Final Report of Linguistic Case Study

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December 2016

I.   Introduction to the Learner

i.   Basic information

My participant Gao is a 23-year-old senior student in Jiangxi University of Finance and Economics. As he studies in a college distinguished by its business education, he decides to major in accounting. Both of his parents are accountants, which is one of the contributors to his major choice. They also consider Accounting as a very practical major, because it is a major with comparatively high employment rate, which is a big advantage for students who do not plan to pursue higher education and decide to find a profitable job when graduating from college. Gao speaks Mandarin Chinese as his native language, and he uses Mandarin Chinese to communicate with others all the time. Although he has studied English for 18 years since he was in elementary school, he is still not an English enthusiast. English learning for him is more of the school requirement rather than of interest.

ii.   Linguistic background

In our interviews, Gao says that he speaks Mandarin Chinese everyday to communicate with everyone else under nearly all circumstances. Obviously, he is immersed in a language environment full of Chinese, which contributes a little to his English learning process. He speaks English most at his English classes, and he rarely has opportunities to apply what he learned in classes into practice except for doing homework. He has never studied or traveled abroad, so he has no experience of staying in an environment of

different culture and language. People who use English to communicate with him are often second language learners as well, and this kind of communication often occurs in their English classes when he and his classmates are required to make some intentional or fixed-pattern conversations, most of which are conversations in textbooks. Additionally, lacking of communication with native speakers also results in absence of professional feedbacks from them as well.

Gao is proficient in Chinese and also fluent in speaking English to complete casual conversations. Unlike me who has participated some English competence tests like TOEFL and GRE, Gao seldom needs to take such comprehensive tests to evaluate his overall English proficiency. Furthermore, his first language also exerts influence on his second language acquisition in terms of phonology, semantics and pragmatics (seeing detailed analysis in the second part).

iii.   Educational and cognitive background

Gao started learning English when he was 5 years old. His elementary school provides students with English classes. Unlike other children who take extra curriculum in some commercial English educational institutions, he never attends English classes outside school. As English is a compulsory subject in Chinese education, Gao is required to learn English throughout his educational experience. In China, English classes are always teacher-centered and test-oriented in our generation, and teachers often put more focus on students' reading and writing skills rather than their oral English. Therefore spoken

English is a shortcoming for many Chinese students', and Gao is no exception. As English examinations in Chinese schools are also designed by Chinese English teachers, contents of these tests are consistent with what teachers taught in classes, dominated by questions evaluating reading and writing skills and also the acquisition of grammar. We talked more about his English classes in college in our conversations. Although he majors in Accounting, English is also a compulsory class. In terms of the form of English classes in his college, he mentioned that teachers are always reading textbooks and give them few opportunities to practice their oral English. However, they do have oral English classes taught by native speakers in college, which are absent in his previous English education. But the problem is that, as students like Gao have so little experience on communicating with native speakers, it is hard for the foreign teacher to have smooth conversations with students. Students also lack of confidence in their oral English, and they are afraid of making mistakes. Thus, from Gao's perspective, this kind of oral English classes also make little sense to him. Considering styles of English classes in schools and the number of years he has been learning English for, it is no surprise for me that his English writing skill is pretty good, which ability also contribute to his CET 4 test. CET 4 (College English Test) is an English test specifically designed for college students. Students of whatever majors are supposed to pass this test before graduation, and most companies will measure their candidates' English proficiency based on their CET 4 scores. As Gao demonstrates advantages on reading and writing English, he not only

passed the CET 4 smoothly, but also got an above average score.

iv. Learner's characteristics

Gao is a really hard-working student who possesses perseverance to pursue his goal. He has taken the college entrance examination for twice, because he did not get a satisfied score to be accepted by his ideal university at the first time. So he decided to stay one more year in senior high school and try to earn higher scores in the next time, and he successfully stepped into his ideal college and chose a major he desired to learn. Although his major does not require very high English proficiency, he also makes great efforts in English learning in order to get a competitive score in CET 4, which could be an advantage for him to seek job. Besides, he is also a very easygoing person, which personality allows us to have very joyful and fruitful conversations.

