

Capstone Portfolio on Teaching Writing to English Language Learners

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## CAPSTONE ELL PORTFOLIO

### Abstract

This ELL Portfolio illustrates my knowledge and practice in teaching English writing to English Language Learners (ELLs) through the description and analysis of the artifacts that I have accomplished during my M.Ed. studies in the ELL program at Peabody College. These artifacts demonstrate my competence according to TESOL standards, my current philosophy of ELL writing instruction, and an unswerving determination to stride forward in a lifelong profession of writing instruction and research in ESL/EFL context. This portfolio is comprised of three parts: 1) my philosophy of teaching writing, 2) description and analysis of the artifacts against the TESOL standards for ESL/EFL teachers, 3) application to practice. In the first part, I take both cognitive and social constructionist views about writing instruction, and discuss how these two dichotomous approaches can complement each other in teaching writing to ELL students. In the second part, I present my understanding of the TESOL standards, describing and analyzing the artifacts I have created during my studies in ELL program and demonstrating my professional knowledge in each domain. A special effort is made here to display how these standards can be accomplished in ELL writing instruction via the analysis of the artifacts. In the third part, I reflect upon the efforts I have devoted to ELL writing instruction and research during my 2 years of study in the ELL program and envision my professional development after graduation from Vanderbilt University. In particular, I identify potential challenges in ELL writing instruction and discuss how I will overcome these challenges in my future teaching. Taking away what I have learned in ELL program, I present a vision of my future career as an ELL writing instructor and researcher.

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**My Philosophy of Teaching Writing**

Informed by both cognitive approaches and social constructionist views towards writing, I conceptualize writing as a discursive problem-solving process as well as an inherently social process that requires mediational activity among writer, reader, text and context for writing. Therefore, I believe that an ELL writing teacher should on the one hand attend to English learners' mental activities and cognitive development in their composing process, and on the other hand, pay due attention to the cultural, educational and sociopolitical contexts where learners' writing takes place, helping them shape their writing to meet the expectations of the target discourse community.

**Process Approach in Writing Instruction**

From a cognitive perspective, writing is a problem-solving act, accomplished by an individual writer whose audience "is only as immediately present as the writer's imagination, knowledge, and experiences allow" (McCutchen, 2006). Hayes (1996) in his revised model, identified three nonlinear and recursive mental moves that skilled writers engage in when composing almost any kind of writing tasks, namely, text interpretation, reflection, and text production. The model also tapped how these cognitive activities interact with long-term memory, short-term memory and motivation. The demands and constraints in ELL's writing process are distinct when compared with those of L1 writing process (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2014). ELL students are faced with additional cognitive and linguistic constraints as they draw on their emerging target language to express their ideas and juggle a number of tasks within working memory (Olson, Scarcella, & Matuchniak, 2013). Generally speaking, ELL students need teacher's support in every stage of their composing process.

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In this sense, process approach to writing instruction provides teacher opportunities to “modify student behavior to match those of good writers” (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2014). Teaching students strategies for planning, revising and editing in their composing process has been documented as having a dramatic effect on the quality of student writing (Graham & Perin, 2007). In particular, process strategies such as prewriting and drafting are claimed to be effective for ELL students because planning skills and sufficient time for drafting offer them relief from fear of error and increase their inclination to “get the words on paper” (National Writing Project & Nagin, 2006).

### **Developing Students’ Critical Thinking**

Writing entails higher levels of thinking skills, instead of merely rote learning and reproducing information. Thus, it is advisable for teachers to help enhance students’ critical thinking in writing instruction. In dealing with argumentative writing, for instance, students need to draw on a set of inquiry strategies whereby they collect and analyze data, pose hypotheses, evaluate how the evidence may support a claim, and even consider a possible counter-argument and rebuttal (National Writing Project & Nagin, 2006). In light of this, instructing students on inquiry strategies will help develop their procedural knowledge related to critical thinking and problem-solving that is essential to generate high quality writing pieces. Instruction on metacognitive strategies can also assist students in becoming more reflective thinkers. For example, visualizing tools such as graphic organizers that encourage students to manipulate their own process of thinking have been proven effective to aid students in generating content and improve writing quality (Dwyer, Hogan, & Stewart, 2011; Lott & Read, 2015; Meyer, 2005). In addition, metacognitive revision is one of the key steps to improve the quality of writing because

revision allows for an opportunity to reflect on one's own thoughts, form and apply evaluative criteria, and enhance one's writing ability (Scardamalia & Bereiter, 1986).

