groups to write a list of reasons they think Mexicans come to the U.S., and a list of problems they encounter here.
- We will read a text based on a true experience about what it's like to endlessly pick strawberries for a very low wage. We will stop to discuss the text critically, think-pair-share style.
- Students will simulate picking strawberries by tying knots on a string tied to their desks. We will define the concept of empathy. Students may react freely.
- We will watch a short video parody of Los Vendidos (about how Americans view Mexican workers) and discuss it. Students may react freely.
- Students will work either individually or in groups to write a letter and/or create a poster advertising for what they think should be done to help ELL students and/or low-wage workers. They need to consider their own purpose and point of view in their project and explain their choices in a few sentences on the back.

CLOSURE

Allotted Time: 7 minutes

- General reactions, comments, questions from each group (free discussion).
- Review today and preview next day.

Assessments

- Daily writing, discussions, letter/poster project, lists

Materials

- Paper & writing utensils
- Red Literature Books
- Projector
- Yarn

Common Core Standards

- [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.8.2](#)
Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including its relationship to the characters, setting, and plot; provide an objective summary of the text.
- [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.8.6](#)
Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text and analyze how the author acknowledges and responds to conflicting evidence or viewpoints.

Academic Language, Syntax, Discourse

- Social Justice, Movements, Rights, oppression, etc.
- Theme, central idea, point of view, purpose, argument
- Persuade, analyze
- Discuss (group + class)
- Write a paragraph (DW)

Differentiation

- Variety of learning styles (videos, string manipulative, discussion, writing, listening to Spanish)
- Independent, small group and whole class time
- Modeling reading aloud
- ELL: language supports & materials available in Spanish

Appendices

None

Appendix B

Artifact 2 - edTPA Environment Commentary

edTPA.

Task 2: Instruction Commentary

Secondary English Language Arts

2. Promoting a Positive Learning Environment

Refer to scenes in the video clips where you provided a positive learning environment.

- a. *How did you demonstrate mutual respect for, rapport with, and responsiveness to students with varied needs and backgrounds, and challenge students to engage in learning?*

One way I demonstrate respect for students is by remembering their comments and bringing them up at later times in the discussion. For example, at 2:48-2:54 of Video 1, I remember to return to a student's earlier comment and invite her to revisit what she said. At 9:43-9:51 of Video 1, I invite a student to share with the class a great point he had told me during small group discussion. This student is typically on the quiet side, so specifically prompting him using praise encouraged him to participate. A second way I demonstrate respect with students is that I am generous with praise for students' contributions and make sure to reword their responses to let them know I am listening as well as to help ensure other students heard and understood what they said. For example, at 3:07-3:35 of Video 1, I use encouraging words such as 'perfect' and 'very good' to let the student know she is spot on with her examples. I also reword her answer carefully; although I rephrase, extend or build on most student responses, it is especially important that I do so for this student because she has an IEP for speech and other students may miss exactly what she is saying. This shows that I am responsive to students with varied needs. These practices create a positive learning environment because all students feel that their contributions are valid, valuable, and worth talking about.

Not only do I demonstrate respect for students, but I also create an environment of respect among students themselves by explicitly talking about respect, by reminding all students that everyone is encouraged to participate, by structuring the learning environment such that students collaborate with others, and by facilitating the sharing of different perspectives. I explicitly remind students to take on the responsibility of acting in a respectful manner. For example, rather than merely commanding students to stop talking while another student is speaking, I tell students to be respectful at 3:57-4:02 and they know that means to be good listeners. Second, I encourage everyone to participate by reminding those who have already participated a lot to give others a chance. This occurs, for example, at 4:54-5:00 of Video 2, where I tell a student I would like to hear from someone else who has not had a chance to speak first. At 7:28-7:31 of Video 2, I offer a specific opportunity for a quiet section of the room to speak up, although they do not do so. The third way I create respect among students is to facilitate teamwork. Throughout the entirety of Video 1, students are working collaboratively in heterogeneous ability groups with students who were not necessarily their friends at the beginning of the year, so that students are exposed to a variety of people and perspectives. Finally, I facilitate the sharing of varied opinions/perspectives in a low-risk environment where, as long as they can be backed up with reasons and textual evidence, all students' interpretations can be considered. For example, at 4:31-5:06 of Video 2, students vote on an opinion question about their interpretation of the text, and I give each side a chance to justify their answer. At 5:09-5:38 of Video 2, I challenge a student's opinion with additional evidence from the text in order to show a justification for the opposing side, and ask him whether that changes his mind or not; he does not change his mind, but changes his reasoning to account for the new piece of evidence brought to his attention. Such a technique promotes critical thinking and encourages students to consider the varied perspectives on different sides.