v. Future development

Gao has no plan to study abroad or pursue further education. It is very likely that he will be an accountant in China, so he may hardly get chance to use English in his future career development. What's more, even if he has studied English for so many years, English for him is more like a compulsory assignment rather than a passion-driven interest. Hence, he may not spend so much time on academic English learning in his future life. Instead, he plans to learn some commonly used daily English in case of traveling abroad.

II.   Description of the Learner's Oral and Written Language Abilities

i.   Phonology

Contents of our interviews range from his interests and educational experience to English classes in his university. I also asked him to do several narrative tasks such as reading out some words with similar pronunciations, telling me what happened in a selected picture, and reading aloud a chosen article in line with Chinese college students' English level.

Based on the differentiating instruction and assessment in the language acquisition chart, Gao's English proficiency can be evaluated as level 3, low intermediate, since he speaks in short phrases and simple sentences in our most conversations. By using the Student Oral Language Observation Matrix (SOLOM) to evaluate his English proficiency, he could earn 18 points in total with 4,3,4,4,3 in comprehension, fluency, vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar respectively. He could easily understand most of the questions I asked in our conversation except for some questions including some words beyond his knowledge, such as sophomore, teacher-oriented, proficiency, etc. Although with a lot of pauses, he is able to describe his interests and experience by using limited vocabulary, and some sentences are lacking of essential elements such as subject, preposition, etc. He has Chinese accent in some pronunciation, and basic grammatical errors are inevitable in our interviews as well.

As Gao is now a college student and has been learning English since elementary school, he has already possessed certain amount of vocabulary more than a beginning

English learner. Therefore, he shows good comprehension of all questions in our interviews, and his Chinese accent doesn't hinder understanding of his discourses regarding his interest and experience. In terms of the fluency and cohesion of his oral English, his tempo of speech is quite slow and he often makes pauses or fluency fillers like "Uh…", "Umm…" while searching for appropriate words. For example, "Umm… Because, because our teacher, our English teacher in school, uh… always um… sorry, always give us some work to write, but speaking and reading is, is, is a few." Repetition of words is another typical feature of his discourse while he needs more time to organize the sentence.

As for the pronunciation, Gao has several problems that are pervasive among lots of Chinese English learners as well. The most typical one is that he does not lisp when pronouncing /ð/ and /θ/. He always pronounces words with 'th' such as 'this/ðɪs/, that/ðæt/, the/ðə/, strength/strɛŋθ/' into '/zɪs/, /zæt/, /zə/, /strɛŋs/'. He also has difficulties in differentiating two pairs of consonants, /s/ and /z/, /v/ and /w/. He pronounces /rɪˈzɪstəns/ as /rɪˈsɪstəns/ in that he automatically considers each 's' in this word has the same pronunciation. The same mistake is also made in pronouncing 'organism/ˈɔrgənɪzəm/' as /ˈɔrgənɪsəm/. When it comes to words like 'however', 'everywhere', he mistakenly curls the bottom lip under the top teeth and pronounces /v/ with /w/ instead. In addition, Gao often mispronounces some vowels. For instance, he mispronounces that/zænt/, happen/ˈhænpən/, friction/ˈfrekʃən/, robust/roˈbust/, finally

/ˈfænəli/ in the article I asked him to read. In words having syllables /ɪ/ and /iː/, he will

mispronounce /eɪ/ instead of them, like fifty/ˈfɪfteɪ/, which/weɪtʃ/, least/ leɪst/, disease