### **Tapping Students' Prior Knowledge**

A teacher should have adequate knowledge about students' prior knowledge in order to provide them with appropriate support in writing. Students' prior knowledge about texts--their genre categories, formal properties and purposes--constitutes schematic knowledge that serves as a mental framework for their future language learning (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2014). The schemata of ELL writers are often entrenched in their distinctive linguistic and cultural backgrounds and feature unique rhetorical conventions. This schematic knowledge takes a constitutive role in both individual sense making of the texts and generating writing (Weaver, 2002).

Schema theory indicates that teachers of writing should engage students in activating their existing schemata and building on their prior learning experiences when selecting learning materials and composing tasks. Hence, utilizing culturally and linguistically relevant mentor texts can encourage them to draw on their background experiences and home language to generate authentic writing (Newman, 2012). Granting students with the freedom to choose writing topics that they are familiar with or interested in is also an effective way to motivate them to write (Chandler-Olcott & Mahar 2001).

ELL students' writing is strongly influenced by their unique prior knowledge which is couched in their primary languages with L1-specific rhetorical patterns (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2014). Being aware of how rhetorical patterns in written language differ crossculturally and crosslinguistically can help teachers realize what strengths and weaknesses their students bring to the writing class and make fairer judgement of their writing ability. Appreciating ELL students' linguistic and cultural traditions exhibited in their writings and in turn helping them build on

these traditions is also a prerequisite for forging a “sustained, trusting, respectful and reciprocal relationships between teachers and students” (Gay, 2010).

### **Scaffolding through Interaction and Collaboration**

The most effective learning occurs when the learners move within their zone of proximal development (ZPD), bridging the gap between what they can do unaided and what they are able to achieve with outside help from more experienced peers or adults (Vygotsky, 1978). Based on the notion of ZPD, a teacher’s job is therefore to provide specific support for the learners in order to “scaffold” them until they can independently complete a learning task (Hammond & Gibbons, 2005). Support aimed to lead students move forward within their ZPD can be in the form of social interactions with more capable peers or teachers (Bodrova, & Leong, 1998).

Sociocultural theories suggest “the root of learning and development exist in human sociocultural interactions and the way groups, not individuals, construct understanding” (Alexander, 2006). Studies have also shown that English learners are more engaged through interaction in small groups or with partners than they were in whole-class instruction or individual work (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2017). In writing instruction, interactive activities have often been introduced as effective pedagogical strategies to help students improve their writing quality. Ferretti and Lewis (2013) advocate using dialogic approach to engage students in various community activities in argumentative writing instruction, whereby their own standpoints towards one issue would be examined in a collaborative way and their understanding of other perspectives are also promoted. Ferris and Hedgcock (2014) argue for the benefits of peer response activities in writing instruction and advocate integrating peer response into composition course and lesson design.

### **Developing Students’ Academic Language**



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From the social constructionist view, writing can be conceptualized as a socially situated activity that occurs within and among discourse communities (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2014). The discourse community is commonly composed of expert and apprentice members who operate on the basis of implicit and explicit public goals. Discourse communities “shape our perception of the world, including how we communicate, interact and understand” (Tardy, 2009).