One simple way I show rapport with my students is that I consistently talk to and call on students using their names, as seen nearly constantly in the 2 video clips. This practice demonstrates that I have a positive relationship with students and care about what they personally have to contribute to the discussion. Using students' names helps create a positive learning environment because students feel personally valued as a member of the class. Another way that I demonstrate rapport with students is by allowing myself to have a sense of humor and relax with my students, who need that comfortable relief from the lesson at times. As seventh graders, many of my students can become fidgety or side-tracked easily, and have a desire to share their loosely related experiences and thoughts. If their comments are not acknowledged, or if they are chastised, some of my students have a tendency to shut down and feel unappreciated, but at the same time, I need to reel the conversation back in to focus on the content and ensure that students are not being disruptive. Thus, I have created a balanced learning environment in which students may make one or two side-comments or fidget a small amount if necessary, but must resume working and relate those comments back to the lesson. I address only behaviors that are truly distracting or unproductive. There are several examples of this balance in the video clips. For instance, at 8:15-8:23 in Video 1, I laugh with my students about the fact that they decorated their answer to look like a horseshoe, but we quickly resume discussion. At 0:24-0:48 of Video 1, one group of students finished discussing the content with me and began talking instead about tangential information. Although I try to relate their comments back to the content, the students again become side-tracked. So, I smile and playfully shake my head but promptly leave the discussion so that the students do not continue talking to me about off-topic information.

Besides demonstrating respect and rapport both with and among students as well as allowing for varied perspectives, I also create a positive learning environment by challenging and engaging students. Throughout Video 1, students are continually engaged and challenged by the pace of the activity. Although it is clearly structured and students are familiar with the routine, the sequence of tasks changes every few minutes. Students spend 2 minutes watching a clip, 4 minutes working in groups with mini white boards, 3 minutes discussing as a class, and repeating the process again, so that my seventh graders, who need constant activity and stimulation, never have enough time to become bored or unengaged. My classroom environment is challenging because, as seen in Video 1, students are asked to think critically about a concept they have just learned that day. Students started the day simply learning terms/techniques related to suspense, and by the end of the lesson, students are asked progressively more challenging questions in each cycle of the activity. First, students are asked to identify a suspense technique used. Then they are asked to give an example and explain how that technique is seen in the video/text. Finally, students are asked to analyze how exactly the use of that technique creates a feeling of suspense for viewers. This progressively more challenging questioning technique is repeated several times throughout Video 1, but one complete round of analysis and discussion occurs at 1:40-2:48. My classroom environment also challenges students to engage in learning because my students are required to do the interpretive work rather than me lecturing at them. Students take the lead in bringing up points and answering questions I guide them with; although I paraphrase and guide, I do not provide the answers. Thus, students must be engaged and cooperate together to construct meaning and challenge themselves to take on an active role in their own learning.

Appendix C

Artifact 3 - Characterization Lesson Plan

Characterization

Sorry, Wrong Number

Grade 7

Day 3 of 10

Overview

- Today we will analyze characters in *Sorry, Wrong Number*, specifically noting direct and indirect characterization.

Rationale

- Students will make personal connections between their lives and the characters of the play so that they will feel more invested while they read.
- It is important to understand how the characters affect each other and, in our own lives, how we are made up of what we say, think, and do.

Learning Objectives

- SWBAT cite textual evidence to support their inferences about characters.
- SWBAT give examples of direct and indirect characterization in the play.

The Lesson

THE HOOK

Allotted Time: 15 minutes

- Daily Writing: How can you tell whether someone is telling the truth?
- Daily Grammar: Use and underline at least one simple sentence in the DW.
- Discuss DW: What if you make a mistake and think someone is lying when they are telling the truth, or vice versa? Which is worse? Using these points, if you were the policeman, would you have believed Mrs. Stevenson? How was she acting on the phone? How did this affect the police man's actions? So whose fault is it that she was murdered?
- Connect: We are going to look at how the people in *Sorry, Wrong Number* are characterized and how they interact with each other.

CENTRAL LEARNING TASK

Allotted Time: 61-68 minutes

- Define direct & indirect characterization on white board. Students take notes.
- Students complete Appendix F in their heterogeneous groups based on Appendix G and H video clips, with guidance from teacher up front (whole class). This graphic organizer helps students cite direct & indirect characterization from the videos.
- Students complete other side of Appendix F in their homogeneous groups (not whole class) to take notes on the characterization of a character assigned to them from *Sorry, Wrong Number* (with more difficult character given to more advanced students). Could project a character traits list on board for inspiration.
- Individuals write paragraph explaining inference about character of their choice and three pieces of evidence to support.

CLOSURE

Allotted Time: 7 minutes

- Turn and talk: Why is understanding characters and people important/helpful in real life? When might it be challenging to get to know them? As authors, how can you help your readers get to know characters?
- Review today (characterization) and preview next day (characterization + compare and contrast media versions).

Assessments

- Formatively assess students' ability to cite evidence to support their inferences about their character, & categorize direct/indirect characterization. Appendix F in groups with help from teacher. Paragraphs individually with no help.

Materials

- Paper & writing utensils
- Collections textbooks
- Projector, character traits list
- White board & markers

Common Core Standards

- [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.7.1](#)
Cite several pieces of textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
- [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.7.6](#)
Analyze how an author develops and contrasts the points of view of different characters or narrators in a text.