/dɪˈzeɪz/, etc. These mistakes could be attributed to the influence of his native language,

since the "interaction hypothesis" (IH) contends that the sound system of the native

language (L1) and second language (L2) will interact with each other. (Baker, et.al, 2008,

p317). In Mandarin Chinese, there is no such sounds like /ð/, /θ/, and /v/, so people tend

to use alike sounds to replace them like /z/, /s/, and /w/. Susan and Larry also found that

" the Mandarin speakers tend to add a schwa to the end of words" (2001). This

phenomenon also exists in Gao's discourses. When speaking English, he is accustomed to

pronounce /ænd/ as /ændə/, /hæd/ as /hædə/, and /edʒ/ as /edʒə/ to deal with the absence

of obstruent in word final position in Mandarin Chinese (Susan & Larry, 2001).

Characteristics of his discourses mentioned above reflects that he has created his own

interlanguage, which possesses rules or patterns only subject to his own (Selinker, 1972).

Meanwhile, some forms of pronunciation, like pronounce all 'th' without lisping, have

also fossilized, and this phenomenon is also referred to fossilization (Selinker, 1972).

What's more, Chinese discourses consist of monosyllable words that lead to no liaison

while speaking, so it is no surprise that Gao's intonation, though fully pronounces each

word, is not as coherent as native speakers.

ii.   Semantics

Both oral and writing samples are used to analyze semantic knowledge of my participant.

Oral samples are collected in casual conversations between Gao and me, and contents of our interviews are related to his daily life including his personal interests, educational experience and English learning experience. Writing samples consist of two parts. The first part includes two writing assignments for his college English classes, one of which is a summary and the other is a retelling of a selected text. The second part contains two different essays, topics of which I choose from TOEFL writing tests. In these two essays, Gao is expected to use more academic content words than in our casual conversations.

From oral samples, we can easily find that Gao has a pretty good acquisition of Tier 1 Words and some knowledge of Tier 2 words (Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2002). The lexical density of his oral samples is 21.48%, which is also consistent with the fact that most words used in his responses are basic words belong to Tier 1. He has no trouble in understanding my questions, and he is also able to give corresponding answers that can be easily understood. Responses concerning questions about his personal interests always begin with sentence patterns like " I think/ I can/ I like/ I want…" etc. He has no problem in expressing his interests by using words like basketball, movies, articles and so on. When describing his college school and answering what kind of movie he likes, he uses more complicated words like economic, technology, exploration, discovery, etc. But hard words are rarely used in our conversations as presented in Table 1. Compared to his low lexical density (21.48%) in oral samples, word choice in his writing assignments seems much better. Text analysis of his writing samples (Table 2) shows that not only the lexical

density is much higher (45.35%), hard words he uses in his essays are also more than those used in casual conversations. Terminology like 'asthma' appears in his essay. The utilization of more formal words and phrases like 'urban dwellers, exhaust, accommodate, alleviate' displays his better use of Tier 2 words in written English than in oral English. Despite his strengths mentioned above, he has difficulty in using words in appropriate contexts. For example, he uses 'brothers' to refer to 'buddy' while talking about his friends with whom he often plays basketball. While depicting the story in the given picture, he uses 'black package' to refer to the old woman's black bag. In his essays, he mistakenly uses 'my wanted university' to express his ideal university. He also inadequately writes phrase like 'elect some selective courses', in which case 'elect' is not supposed to be used. Some words are even too formally or inappropriately used in his essays. For instance, he uses phrases like 'precious land', and 'clear environment'. These misuses manifest that he knows the literal meanings of some words but cannot use them under appropriate circumstances.

Since Tier 1 and Tier 2 words are mostly taught throughout the compulsory education of each Chinese student, which is similar to K-12 education in the US, Gao's acquisition of Tier 1 words and Tier 2 words is not beyond expectation. However, both the process of learning English words and the frequency of using new words have influence on his word choice. English teachers in China always use decontextualized ways to teach new words. Specifically, this way of teaching will lead student to know the

literal meaning and the most commonly used meaning of a new word. Usually, teachers

will directly translate the word into Chinese, in which way the depth of word meaning

would be insufficiently explored (Peregoy & Boyle, 2013). It is worth noticing that

English words often have some synonyms while most words in Chinese do not have.