Academic discourse, which is typical in school settings, can be characterized by certain linguistic features that distinguish it from other registers. Mastery of academic language is fundamental for success with demanding literacy tasks, especially writing essays in persuasive or analytic genres (Snow & Uccelli, 2009). Cummins (2008) formulated a distinction between Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) and Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills (BICS) and declared that BICS are easy and relatively automatically acquired while acquiring CALP is a lengthier process. Studies have established significant relationship between academic language features and writing quality. A contrastive analysis between the writings by a seventh-grader writer and an adult writer reveals that the adult written piece exhibit more sophisticated academic language features than that of the student (Snow & Uccelli, 2009). Uccelli, Dobbs and Scott (2013) identified some key academic language features (e.g., organizational markers, epistemic hedges) as significant indicators of adolescent students’ writing quality. Accordingly, sufficient attention should be paid to students’ academic language development in writing instruction. In light of ELL writers’ still developing academic language proficiency, it is favorable for teachers to implement language-conscious instruction that supports these writers to attend to a range of language choices in their writing process (Galloway & Uccelli, 2015). Explicitly instructing on academic language can help ELL students achieve academic success in every content area, including writing (Freeman & Freeman, 2009). An

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applicable practice on this score is to offer students a stock of model templates to help them generate key rhetorical moves to communicate sophisticated ideas, as is demonstrated in the book *They Say / I Say* by Graff and Birkenstein (2014).

### **Conclusion**

Writing can be viewed as both a problem-solving task that entails tremendous cognitive effort on the part of the individual and as a social activity that is simultaneously shaping and shaped by social circumstances as it serves to facilitate communication among and between people. Integrating the cognitive perspective and the sociocultural approach in writing studies, I believe that student writers should be supported to facilitate their cognitive moves in their writing process and at the same time be scaffolded with a broader view of the sociocultural contexts in which they are situated. I hereby advocate the implementation of process approach and strategy instruction to relieve their cognitive constraints and promote their critical thinking in their writing. In addition, I believe that teachers of writing should also value what ELL students bring to the classroom as “funds of knowledge” (Moll, Gonzalez, Neff, & Amanti, 1992) and ensure that their distinctive cultural and linguistic backgrounds serve as positive contributions to their learning experiences. To achieve this, writing teachers should try to forge a supportive learning community that features equity and mutual respect, where ELL students are engaged in multiple interactions and collaborations with each other to facilitate their learning of writing. Writing teachers should also be aware of the distinctive academic language features required in school writing tasks and provide them adequate support in academic language development.

**Artifact Analysis according to TESOL Standards for ESL/EFL Teachers**

TESOL standards set the guidelines concerning professional expertise needed by ESL educators to work with English learners. In order to demonstrate my understanding and mastery of these standards as a prospective ELL writing teacher, I will present several artifacts ranging from writing instructional plans and writing research papers. The artifacts will be described and analyzed in terms of their conformance to each domain of the seven TESOL standards, namely, 1) Planning, 2) Instructing, 3) Assessing, 4) Identity and Context, 5) Language Proficiency, 6) Learning, 7) Content, 8) Commitment and Professionalism. Special focus will be given to the following elements: 1) learners and learning, 2) the learning environment, 3) curriculum, and 4) assessment.

**Domain: Planning**

*Standard 1: Teachers plan instruction to promote learning and meet learner goals, and modify plans to assure learner engagement and achievement.*

In order to make the instruction effective, it is crucial for teachers to plan carefully before delivering the lesson. An efficacious lesson plan entails the teacher's knowledge of what learners already know and accordingly what pedagogical approach should be employed to guide them towards the desired instructional goals. Such knowledge would facilitate teachers' efforts in providing appropriate scaffolding to bridge the gap between what students can do unaided and what they are able to achieve with outside help (Vygotsky, 1978). Therefore, teachers need to explore demographic information about the learners, their learning preferences and career aspirations in order to tailor the instruction to their needs. In addition, an instructional plan should be flexible enough to allow for contingent alternatives, given students' non-linear progress in learning and unpredictable variables in the learning environment. Effective planning

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should also incorporate effective assessment to evaluate students' performances in and after the instruction, which would in turn help teachers to adjust their plans to better accommodate student's needs.

I herein present a **lesson plan on reflection writing** (see Artifact A) as a demonstration of my understanding of this standard. This lesson, a part of the "Oklahoma Land Rush" unit mandated by MNPS **curriculum**, continues to build on **learners'** knowledge of the important historical event of 1889 by engaging them in reflecting upon what strategies the author uses to create images in the text *Build in a day: The Oklahoma Land Rush*. At the end of the lesson, students will be able to write a reflective essay on image-creating strategies exhibited in the text.