Academic Language, Syntax, Discourse

- Cite textual evidence
- Direct & indirect characterization
- Drama / Play
- Inference
- Group and whole class time
- Write a paragraph, write phrases on handouts, draw, quote

Differentiation

- Heterogeneous & homogeneous ability groups, with differentiated character assignments
- Independent, small group and whole class time
- Scaffolded practice with characterization
- ELL: Materials in Spanish

Appendices

- Appendix F: Characterization
- Appendix G: [Mean Girls Video](#)
- Appendix H: [Up Video](#)

Appendix D

Artifact 4 - Culturally Relevant Texts Video

[Click to view video online.](#)

Appendix E

Artifact 5 - Linguistics Case Study

PART I: INTRODUCTION TO THE LEARNER**Participant Information**

My case study participant, here referred to by the pseudonym *Zelda*, is a International student enrolled in one of Vanderbilt's graduate school programs. Although she is from China and speaks Mandarin natively, Zelda began learning English in school as a requirement starting in third grade, and has also briefly studied French and Japanese at the university she attended. Zelda studied English literature in college and has demonstrated her English proficiency by passing the TOEFL exam, but still considers herself (and enthusiastically identifies as) an English Language Learner. In fact, part of the reason she agreed to participate in this case study was to seize an opportunity to practice English.

Zelda's motivation to improve her English is partly due to her intrinsic desire to be a life-long learner and her interest in languages in general. In addition, Zelda plans to teach English as a foreign language in China, and thus has a professional career path that requires a deep understanding of and fluency in the English language. Since Zelda acquired the majority of her English in an academic setting, has primarily utilized her English in academic settings, and plans to teach English in an academic setting, it is no surprise that besides transfer from her native language of Mandarin, Zelda's English skills are also highly influenced by academia. In fact, because Zelda has had limited opportunities to engage in casual usage of English (especially with native speakers), her oral language is just as academic as her writing, rather than being more informal or conversational. Nonetheless, a brief interaction with Zelda quickly reveals that she is a highly skilled speaker of the language. Zelda speaks fluent English with only rare pauses or misunderstandings, and has an impressive academic vocabulary of complex and nuanced words. She is able to talk about abstract ideas without context, to build on others' comments, and even to work through ideas and problems in English (i.e. to think and learn in English), as demonstrated by her ability to succeed in the rigorous coursework at Vanderbilt.

Case Study Context and Methodology

To obtain oral language samples from the case study participant, Zelda and I simply recorded a casual, natural conversation on Peabody campus with no particular prompts or topics. We mostly discussed generic, light things such as plans for fall break. With over thirty minutes of recorded data, the sample is over 3,200 words. To obtain written language samples, Zelda e-mailed me paragraph excerpts she composed for two different assignments here at Vanderbilt. The first sample is from a report about a cultural excursion field trip completed for a class, while the second is a discussion board post reflecting on her own writing progress/development. In total, the written data is 362 words. The written and oral samples were then analyzed according to the major components of linguistic study.

PART II: DESCRIPTION OF THE LEARNER'S WRITTEN AND ORAL LANGUAGE

Zelda's written and oral language samples demonstrate both strengths and weaknesses in the areas of phonology, semantics, grammar (morphology and syntax), and pragmatics.

Phonological Ability

As someone who has been studying English for most of her life, Zelda demonstrates many advanced phonological skills. One of her strengths is her highly accurate pronunciation of English vowels, which can take on several different sounds according to complex phonics rules. For example, Zelda correctly pronounces college, month, worked, one, do, and Hollywood studio, where the letter *o* represents the phonemes /a/, /ə/, /ʌ/, /u/, /ʊ/, and /oo/.

Another of Zelda's phonological strengths is her ability to use stress and juncture appropriately. For example, in the following sentence, Zelda varies her voice and pace to emphasize words that a native English speaker would likely also stress: "A lot of factors will *hinder* the problem of pronunciation. I think I need to do that. And also, my friends, [juncture] they choose to do the *semantic* part because they think the semantic is much *easier* than the phonological part." This demonstrates Zelda's ability to hear the subtle prosody or rhythm of English; it is difficult for a native English speaker to explain why exactly it makes sense to emphasize certain words rather than others. One would never say, "the semantic is much easier *than* the phonological part," for instance. Likewise, pausing after "my friends" in this sentence creates an acceptable phrase that native-speakers do use even though it is informal/nonstandard ("my friends, they choose" vs. "my friends choose"). What would be unacceptable is saying "My friends they choose" with no pause at all; this would be perceived as a grammatical error. Zelda clearly has a sense for what sounds and feels right when speaking English (i.e. prosody).

On the other hand, Zelda also demonstrates two primary phonological weaknesses. First, she consistently pronounces /ð/ and /θ/ like the phoneme /d/. This causes her to produce words like /fadər/ instead of /faðər/ and /dæt/

for that /ðæt/. Because it is so consistent, however, one catches on quickly and does not misunderstand her, so this phoneme substitution does not change her meaning, and she herself has no problem understanding when native English speakers say words with the /ð/ and /θ/ phonemes. This is important to note because some believe that foreign accents are not a problem if they do not interfere with understanding a person's meaning. Zelda may have difficulty with the /ð/ and /θ/ phonemes for two reasons: first, these phonemes do not exist in Mandarin, and second, /d/ has a similar sound and manner of articulation to /ð/ and /θ/ (i.e. the mouth is open to about the same degree and the tongue performs a similar motion but in a different location). This could be explained by the categorical perception problem (a difficulty in distinguishing between the /ð/, /θ/, and /d/ sounds), or by the speech learning model (the theory that sounds similar to those in the native language will be defined through the first language rather than given a distinct category), though these theories seem unlikely since she can hear the difference—just not speak it (Byrnes, 2009).