Thus, words with similar meanings would be translated into same Chinese words.

Without further explanations of their different uses, students like Gao will definitely have

hard time differentiating these synonyms and misuse them as a result. This phenomenon

also reflects the transferring influence of first language on learning second language

(Peregoy & Boyle, 2013). As we have found a gap between lexical density in Gao's oral

samples and lexical density in his writing samples. Emergence of this gap is also

consistent with what Gao has said in our interview that English classes in China put more

emphasis on reading and writing skills rather than listening and speaking proficiency.

Therefore, he is more likely to use more unique words in his writing, and his spoken

English are full of simple words due to lack of practice.

iii.   Grammar (Morphology and Syntax)

Morphological Analysis: As the Mean Length of Utterance (MLU) is a countable measure

of linguistic productivity; I have calculated the total amount of utterances and morphemes

in three oral transcripts of our interviews regarding his private and school life. Then I

calculated the MLU of Gao's oral sample and writing sample respectively by dividing the

number of morphemes by the number of utterances. Concrete data I used to calculate

MLU has been displayed in Table 3 and Table 4 (see appendix). Gao's MLU of oral utterances is 6.04, which displays that he possesses a pretty good command of morphological knowledge. He demonstrates strength in using both free and bound morphemes flexibly. On the one hand, a large amount of free morphemes appear in our conversation, such as 'native', 'language', 'spare', etc. On the other hand, he also develops proficient skills in using derivational and inflectional morphemes. For example, when talking about what kind of books does he like to read he responds with words involving "discovery, science and exploration", and we can also find words like 'helpful, classmate, homework' in our conversations, which indicates that he not only grasps use of prefix like dis-, but also is good at using derivational morphemes to turn verbs into nouns (like 'discovery' and 'exploration') or adjectives (like 'helpful'). Although he displays ability of using inflectional morphemes such as the –s plural marker, the –ed past tense marker, the –ing present participle marker and the –s third person regular tense marker, he would occasionally overuse or leave out specific morphemes, which has been called overregularization according to Byrnes and Wasik (2001, p147) . For instance, he leaves out the –s plural marker in his utterance like 'my parents are accountant', and the –s third person regular tense marker while saying 'my English teacher always give us…'. In terms his writing skill, the MLU of his writing sample is 10.52, which is much higher than that of his oral sample. Much more complicated words choice, such as 'occasionally, extremely, selective, graduation', in his writing samples also present his proficient

mastery of morphological ability. It is worth noticed that though grammatical mistakes are inevitable in his writing samples, the amount of these mistakes in his writing samples are much fewer than those in his responses to my prompts, which may result from he has more time to make proofreading and modification while writing.

Syntactic Analysis: In Gao's oral samples, he rarely uses logical linking devices in his utterances. Most of the time, his utterances use 'I' as the subject, such as 'I think, I can'. He often directly jumps from one topic to another without using any linking devices or transitional words like first, second, then, therefore, etc. Mostly, he uses 'because' and 'so' to explain causal relationships. Word order in his responses is always correct which lead to no hinder in comprehending meanings of sentences. He also has no problem in using pronominal forms to refer to words mentioned in preceding part of text. For example, when talking about his major, he says that 'I think accountant is a useful major, so I choose it', and he also says ' we often read the article in the book and learn the meaning of it'. In these two sentences, 'it' respectively refers to the noun mentioned before to avoid repetition and verbose expression. In his writing samples, logical linking devices enjoy higher frequency than in oral samples. He uses transitional words and phrases such as 'first of all, however, last but not least, for one thing, for another' and so on. As a result, his writing materials are more cohesive than his spoken English, which complies with his English classes dominated by pedagogy of reading and writing. Another problem I noticed in his essay is that tense used are inconsistent in different paragraphs, and he also

occasionally use the wrong tense in sentences. For example, he might use past tense in the first paragraph to introduce some social effects of automobile, and then start to use present tense in the next paragraph. In the sentence 'over 1000 new cars were registered every day', he mistakenly uses past tense while 'every day' is a marker of using present tense. By comparing the completeness of his oral samples to writing samples, we can easily come to a conclusion that his utterances in writing materials are more complete and complicated than in his oral ones.