Before devising the plan, I gathered the demographic information of the **learners**, a culturally and linguistically diverse group. I was also clear that the intended **learners** of this lesson plan are ELD 3 students at Wright Middle School, which means the majority of them have achieved an average Level 3 (Developing) according to the WIDA ELD Standards for Kindergarten-Grade 12. In addition, I conversed with the **learners'** current EL teacher about their prior knowledge of the topic, learning that in previous lessons the teacher offered a brief introduction of the historical event to provide them with an overview of its historical context and significance. In this lesson, the teacher also guided **learners** to identify and discuss some "vivid moments" in the text.

Taking the above information into consideration, this lesson plan taps into the **learners'** prior knowledge, designing and sequencing activities in a way that ensures the "gradual release of responsibility" (Echevarria et al., 2017). The plan fosters a supportive **learning environment** by prioritizing student-teacher interactions to allow for contingent scaffolding from the teacher. This formative **assessment** ensures the **learners** are on the right track towards the desired

**learning** goals. For instance, at the beginning of the lesson, I plan to raise a series of questions to inspire **learners'** discussion revolving around the key words "image" and "reflection". This is aimed to check the **learners'** prior knowledge from previous lessons as well as to make sure learners are clear about the learning goals. For another example, in the "Search and Match" game where **learners** will be shown two pictures about the "Oklahoma Land Rush" and asked to search in the text for sentences that match the picture, **learners** are not only supposed to select the sentences that match but also required to state clearly why they choose the sentences. This grants me opportunities to check how well the **learners** understand the author's image-creating strategy and correspondingly guide the **learners** in analyzing the author's strategies demonstrated in the text to create images, such as "concrete nouns", "strong verbs", "vivid adjectives" and "figurative language". In addition, this supportive **learning environment** also features interaction and cooperation among peers. In this lesson, sufficient pair work time is guaranteed so that **learners** can read aloud their chosen sentences to peers and share orally the images in their mind with each other. In the latter part of the lesson, **learners** are also encouraged to share their reflection essays in class and get feedback from their classmates.

**Assessment** is interwoven into the lesson plan through frequent teacher-student interactions. This performance-based **assessment** allows me to examine how **learners** actually perform in their **learning** process and provides me feedback on the spot, allowing me to modify the plan as needed to ensure that **learners** are engaged and progressing towards the **learning** goals. At the end of this lesson, students are supposed to complete their reflection essays and have them included into their writing portfolio. I will present the **learners** two self-**assessment** questions (see see Artifact A) to help them reflect on their own achievement in accomplishing the writing task. I also add my comments to each of their essays as teacher evaluation. In this way,

the **learners'** current writing work will be **assessed** against the continuum of their on-going maturing towards competent writers.

**Domain: Instructing**

*Standard 2: Teachers create supportive environments that engage all learners in purposeful learning and promote respectful classroom interactions.*

Language development is essentially a social process given the collective nature of constructing linguistic knowledge and making meaning. An individual develops his language competence via interaction with a more knowledgeable other over time (Hull & Moje, 2012). In school contexts, English learners are more engaged through interaction in small groups or with partners than they were in whole-class instruction or individual work (Echevarria et al., 2017). Therefore, it is quite necessary for teachers to foster a supportive environment where learners are engaged in a variety of interactions to develop their language proficiency. In writing instruction, a safe, collaborative and supportive learning environment is of particular importance to support learners in eliciting their own thoughts, enhancing their audience awareness, and developing flexible and open-minded thinking in their writing.

The artifact I provide here to demonstrate my understanding of this domain is a **persuasive writing lesson plan** (see Artifact B) with the target learners of Grade 7 EFL students in China. This lesson is one integral part of a unit concentrating on teaching the genre of persuasive essays as required by *National English Curriculum for Chinese Primary Schools and Junior/Senior Middle Schools* issued in 2011. It adopts a process approach to writing instruction and devotes a large share of the time in prewriting activities. Building on the **learners'** prior knowledge about argumentative structure, this lesson is designed to help develop **learners'** capability to defend their claims by raising legitimate reasons.