Zelda's other main phonological weakness in English is using fairly little variety of pitch and tone, resulting in speech that sounds somewhat unemotional. This is because in Mandarin, word stress does not exist, and pitch cannot be used too extensively to convey emotion because it can affect the meaning of a word (i.e. the four tones). Thus, Zelda's minimal use of pitch and tone variation is best explained by a transfer of principles from the first language into the second (Byrnes, 2009). Although the following utterance is perfectly comprehensible, Zelda's personal voice and emotions are essentially lost in English without cues from pitch and tone: "When I was in the flight there were a lot of /tɑmbləns/ [turbulence.] I really at that time I think I will die, I will die. That two hours was so terrible. I don't like it." According to Byrnes, Zelda and other ELLs need to learn the different functions of language in order to adapt their tone and pitch to the appropriate phonology for the purpose, so perhaps Zelda's phonological weakness here can be linked to a need to develop pragmatic skills (Byrnes, 2009).

Semantic Ability

During the informal conversation with Zelda, topics flowed naturally and arose spontaneously with no prompting or guidance, so any vocabulary needed to discuss the subject at hand had to be called upon quickly and with little context or warm up. As a fluent, long-term English speaker, Zelda was able to utilize her semantic knowledge in such a manner with few difficulties. Zelda communicated her intended messages and understood things said to her using accurate and meaningful language. Only once during the 30+ minute dialogue was it necessary to clarify meaning; this occurred when the interviewer asked several questions together without pause (i.e. have you travelled a lot, where all have you been, where are you from), and had to repeat them more slowly for Zelda to process them. Her response was delivered somewhat hesitantly, and primarily answered the last question in the series and did not address the others, perhaps indicating that she did not understand the meaning or the relationship between the questions. Given that this occurred only once, it is clear that Zelda possesses strong receptive and productive semantic skills and can carry on a fast-based, context-independent conversation about a variety of topics with a native English speaker.

In Zelda's two writing samples, taken from class assignment prompts, academic language is much more prominent than in her speaking, featuring difficult words such as *acquisition*, *effectiveness*, *pivotal*, *constructivist*, *redundant*, and *transnational*. Indeed, according to a text content analysis tool, 10.28% of Zelda's writing is composed of difficult words, compared with 5.37% of her speaking sample ("Text Content," 2016). Quantitative analysis of a section of the oral language sample revealed that Zelda produced about 440 unique words per 1507 words, for a fairly low lexical density of 29.2%, compared to 51.11% for her written language ("Text Content," 2016). Clearly, when given the opportunity to contemplate word choice in writing, Zelda is able to correctly use complex and varied terms (i.e. with high lexical diversity).

However, perhaps because of the increased complexity, the writing samples also feature more obvious semantic deviations from standard/native English in terms of word choice. For example, Zelda uses the grammatically correct but semantically unusual phrase *thinking ways* rather than the more typical *ways of thinking* one would expect to see. She also describes needing to research *effective* information, which is also grammatically acceptable but not typically a word a native English speaker would use to characterize information. This occurs a third time when Zelda says that she will *initially* divide her paper into five parts. Normally, the word *initially* implies that something will occur first and then will change, but Zelda does not mean that she changed her mind about the divisions; rather, she attempted to use the word *initially* to convey chronological order (i.e. that first, one should notice the structure of the paper). Thus, Zelda's academic writing indicates that she is familiar with complex words and ideas, but is still grasping at choosing the precise words to talk about them--thus approximating with the next closest option she knows in an understandable but atypical way. It is possible that Zelda has more breadth than depth of semantic knowledge based on this pattern in her written word choices; she knows generally what terms like *initially* and *effective* convey, but lacks a deeper understanding of the words that would help her use them in a more typical manner.

Influencing Factors on Zelda's Semantic Ability

Zelda's word choices are most obviously influenced by the medium and nature of the instance of communication. As noted previously, Zelda's written language features significantly higher lexical diversity than her spoken language, as she selects both more unique and more difficult words to fit the academic language required by the assignments that prompted her writing. More generally, Zelda's highly advanced semantic skills are likely the result of years of formal English language study in China. Since she studied English in an academic setting rather than with English-speaking friends, for example, it makes sense that her academic vocabulary would be highly developed and she would demonstrate more advanced skills on an academic writing assignment than in informal conversation.

Grammatical Ability: Morphology

When speaking with Zelda and when reading her written work, it is clear that she has mastered several complex morphological skills in English. For example, Zelda always forms correct contractions such as *it's*, *I'll*, *I'm*, and *didn't* and uses these appropriately in sentences, matching number and person. This indicates that she understands that free morphemes (e.g. *I* and *am*) can combine to form contractions (e.g. *I'm*). Similarly, Zelda demonstrates proficiency in adding plural-marking inflectional suffixes, especially by the addition of the letter *s* (e.g. *lots of rules*). Zelda also produces words made up of morphemes that change their tense or their part of speech; for example, she uses the word *romantic* (*romance* + *ic*) and *learned* (*learn* + *ed*).