Global Assessment of grammatical knowledge: In previous mini-analysis, Gao has been scored 3 point in using the SOLOM to assess his grammatical ability (Peregoy & Boyle, 2013, p155). To be more specific, his score of grammar is between 3 and 4 point in that he inevitably makes some errors of grammar, especially frequently in his oral samples, and sometimes these errors would occasionally obscure meaning. His strength falls into skillful using of various morphemes in both oral and written English, and he is also adept at using linking devices that make his writings more coherent and cohesive. However, he still makes too many repetitions of words while speaking English resulting from his limited vocabulary and few chances to practice oral English.

iv.   Pragmatics

In terms of the contexts of our conversations, interviews between my case study participant Gao and me took place in video through video chat on Skype. In this part, contents of the first two interviews were chosen to analyze his pragmatic skills including

introductions of his interests, his college life, and his English-learning experience. The situational contexts of our interviews were informal in that we used Skype to have video chat, and I was the questioner while Gao was the respondent for most of the time. Contents of our conversations were regarding more about his daily life rather than academic fields as well.

As for linguistic context, Gao usually answers my questions directly and concisely instead of adding additional information to help the listener interpret his responses. In the conversation regarding his interests (see Conversation 1 in Appendix), he responds that he likes playing basketball and watch movies without spontaneously explaining reasons. Then I naturally ask more detailed questions such as why he likes playing basketball, how often, and with whom does he plays basketball. When I asked what kind of movie he likes, he not only enumerates categories of movie he likes, but also explains the reason at the same time, which proves that he is able to grasp the rule of our conversations quickly (he anticipates that I will ask why if he doesn't explain). The situational context is really casual since we have been known each other for more than 10 years, and he feels comfortable to talk with me and always answers my questions without any hesitation. As a result, the social context is also relaxed because of our intimate relationship. In our conversations, he also uses some words or phrases that could only be interpreted by people like me who has same native language background, because he knows that I could understand even he does not use them appropriately. For instance, he says that he usually

calls friends who often play basketball with him 'brothers'. In fact, 'dude' or 'buddy' could be more authentic ways of addressing. Since Gao is already a senior student in college, he has no trouble in consciously abiding by four maxims proposed by Grice. However, extent to which he follows each maxim is different. First, he does great job in following the maxim of quality because what all his utterances are truly facts, which are supported by further explanations or evidence in following conversations. For example, he thinks that he is better at writing in English than speaking, and then he adds that they rarely have oral English practice in their English classes to support why his shortcoming is his spoken English. With regard to the quantity maxim, he provides enough information for each single question, but he infrequently provides supplementary information without my guidance. When talked about his English classes, he is expected to describe them thoroughly and elaborately. However, he needs my guiding questions to figure out what aspects he should depict to help me know contents and forms of his English classes. He also follows the maxim of relation proficiently because he always makes direct responses without any digression from the subject. Ambiguities may occasionally appear in our conversations, which results from grammatical mistakes rather than from purposely violation of the maxim of manner. For example, in Conversation 2 (see Appendix), he makes mistakes in using referential chains (PowerPoint slide 21) like he uses 'them' to refer to a singular word 'major', and he corrects that immediately. He also uses 'laws of accounting' to refer to 'principles of accounting' which could cause

confusion. From these examples, it is clear that he is translating rather than creating "reader-based" texts (Byrnes & Wasik, 2009).