To facilitate the elicitation of the **learners'** proposed reasons in support of their claims, I create an interactive and cooperative **learning environment** through a variety of activities such as brainstorming, peer dialogues, student-teacher conversations and class sharing. In studying and analyzing the mentor persuasive text, for instance, **learners** are involved in peer collaboration to explore the position held by the author and accordingly the reasons the author raises to support his position. A whole-class discussion led by the teacher then follows to help **learners** list out all the supporting reasons exhibited in the mentor text. Such a conversational approach with peer cooperation sequenced prior to class discussion helps lower **learners'** affective filter level (Krashen, 1982), thus facilitating their comprehension of the mentor text.

The inclusion of peer dialogue in argumentative writing instruction has been proven effective in cultivating open-minded thinking (e.g., Ferretti & Lewis, 2013; Kuhn & Crowell, 2011; Morgan & Beaumont, 2003; Tanaka, 2014). This lesson adopts a dialogic approach whereby the **learners** examine the credibility of their peers' proposed reasons by posing a list of critical questions. This peer dialogue enables the **learners** to reflect on their own thinking and moreover leads them to modify their positions and supporting reasons when necessary to avoid being bigoted.

In terms of **assessment**, the lesson adopts peer evaluation which also contributes to its interactive **learning environment**. At the end of the lesson, **learners** are assigned a Peer Assessment Checklist (see Artifact B) to evaluate their partner based on their observation of his/her performance in class. This informal **assessment** is helpful in that it provides the **learners** a peer's perspective of their progress towards the **learning** goals stipulated in the **curriculum** without the pressure of formal teacher-dominated assessment. This **assessment** is also conducive to the cultivation of a cooperative and supportive **learning environment**.

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### **Domain: Assessing**

*Standard 3: 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.*

Language assessment provides valuable information for teachers to monitor learners' progress against the curriculum standards and makes correspondent adjustment of their teaching. A competent teacher should thus possess a toolkit of assessment choices, formative and summative, formal and informal to gauge learners' intellectual and linguistic development over time. In addition, the teacher should have sufficient knowledge about assessment tools, taking heed of their reliability and validity as well as feasibility when applied to different contexts. Teachers should strive for accurate examination, making cautious interpretations of the assessment results to avoid any negative washback that inhibits learners' learning. In writing assessment, both learners' writing processes and products need to be evaluated to generate a full picture of the learners' achievement. In addition, writing assessment should be tightly linked to curriculum design, lesson planning, task and assignment development and feedback processes to directly or indirectly promote learners' progress as independent writers. Meanwhile, writing assessment results also inform teachers of the effectiveness of their instruction, as reflected in learner progress towards writing goals.

To illustrate my grasp of this standard, I present here **an analysis project** (see Artifact C) conducted on Sherwan, a Grade 5 ELD student from Wright Middle School. This longitudinal



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project monitors and **assesses** the **learner's** English language development over one semester. It combines both summative standardized **assessment** tools (e.g. Oral and Written Language Scales) and formative observational checklist (such as Classroom Language Interaction Inventory). The project examines the **learner's** linguistic progress not in isolation but within the specific context of school **environment**, **curriculum** requirements and state language policy. The **learner's** cultural identity and educational background are also taken into consideration to help delineate a more complete picture of his language development. Informed by **assessment** results, instructional suggestions and more comprehensive **assessment** plans are proffered in the latter part of the project to support the **learner's** sustained progress in English development.

In this **assessment** project, I devote some space to the examination of the **learner's learning environment** that can exert a positive or negative influence on students' language development. I present demographic features of the student body at Wright Middle School by referring to the school website and explore the sociocultural **environment** at Wright Middle School using a checklist (see Appendix D) devised by Collier (2007). I also discuss the state and federal language policies and **assessment** requirements as well as the influence of No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) on minority learners. This information sets the **learner's** language development in a broader background and helps me comprehend more deeply the interaction between the **learning** process and **environment**.