However, Zelda also produces some nonstandard language by using her knowledge of morphology to create possible but atypical constructions. For instance, although Zelda attempted to create the word *romantical*, knowing that *al* could also be an adjective-marking morpheme. Irregular plurals and past verbs seem to be avoided, as the whole conversation features few of them. When Zelda encounters irregularities in English morphology, she avoids applying the regular rules because she knows they are wrong, and instead keeps the word as it is. For instance, knowing that she cannot simply say *thinked*, Zelda produces the phrase *initially I think* when talking about the past. In her writing, she opts for *choose* rather than the irregular past tense verb *chose*, and switches between *get* and *got* and *find* and *found* inconsistently.

Zelda clearly uses inflectional morphemes to modify tenses and plurals in both writing and speech, though other morphological usage is fairly simple. When taking a 50-word sample from both her writing and her speech to calculate Mean Length of Utterance (MLU), she received the same exact score for both mediums. The number of morphemes present in each sample was tallied and then divided by 5 (50 words/10 words for the average sentence). Zelda had 70 morphemes in both her writing and speech samples, resulting in an MLU of 14--about two and a half times more morphologically complex than a five year old. It is striking that Zelda's written and oral language are equally morphologically complex. This indicates that her speech may be influenced by writing or academia; indeed, Zelda learned English formally in school, rather than with friends. This explains why her morphology in both mediums features the same patterns.

Grammatical Ability: Syntax

Zelda's oral and written expressions feature some prominent weaknesses. In her writing, Zelda uses very long sentences that may be technically correct, but could use some punctuation, simplification, and/or word reordering in order to make her intended meaning more clear. This is not so unusual, however, as native speakers often do the same. The unusual features of Zelda's syntax are much smaller details. For example, her written phrase *for my paper of the case study in this semester* is highly nonstandard, as a native speaker would use *case study* as an adjective to describe paper (i.e. *case study paper*) rather than using a formal clause with the word *of*. *In* is also a preposition that would probably not be used by a native speaker; they would typically say *during this semester* or even simply *this semester*. More subtly, Zelda neglects to insert key prepositions that must accompany a compound verb. For instance, she says *think these questions deeply*, skipping the word *about*, and *looking other people's opinion*, skipping *at*. In other cases, she adds a preposition where unneeded, as in *possesses of*. Sometimes, she includes both the verb and preposition, but the order is mixed up, as in *pick up it*. In her oral language, but not in her written language, Zelda occasionally places the definite article *the* before nouns that are not supposed to according to standardized English, such as *I learned the French*. However, she uses articles correctly in nearly all other instances, so this seems to be an exceptional rule about proper nouns that she has not yet internalized, but has mastered when able to think and write.

Despite the fact that syntax is one of Zelda's weakest linguistic skills, she still has many strengths in this area, including correct placement of dependent clauses in relation to the rest of the sentence. In addition, Zelda frequently utilizes transition words such as *however*, *initially*, *if*, *also*, *now*, and many more, which indicates that her language is coherent and logical. She knows what she is saying and where she is trying to go with her message. She also employs grammatical linking devices such as pronouns referring back to people, as in her use of the word *their* to refer back to Indian Americans mentioned earlier in the sentence to avoid repetition.

Overall, Zelda's grammatical ability is equivalent in both her writing and speech, featuring a solid understanding and use of syntactic and morphological rules and patterns, but to further enhance her English, she will need to master irregularities and exceptions in the language.

Pragmatic Ability

Zelda and I engaged in an informal discussion on campus with no set topic or prompts, although our discussion was intentionally planned in order to complete the case study rather than a spontaneous decision to interact as friends. We had never conversed one-on-one before and knew little about each other, so the subject matter was fairly generic, light, and introductory--things like upcoming assignments and fall break plans. We thus positioned ourselves through the discussion as friendly acquaintances and equal peers at Vanderbilt (i.e. members of the same social group), taking turns asking each other questions and responding in some way to each of the other person's statements to connect the conversation and make it flow. Asking questions also signals an interest in the other person--it is a gesture of friendliness. All of these pragmatic traits of the discussion make up the social context of the interview.

In addition to the social context, pragmatics also consists of linguistic and situational contexts. Our conversation featured very little situational context, as we discussed ideas such as plans for break or descriptions of our hometowns while sitting in a barren cubicle on campus. In other words, we had no visual representations or other aids or cues from our physical environment, as our discussion went beyond the bounds of the present situation we were in. Therefore, the linguistic context had a heavier influence on the discussion. It was imperative to understand the actual words and sentences being produced in order to interpret and respond to the message. And as previously mentioned, Zelda was able to respond to statements made in a way that connected ideas or questioned what was said, rather than making many unrelated statements.

In addition to the three pragmatic context types, a competent language user must also adhere to Grice's Maxims of quality, relevance, quantity, and manner. Zelda follows all four, for the most part. She always provides a direct answer to questions and typically restates the question in her response; this demonstrates a mastery of the maxim of quantity, because she does not explain more than what is necessary when asked a question. At times, she will elaborate on why she answered the way she did, which follows the maxim of quality--that one should provide evidence for their answers and be sincere. Zelda approaches the maxim of relation, on the other hand, somewhat ineffectively. Although she does say things that are relevant to every topic, her contributions are not always relevant to the controlling idea, or the relevance is somewhat obscured for lack of appropriate linking statements. For example, when asked what she will do for break, Zelda answers that she will go to Orlando. The maxim of relation would dictate that she explain what she will do there, per the question. However, rather than adhering explicitly to the question's specific parameters, Zelda begins talking about Hurricane Matthew and her friends who work at Disney. These are certainly relevant to the topic of Orlando, but not clearly linked to the question of what she plans to do in Orlando. A native speaker may have made these thoughts relevant by explaining that she was going to Disney in Orlando because her friends work there, and that she was worried that the weather would be bad because of the hurricane. Thus, Zelda's problem with the maxim of relation is also a problem with the maxim of manner--saying things clearly and orderly to avoid being ambiguous (here, seemingly irrelevant).