As Gao mentioned that his English classes are full of reading and writing assignment, his unskilled oral English is not surprising even though he has studied English for about 18 years. Lack of communication with native speakers affects his communicative competence as well. As the pragmatic proficiency also closely relates to his sematic knowledge, he makes some obscurities because of his superficial and limited literal understanding of words. What's more, his knowledge of semantics also influences his word choice, and then further affect his pragmatic skill.

III. Overall Assessment and SLA Theoretical Framework

i.   Assessment of the learner's current stage of SLA

By using the Language Acquisition Chart to evaluate my participant's level in second language acquisition, Gao's overall English abilities will be placed between level 3 and level 4. First of all, in out conversation, he uses a lot of simple sentences and short phrases instead of using complex sentences to convey information more completely and elaborately. Academic language is more likely to emerge in his writing samples than in oral English. As for his vocabulary, he has a good acquisition of Tier 1 and Tier 2 words, and he also gets a good score in CET 4 test, which requires candidates' vocabulary should be at least 6,000 words according to the test syllabus. Therefore, he probably possesses a repertoire roughly between 7,000 (level 3) and 12,000 (level 4). Second, although grammatical mistakes are inevitable, Gao makes comparatively fewer mistakes in his writings than in our conversations. One of the reasons is that he has more practice on writing than on speaking English in his English classes. Also, he has more time to modify and proofread his writings while he has to give instant answers to my prompts. As the word order, sentence structure, and grammar in Chinese are totally different from those in English, it is acceptable for a second language learner like Gao to use more time to think over before saying sentences in completely correct manners. Generally speaking, he exhibits abilities in using English to accomplish speech acts including telling, describing, restating, questioning, explaining, etc.

In order to evaluate his English proficiency more comprehensively, I also use the Student Oral Language Observation Matrix (SOLOM) to respectively grade his level in comprehension, fluency, vocabulary, pronunciation and grammar. First, he earns 4 points in Comprehension, because he could understand nearly all my questions except for those containing words beyond his lexicon. As for his fluency in English, he could earn 3 points in that he often makes pauses or uses fillers when he is searching for appropriate words or expressions. One reason lead to this problem is his limited vocabulary; the other is lack of oral practice. In terms of vocabulary, he earns 4 points as well. He occasionally uses inappropriate terms because he could only understand the literal meaning of some words due to the teaching methods used by his English teachers. Chinese English teachers always teach vocabulary by simply translating them into Chinese without displaying the appropriate context to use them. Thus, it is even harder for students to differentiate the use of synonyms under different circumstances. To evaluate his pronunciation, he also earns 4 points. Although he has a Chinese accent, it does not hinder my understanding of his utterances. As to the grammar part, he is given 3 points based on what I mentioned above that he makes some errors that may result in obscure meaning. Besides, he also demonstrates strength on morphological aspect. He is able to use derivational and inflectional morphemes proficiently, like using the –s plural marker, the –ed past tense marker, the –ing present participle marker and the –s third person regular tense marker, etc. What's more, Gao also performs well in adhering to Grice's

four maxims of pragmatics. He never violates any maxim on purpose. However, he does comparatively better job in adhering the maxim of quality and the maxim of relation. He always gives me direct responses and rarely makes digressions from our topics. He could makes more efforts on providing more supplementary information while speaking and also choose more accurate words in his utterances.

ii.   Theoretical framework

In my analysis, Cummins' CUP theory has been used to explore the influence of Gao's L1 on second language acquisition. The CUP (Common Underlying Proficiency) theory refers to 'the cognition and knowledge of L1 provides a firm foundation for L2 acquisition'. In other words, 'L1 and L2 have a shared foundation' (PowerPoint slide 41, week 3). For example, sentences basically consist of subjects, predicate verbs, and objects both in Chinese and English. Gao's semantic knowledge in Chinese could also help him to learn English words. Apart from these positive effects of L1, it may also insert some negative factors into second language learning. Interlanguage is a typical product of learning L2 under the influence of L1 (Selinker, 1972). In my analysis, Gao possesses linguistic rules or patterns, particularly in phonological aspect, only subject to his own (Selinker, 1972). This kind of phonological variants could be considered as a phenomenon of fossilization (Selinker, 1972). Specific examples of this fossilization have been mentioned above. What's more, the Critical Period theory also applies to Gao's English learning experience. Since Gao started learning English in very young age, it is a