I demonstrate my mastery of a storehouse of **assessment** tools when evaluating the **learner's** writing development. I adopt an observational protocol (Classroom Language Interaction Inventory) to track how the **learner** expresses himself through writing in his **learning** process. I use a Spelling Inventory Feature Guide to examine the **learner's** knowledge and performance in spelling. In order to investigate how the **learner** writes independently in

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authentic settings, I also **assess** a self-introduction letter he wrote to me. The variety of **assessment** tools tap into both the **learner's** writing process and his products, presenting a dynamic picture of the **learner's** writing development.

In this project, information gathered from the whole set of **assessment** tools is interpreted in relation to the **learner's** distinctive cultural and linguistic background, the school **environment** and **curriculum** standards. Validity and reliability of the tools are also examined before the discussion of the **learner's** performance and potential in writing reflected in these **assessments**. Informed by the **assessment** outcomes, I propose a set of instructional strategies to help the **learner** progress towards a qualified writer. For instance, I recommend a systematic instruction of spelling rules to the **learner** based on his weak performance on the Spelling Inventory Feature Guide. This recommendation also takes into consideration the fact that the **learner** had little instruction in English spelling rules before coming to the U.S.. Hence, I believe such a one-on-one spelling instruction will accommodate the **learner's** special needs and help him proceed more steadily in English writing.

### **Domain: Identity and Context**

*Standard 4: Teachers understand the importance of who learners are and how their communities, heritages and goals shape learning and expectations of learning. Teachers recognize the importance how context contributes to identity formation and therefore influence learning. Teachers use this knowledge of identity and settings in planning, instructing and assessing.*

Teachers should deem the learner as a whole person, not merely as a “student”, respecting his/her cultural and linguistic background, ethnic identity and personal experiences (Moll et al., 1992). This facilitates teachers’ understanding of the world of their learners and helps build

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“sustained, trusting, respectful and reciprocal relationships between teachers and students” (Gay, 2010). In addition, the heritages, knowledge and skills learners acquire at home and in the community can be valuable cultural and cognitive resources with great utility for classroom instruction. Therefore, teachers should affirm the particular linguistic and cultural identity of the learners by representing the learners’ cultures and experiences in curriculum planning. Efforts to affirm learners’ identity should also extend to assessment of their work. For instance, the specific ethnic and cultural traditions of ELL learners may shape their way of approaching knowledge and interacting with others through both oral and written expression. A fair assessment of ELLs’ language development should thus take all these factors into consideration.

I present herein **an experience paper on community literacy** (see Artifact D) as evidence for my understanding of this domain. This paper is aimed to explore the transnational experiences of adolescent **learners** in Beijing, the contribution of these experiences to the formation of **learners’** identity, and their correspondent instructional implications. Interviews were conducted with two teenage **learners** from Beijing to probe into how their experiences abroad influenced their current **learning** and expectations of themselves. Artifacts associated with local community literacies were collected and a **curriculum** plan was devised to integrate community literacies into classroom instruction in order to better serve **learners** with transnational experiences.

In conducting this community literacy project, I acknowledged how **learners’** transnational experiences shaped their identity. Therefore, when I interviewed the two teenage **learners**, I asked questions that probed into the role of their transnational experiences in their maturing and the formation of their views towards themselves and the world. In particular, I investigated how their life experiences in Canada contributed to their language development and their expectations

in English **learning**. The interviews presented me a more complete picture of the **learners** and deepened my understanding of how personal experiences of **learning** and the **learning context** shape their identity and consequently influence their language development.

In this project, I also gathered several community literacy artifacts that exhibited multicultural elements in Beijing. To validate the legitimacy of integrating these literacy artifacts into English instruction, I alluded to the newly issued *National English Curriculum for Chinese Primary Schools and Junior/Senior Middle Schools* which prescribes a goal in English teaching as helping students “build an awareness of and respect for cultural differences” (www.pep.com.cn).