Overall, then, Zelda's strengths include her ability to use social and linguistic context to have a productive conversation even without situational context to rely upon, and her adherence to the maxims of quality and quantity. She is approaching mastery of the maxims of manner and relation, but still struggles to use linking language to clarify relevance to the parameters of the topic.

Given that Zelda is able to maintain a conversation about the past, present, and future without immediate aids or situational context, it is clear that her excellence in pragmatics stems largely from her advanced vocabulary and syntax. Zelda is familiar with a wide range of abstract vocabulary and complex grammatical tenses, which enables her to engage in conversations about nearly any topic with proficiency. These other linguistic skills were learned and practiced diligently as she received English instruction from childhood onward, likely participating in thousands of both natural and contrived conversations in her lifetime. As her peer, I have also observed her ability to adapt the form of her language for its function, using more academic language in class than in her personal conversation with me, for example. Practice engaging in both types of English communication has allowed her to develop such pragmatic skill.

PART III: ASSESSMENT OF STAGE OF SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

Summary and Influences

Overall, then, Zelda's key linguistic strengths include accurate pronunciation, intuitive prosody, rich vocabulary, advanced morphology, context-independence, and use of linking devices. Her weaknesses include non-variance of pitch and tone, nonstandard semantic phrases, minor grammatical errors (insertion of *the*, absence of prepositions in compound verbs, hesitance with irregular past tense verbs), and nonadherence to the maxim of

relation. It makes sense that Zelda would make frequent use of linking devices and have strong morphological skills and a great vocabulary, given that she learned English in an academic setting where she was likely drilled on vocabulary words, advised to study roots and affixes, and taught to include transitions in academic writing.

On the other hand, transfer of principles from the native language seems to explain her weaknesses. For example, since Mandarin features different tones to distinguish words, Mandarin speakers do not vary their voice as much as English speakers do, since doing so could change the meaning of the word. When this principle is transferred to English, where speakers are expected to add this expressiveness, the result is a bit monotone. Zelda also likely struggles with irregular past tense verbs due to language transfer. In Mandarin, one does not even conjugate verbs for tense or person, so imagine the difficulty of not only learning about conjugation rules, but also memorizing irregularities and exceptions. Zelda seems to have mastered general principles of verb conjugation, but has yet to feel comfortable with exceptional verbs. Mandarin and English also have different phonemes, although Zelda has clearly demonstrated complete mastery of all English phonemes except for /ð/ and /θ/, which makes sense given that Mandarin does not have these sounds at all.

Second Language Acquisition Stage

According to the Student Oral Language Observation Matrix (SOLOM), a rubric designed to assess a person's level of language acquisition on a scale of 1-5, Zelda would place in between a level 4 and 5. Zelda is able to comprehend and engage in conversations as well as academic discussions with almost no need for clarification or repetition, and she is able to both listen and speak at a native-like pace, only rarely pausing to think. Typically, Zelda's advanced semantic and syntactic skills allow her to communicate her message with ease and with correct word order, although, rarely, she circumlocutes around a word or idea. Her pronunciation and prosody approximates native fluency, but the lack of pitch and tone variance gives away her status as a language learner. Thus, Zelda's linguistic abilities in English fit descriptions in both the 4 and 5 columns on the SOLOM rubric—very advanced English proficiency.

Theoretical Framework

The primary second language acquisition theory that this case study analysis relies upon is the interlanguage hypothesis, which posits that errors in the second language are a result of generalizations or transfers of principles from the native language, and that language learners essentially create their own idiolect somewhere in between their L1 and L2 (Byrnes, 2009). As noted earlier, Zelda's linguistic weaknesses are best explained by this transfer, as she struggles with pitch/tone variance, certain phonemes, and irregular verbs in English all due to a lack of each of these three things in Mandarin. It is worth noting that Zelda does not make errors in these areas randomly, but rather, does so in a pattern—consistently speaking in monotone, pronouncing /ð/ and /θ/ as /d/, and dancing around irregular past tense verbs (i.e. rearranging her sentences so as to avoid them). Thus, Zelda has created her own consistent idiolect combining her L1 and L2, as interlanguage hypothesis describes.

For my instructional recommendations, I relied on the interaction hypothesis and Krashen's idea of comprehensible input (Byrnes, 2009). Together, these theories imply several things. First, learners of a language need negative (i.e. corrective/modeling) feedback as well as feedback in general to help them target areas for improvement. In my instructional recommendations for Zelda, I suggest having Zelda receive such correction and modeling in conversations, such as telling her when she pronounces something inaccurately or uses a nonstandard semantic construction. I even recommend having Zelda directly mimic native speakers in a more extreme version of negative feedback. Krashen's theory also indicates that comprehensible input via tool usage is necessary for language learners. In line with this, my instructional plans for Zelda propose that she use pictures, drills, conversations of interest, and so on when practicing vocabulary and grammar on her own.