big advantage for him to learn a second language. However, from the result of the overall assessment on his SLA, the influence of environment could play even more important role in his language learning process. If Gao is learning in an English immersion environment, his oral English and communicative competence could probably be much better.

IV. Instructional Plans for the Learner

First of all, I would strongly recommend Gao to have more oral practice with native speakers. Because communicating with native speaker is one of the most effective ways to improve his English language proficiency in terms of phonology, semantics, grammar, and pragmatics. On the one hand, talking with native speakers is the most direct way to be exposed to the authentic manners of pronunciation. One the other hand, more practice gives him more opportunities to use words and expressions in appropriate contexts, which could improve his pragmatics skills as well. To be specific, this kind of communication could take place in English club like English corner or at school with International students who come to study in China, and they may even have some chat on Chinese learning. Apart from oral practices, finding a pen pal online is also a good way to improve communicative competence and writing skills.

From a phonological aspect, as Gao has typical pronunciation problems (the pronunciation of 'th', the two pairs of consonants mentioned in phonology analysis in part Ⅱ, and adding schwa at the end of some words), it is necessary for him to summarize these problems carefully, and attempt to explore how to pronounce them correctly, and then try to avoid mispronunciation each time pronouncing them. It is not easy for a second language learner to change his/her own interlanguage, even it would be the most difficult part, but it still worth trying. Watching English movies and listening to some English radio programs or talk shows are also great access for him to improve his

listening skills, which is also one of his drawbacks of learning English.

In terms recommendations to improve his semantic skills, considering Gao has already possessed the knowledge of certain amount of words and their meanings, I would recommend him to find out English explanation of words he already knew and try to understand and remember words in some sample sentences or reading materials. English dictionaries like *The Merriam-Webster Collegiate Dictionary* and *The Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary* are highly recommended when searching new words. Since there are few opportunities for students to speak on English classes, Gao needs to participate in some extra curriculum activities or English programs to extend his semantic knowledge of new words and use them in appropriate contexts.

With respect to his grammar, he has obtained enough morphological and syntactic knowledge and he makes fewer grammatical mistakes in his writing samples than in oral samples. Therefore, what is critical for him is to try to use more synonyms to avoid repetitions. *Thesaurus.com* could be a very helpful tool to search for and learni how to use synonyms. As for grammatical errors in writings, it would be beneficial for him to find a partner or teacher to make modification of his writings than only proofreading by himself.

As Gao doesn't major in English, he does not have so many opportunities to use academic language in writing and speaking. So using appropriate English to

communicate with others in different contexts is rather critical for him, which is regard to his pragmatic skills in English. Besides those benefits of oral practice I mentioned above, there are a lot of books regarding communicative English. Some books containing contents of business English could be helpful for his future career as his major is accounting. To give more support of his knowledge of pragmatics, a particular resource I would recommend him to use is the National Public Radio, interviews in which would model how to respond to questions offering enough information.

V.   Critical Reflection

In this case study, I have reviewed some theories concerning L1 acquisition I used to learn in my undergraduate school, and also learned some new theories and concepts like the Interactionist theory, CUP theory, interlanguage hypothesis and how to connect these theories with learner's second language acquisition.

Also, I used tools like the Language Acquisition Chart and SOLOM to systematically evaluate my participant's English language proficiency from aspects of phonology, semantics, grammar, and pragmatics. When I was in China, I couldn't find such kind of evaluative tools to measure students. Students' English proficiency is always evaluated by their scores in English examinations, which could be one-sided and not comprehensive enough. Supportive indexes like the lexical density and MLU are also valuable in figuring out the strengths and areas of improvement of English learners. Additionally, analysis from different perspectives (phonology, semantics, grammar, and pragmatics) also deepens my understanding of influence of L1 on L2, no matter positive or negative.