Based on the knowledge I garnered from the interviews and community literacy artifacts, I designed a unit of lesson plans that focus on **learning** about Christmas. The literacy artifacts that students collect during their field trip in the local community are included as **learning** materials when **learners** are instructed on how to write Christmas card greetings. The involvement of authentic **learning** materials gives **learners** a real sense of how Christmas greetings are expressed in western culture. It also implies that teachers can take advantage of resources from the **learning environment** to support **learners’** language development. Furthermore, the strengths of **learners** with transnational experiences are brought to full play in this unit of **learning**. Their first-hand experiences of celebrating Christmas in English-speaking countries serve as valuable background knowledge and will be leveraged in classroom instruction as they recount their personal Christmas experiences, share their understanding of Christmas culture in class, and help their peers navigate obstacles in writing greetings on Christmas cards. In this unit plan, I strive to show caring to **learners** with transnational experiences by valuing their unique identities and holding them accountable for high-quality academic, social and personal

performance.

**Domain: Language Proficiency**

*Standard 5: 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.*

The English proficiency level that I currently possess demonstrates my potential to make a qualified EFL teacher. I took TOEFL iBT in November 2017 and achieved a total score of 110 out of 120, and displayed my mastery of all the four skills: reading (28), listening (26), speaking (27), writing (29). My performance on the TOEFL test illustrates my strong capability to conduct academic tasks in English. I'm nearing the end of my studies at Peabody College of Education and Human Development at Vanderbilt University and have obtained an excellent GPA of 4.0/4.0 thus far. This GPA is the result of my active participation and insightful contribution in class discussions as well as outstanding performance on assignments. It serves as another piece of evidence for my proficiency in academic English. In the fall of 2017, I did my practicum at Wright Middle School and taught Grade 5 ELD students--a cohort of different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. The positive feedback from both my mentor and practicum director demonstrate my competence in teaching English as a second language to teenage students. In particular, my strength in English writing, as is shown in my performance on TOEFL writing test (29/30) and GRE Analytical Writing test (82 percentile) demonstrates my qualifications in writing, the area where my identity as a teacher most closely aligns.

**Domain: Learning**

*Standard 6: Teachers draw on their knowledge of language and adult language learning to understand the processes by which learners acquire a new language in and out of classroom*

*settings. They use this knowledge to support adult language learning.*

Knowledge about language acquisition that teachers gain from both empirical research and formal theories can work as a guiding force in teachers' instructional endeavors and professional development. Equipped with sufficient knowledge about language learning and teaching, teachers become critical and reflective practitioners and make informed instructional decisions to better aid learner's language development. In light of the vital role of theoretical knowledge, a competent language teacher should thus continuously update his knowledge structure and consider ways of utilizing the theoretical models in his classroom instruction. To writing teachers, it is far from enough to merely master a set of writing techniques. One of the primary activities in writing instruction involves conceptualizing their beliefs and practices about learning and teaching writing. Teachers familiar with theories about writing and writing pedagogy can therefore reflect on their assumptions and approach current methods with an informed and critical eye. Hence, a writing teacher should maintain an inquisitive mind and keep seeking out optimal pedagogical methods to help learners conquer writing, the most important technology in the history of the human species, except how to make a fire (Powell, 2012).

Artifacts E and F demonstrate my knowledge of language acquisition, an unrelenting effort in conducting research in this field, and an inclination to apply what I know to support **learners** in their language development.

Artifact E is **an empirical research** I conducted to explore how second language (L2) **learners'** English writing quality might be impacted by a negative transfer from their first language (L1) and how this would inform English writing instruction in the **context** of China's middle school English classrooms. In doing this research, I reviewed theories and empirical research on language transfer, and concluded that negative transfer from the **learners'** first

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language is more likely to show up where the learners' first language and target language share a certain degree of similarity. To test how this negative L1 transfer may influence **learners'** L2 writing quality, I devised an **assessment** tool based on my collection of English sentences written by Chinese adolescent **learners** that are grammatically correct but inauthentic because of their L1 influence. This test is composed of 25 multiple-choice questions that pair the inauthentic sentences with corresponding standard English expressions. I administered the test to three groups of Chinese middle school students with differing English writing levels. The study revealed a significant correlation between **learners'** ability to counteract negative L1 transfer (which is shown through their test scores) and their writing quality. This revelation suggests that guiding English **learners** to notice the differences and similarities between English and their L1 may have an advantage over mere English immersion. This research deepens my understanding of how adolescent **learners** in China develop their English writing ability. It also reinforces my belief in an English **curriculum** in China's middle schools that integrates explicit instruction on subtle differences between Mandarin and English which will help **learners** better navigate negative L1 transfer in their English writing development.