PART IV: INSTRUCTIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Instructional Recommendations for Zelda's Phonological Development

To help Zelda improve her phonological skills, she could be given instruction and practice in distinguishing place and manner of articulation for the /ð/, /θ/, and /d/ phonemes. She could listen to audio of those sounds, examine diagrams modeling accurate mouth movements, and practice those sounds with someone providing direct feedback. To address a need for more variety of pitch and tone, Zelda should be exposed to people and videos modeling such expression and should practice getting comfortable making such vocal adjustments by mimicking and repeating after those models.

Instructional Recommendations for Zelda's Semantic Development

To maintain and build upon her expansive lexicon, Zelda should continue to practice using English in everyday life in a variety of situations and should aim to incorporate words that are part of her written vocabulary into her spoken vocabulary--perhaps selecting 1-2 words per week to focus on (Byrnes, 2009). Words that Zelda attempts to use correctly but atypically should be explicitly discussed and explained with specific examples of more typical usage to deepen the breadth of vocabulary she already possesses. Zelda should practice new and deepened

vocabulary words 40 times using pictures and other tools to increase comprehensible input, as this many exposures is what is required for true integration into one's lexicon (Byrnes, 2009).

Instructional Recommendations for Zelda's Grammatical Development

Zelda demonstrates high morphological awareness by correctly forming contractions, plurals, and various tenses, but has yet to master irregular verbs (especially past tense), so instruction should aim to build on what she already knows about regular constructions to help her contrast irregular ones, which she will simply have to memorize (although there are also patterns of irregularity that should be pointed out to Zelda). She should practice these verbs regularly, as repeated exposure is required for her to internalize them (Byrnes, 2009). Syntactically, Zelda effectively uses linking devices, transitions, and dependent clauses, but occasionally places definitive articles where unnecessary and has a real problem with compound verbs that include a preposition--either leaving out the preposition, inserting one where it does not belong, or mixing up the order of words in context. This should be the focus of grammar instruction for Zelda; she needs exposure to texts and speech that feature correct usages of such verb forms and she needs to receive feedback on her own speech, with listeners offering the corrected form when responding to her if she makes an error (Byrnes, 2009).

Instructional Recommendations for Zelda's Pragmatic Development

Since Zelda still needs to work on her mastery of the maxims of relation and manner, instruction should focus on helping her pinpoint the underlying central idea of a question or conversation so that she can tailor her response to the parameters of that specific topic, rather than a general one as she seems prone to doing. One way to accomplish this would be to practice generating a central idea from written English, and then applying it to oral conversations (such as having her stop and paraphrase what the other person is asking before offering her answer). Additionally, Zelda should receive instruction on how to insert linking statements in her responses that explain how her response answers or relates back to the question or topic at hand. This will help her strengthen her adherence to the maxim of manner, improving her clarity.

PART V: CRITICAL REFLECTION

Conducting this case study of Zelda has taught me a great deal about linguistics and its implications. I have been introduced to many useful language-analysis tools and procedures I can use in the future, such as the MLU calculator. I learned how to deeply and thoroughly analyze each aspect of a student's linguistic competence in detail, how to connect theories and student background information to observed linguistic performance, and, most importantly, how to align instructional goals and plans with students' specific linguistic strengths and weaknesses. As a teacher, I could conduct a similar in-depth analysis of students (although without writing an entire report on each child) to inform my teaching and best serve my students. I could even have students assess each other to help them develop their metalinguistic and metacognitive abilities and to help them realize that everyone has their own strengths and weaknesses as language learners.

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Appendix F

Artifact 6 - Text Structure Lesson Plan

Text Structure

Holly Sanderson

Grade 3

Lesson 3 of 3; recorded

Overview

- Today students will practice identifying text structure and begin to go a little beyond that by discussing why authors write using these structures and how this knowledge of organization helps readers comprehend texts.

Rationale

- Students will improve their reading comprehension skills by being able to organize the information from the text into different text structures and think from the perspective of the author.

Learning Objectives

- Content: SWBAT identify the text structure of a passage by looking for signal organizational words and putting the content of the text into the appropriate graphic organizer.
- Language: SWBAT explain in small groups how text structure helps authors communicate their message and readers grasp that message

The Lesson

THE HOOK

Allotted Time: 7 minutes

- Show a picture of a pile of bricks and a house. What's the difference? (One is random, one is organized for a purpose). Connect to text structure.
- Prior learning: remind students they learned all the text structures.
- Go over objectives, clarify key academic words together. May use L1.

CENTRAL LEARNING TASK

Allotted Time: 48 minutes

- Students briefly review the text structures (Depending on time and the mood of students: Video? Jigsaw? *Just whole class with document cam?*)
- Teacher explains that text structure helps readers understand and better remember what they read because they can more easily see the organization and purpose the author intends.
- Have students think like a writer. They match five cut-out scenarios to a text structure (e.g. a writer is wanting to write about ___. Which text structure would be best for them to use to accomplish that? Why? How would that sound/what would you say?)
- (Teacher models this process before activity). Students read paragraphs and decide the text structure used. Teacher asks questions to small groups: How do they know which text structure was used? Students highlight signal words and explain. Why did the author pick that structure?
- Each group of students is assigned a different paragraph to put in a graphic organizer. We share via the document cam, white boards, or via jigsaw and discuss how all the paragraphs were about the same topic (e.g. dogs) but they were organized a differently to accomplish different purpose

CLOSURE

Allotted Time: 5 minutes

- Turn and talk: Why is understanding text structure important/helpful? When might it be challenging to figure out? As authors, how can you help your readers easily obtain information from texts?