As I am more likely to teach English in China, it is worth notice that English classes in Chines are still test-oriented and teacher-centered. By using those evaluative and analyzing tools, I could effectively figure our English levels of my students. As I have found that lack of oral practice is a universal problem for most English leaners in China, I would provide my students with more resources to have communication with native

speakers. Often, students are not short of the capacity in learning English, but lack

efficient methods and learning resources. Therefore, teachers should not only teach their

knowledge but also guide them to use them effectively. For example, IPA themselves

could be useless if students only know what is IPA and how many phonemes does IPA

include. It is more important to learn how to use them recite words more efficiently and

how to spell words if students only know the pronunciation of a specific word. In

addition, I could download some excellent documentaries made by BBC, some talk

shows and TV series, then sharing with my students and also providing them with

website or apps to give them accesses to these resources.

One of the biggest problems in Chinese education is that there are too many students

in a single class. It is hard for a teacher to pay enough attention to an individual student in

a classroom consisted of 50, even 60 students. Under this circumstance, evaluative tools

we learned in this class could hardly be made full use of. Hence, students in a big class

are supposed to be separated into small classes, which is a method that my high school

took on our English classes. Then, my class will switch the emphasis on reading, writing,

and grammar to the improvement of students' communicative competence. Thus the

involvement of contexts is rather important to achieve this goal. Students need more

instruction on how to use after they have acquired quite a bit of knowledge on phonology,

semantics, and grammar.

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Appendix

Table 1. Text Analysis of Oral Samples

Total Word Count	1755
Total Unique Words	377
Number of Sentences	171
Average Sentence Length	10.26
Hard Words	50 (2.85%)
Lexical Density	21.48%

Table 2. Text Analysis of Writing Samples

Total Word Count	1173
Total Unique Words	532
Number of Sentences	74
Average Sentence Length	15.85
Hard Words	93 (7.93%)
Lexical Density	45.35%

Table 3. Mean Length of Utterance (MLU) of Oral Samples

Total Words	712
Total Utterances	126
Total Morphemes	761
Mean Length of Utterance (MLU)	6.04

Table 4. Mean Length of Utterance (MLU) of Writing Samples

Total Words	639
Total Utterances	70
Total Morphemes	737
Mean Length of Utterance (MLU)	10.52

Conversation 1:

L: Ok, what about other kind of things, about your interests?

G: Ok, my, uh, my interest. Ok I like basketball, movie, and(e) music, and.. and what..

L: So how often do you play basketball?

G: Uh…Three times a week at least.

L: Ok, why do you like basketball?

G: Uh… I think(sink) basketball can make me more healthy and bring me more friends.

L: So you play basketball with your friends most of the time?

G: Uh… Sometimes we call them brothers.

L: Ok, I know that. What about movies? What kind of movies do you like, or which movie do you like best.

G: Uh… I like all kinds of movies, because uh… different movies give me different uh… I don't know how to say, different feelings, it can bring me something to uh… to, how to say, it can bring me something to, oh sorry… I forgot how to say.

Conversation 2:

L: And what is your major?

G: Major. Account? Accountant?

L: Accounting, Ok. So why do you choose this as your major?

G: Uh… That's a mistake. (Laugh)

L: That's a mistake? Why? Because your parents want you to be an accountant?

G: Yeah, my parents are accountant(s), both of them are accountant(s), and, I think(sink) it's a very useful major, so I choose them… I choose it.

L: Can you tell me what kind of classes do you take at school?

G: Uh…it's… All the class about the accountant, like uh… how to say, the rule of the accountant, some about the laws of the accountant, uh… and..