Assessments

- Formatively assess text structure identification via paragraph worksheets
- Formatively assess text structure explanation via informal group discussions

Materials

- Doc cam: text structure chart, brick analogy pictures, activity modeling
- White boards & markers (?)
- Structure/writer sort cards
- Graphic organizers (?)

Common Core Standards

- [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.3.8](#)
Describe the logical connection between particular sentences and paragraphs in a text (e.g., comparison, cause/effect, first/second/third in a sequence).

Academic Language, Syntax, Discourse

- Discourse: whole group, small group, turn/talk
- Syntax: Write phrases from text info, speak sentences to explain
- Text structure
- Organize
- Cause-effect, problem-solution, sequence/order/chronological, description, compare/contrast

Differentiation & Supports

- Teacher modeling
- Representation of different learning styles (visual, kinesthetic, social)
- Graphic organizers
- May use L1 if necessary
- Highlighting signal words

Appendices

- Paragraph texts
- Word sort cards
- Bricks/house picture
- Graphic organizers (text structures)

Appendix G

Artifact 7 - ESL Speaking Centers PD Presentation

Slides 1-3

Speaking Practice for ELLs During Centers



Activity: Rank the Literacy Skills

- **4 Literacy Skills:** read, write, speak, listen
- **Create 3 Lists:**
 - **List 1:** Put the 4 skills in order of most important to least important for life
 - **List 2:** Put the 4 skills in order of most to least focused on in schools
 - **List 3:** Put the 4 skills in order of most to least developed for your ELL students
- **Discuss:** Do the lists match up? Should they? How could they?

The Focus of This PD

- **Essential Question:** How do we design effective small group reading instruction and centers that help ELL students develop their speaking skills?
- **Rationale:**
 - Our ELL team has been starting to implement small group reading and centers.
 - TCAP data shows a need for improvement in general English proficiency for ELLs, and especially in writing.
 - Writing and speaking are interrelated and are important components of literacy. Our teachers expressed a need for students to practice speaking more.
 - Speaking activities fit well into small group center activities.

Slides 4-6

The Search Process

- Focused on ELL speaking activities deemed effective and student-centered
- Also researched general literacy center tips
- Looked at teacher blog advice, classroom examples on Youtube, and research from the ERIC database on effective literacy centers



Turn and Talk!

- How are you currently supporting students' speaking skills in your classroom? During centers or small group reading instruction?
- Have you had any notable successes? Challenges?



General Tips to Get Students Talking

- **Create a welcoming classroom environment with less emphasis on correctness**
 - Tell students explicitly that mistakes are ok
 - Talk with students outside of class about non-academics.
 - Praise students for speaking
 - Give enough thinking time for students before responding
- **Combat crickets by reenergizing the room**
 - Get students moving and mingling. Do silly warm-up or transition activities (dancing, tongue twisters).
 - Pair students with different speaking partners for variety
 - Incorporate new, interesting conversation topics that they can't resist talking about

Slides 7-9

Specific Speaking Activity Ideas

- Students can **role-play** real-life situations with each other (e.g. going to the doctor, going shopping)
- **Task-based activities**, where students collaborate on a mini-project or a decision (e.g. lifeboat game)
- **Peer interview**: ask and answer general or themed/issue-related questions and summarize peer's responses and opinions to the class afterward
- **Show and tell, debates, 20 questions**, giving drawing or walking **directions** to a blindfolded partner, 'speed-dating' style games (What's Your Secret), board game **Taboo**, **quiz-quiz-trade**, **question-answer ball throw**

Speaking Using Technology

- Voxer app: audio texting
- Blabberize site: record voice to any picture puppet
- Groups create a mini-film
- Obtain practice speaking tests to get used to test format



Try It!

- Choose one speaking activity:
 - Taboo
 - Role-Play going to the doctor
 - Tell a partner how to draw something (eyes closed)
 - Pick a topic to debate



Slides 10-11

Things to Keep in Mind

- Always **model** activities, & possibly **practice** together
- Have brief but **clear directions** available at the centers
- Consider having very **limited reading or writing** during the speaking activity. Required worksheets to complete during the activity can kill conversations.
- However, **accountability** is still important; rather than worksheets, teacher could collect the products of the activity or short checklists (did you accomplish this or not). Accountability can also come from **reporting out** orally once everyone is back together.
- Activities can and often should be **adapted to reflect current learning or reading** in the classroom (e.g. character role playing, taboo with thematic vocabulary)
- **Don't completely ignore** your students who are at centers while you work with a small group; if they seem off-task or confused, help or designate a student helper

Resources

- <http://www.ncte.org/library/NCTEFiles/Resources/Journals/LA/0923-jan2015/LA0923What.pdf>
- <http://www.canadatesl.com/tips-for-encouraging-esl-students-to-talk/>
- <http://www.fluentu.com/english/educator/blog/speaking-activities-for-esl-students/>
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