Artifact F is a **case study** that I carried out with a Grade 8 student from China. In this case study I examined the **learner's** current language ability from four aspects: phonology, semantics, grammar and pragmatics by drawing on relevant linguistic theories. I also investigated the learner's **learning environment** and his experiences to account for his language development. Based on these analyses, I proposed at the end of the study some instructional suggestions to support the **learner's** language development. In this case study, I applied my knowledge of linguistics to the thorough analysis of the **learner's** writing samples. I examined in the samples such linguistic features as lexical diversity and density, syntactic complexity, grammatical

accuracy and organizational markers and gave an in-depth report of the **learner's** holistic language use in English writing. I drew on the Interlanguage Hypothesis (Ellis, 1994) to account for the **learner's** interlanguage features exhibited in his writing, such as inadequate productive vocabulary, frequent grammatical errors (e.g. failure to apply irregular past forms and inflectional affixes), and inauthentic sentences. In addition, informed by Input Hypothesis (Ellis, 1994), I suggest the **learner** use **learning** strategies such as word cards and a model sentence notebook to accelerate his progress in English writing. This case study helps me to gain a deeper understanding of how English **learners** marshal their language use in their writing, among other things.

**Domain: Content**

*Standard 7: 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.*

As a medium for communication, language should not be taught in an isolated or decontextualized manner. Instead, it should be used by learners for genuine communicative purposes. “Learners become proficient by using the language, and not by just merely learning about the language” (Kabilan, 2000). In school settings, learners develop their language ability in tandem with their subject knowledge as a typical content classroom provides a context for communication about subject matter through the target language. It is also argued that by focusing on the content rather than on the language itself, teachers can help keep the learners’



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anxiety level to a minimum, especially if the content is intrinsically interesting or at least relevant to the learner (Krashen, 1982). Thus, it is advisable to develop learners' English language proficiency by incorporating information from the subject areas into English curriculum. Integrating subject-matter knowledge into English writing instruction is also an effective educational practice that engages learners to use writing as an avenue to comprehend content in disciplines such as history, social studies, science, mathematics, etc (Klein & Yu, 2013). This approach also help fosters the communicative function of writing as learners share their written thoughts with each other (Boscolo & Gelati, 2013).

I present here a **writing lesson plan on summary writing planning** (Artifact G) as a supportive evidence of my ability to incorporate content knowledge into language instruction. This lesson plan is devised to facilitate **learners'** comprehension of the challenges settlers met during the Oklahoma Land Rush through summary writing, as prescribed by the **curriculum** goals. In this lesson, summary writing is deemed as an avenue for the **learners** to understand subject-matter knowledge and to reflect on what they learn from the historical event. In designing this lesson, I adopted a process approach to writing instruction and devised a series of pre-writing activities to deepen **learners'** understanding of settlers' challenges in the land rush and inspire them to form their own views about the event.

For instance, I engage the **learners** in pre-writing activities to search the text and identify the various challenges the settlers encountered. **Learners** work with their group members to read selected lines of sentences in the context that depicts particular situations the settlers met, and try to summarize in a few words what the challenges are. **Learners** also participate in peer dialogue where they share their ideas about how much weight each of these challenges might carry in the eyes of the settlers. These tasks entail **learners'** understanding of the historical circumstances of

the land rush, the zeitgeist of the time and the backgrounds of the settlers themselves. The learners are also supposed to put themselves in the shoes of the settlers to evaluate to what degrees these particular situations might constitute adverse conditions for those land rushers. Therefore, **learners** are engaged in both obtaining subject-matter and practicing writing planning skills.

At the end of the lesson, **learners** evaluate each other's performance using a peer **assessment** checklist. This peer **assessment** puts emphasis on using language to communicate in content areas by judging how well learners understand the challenges the settlers met in the land rush and how they summarize these challenges in their own words as they plan their summary writing.

**Domain: Commitment and Professionalism**

*Standard 8: Teachers continue to grow in their understanding of the relationship of second language teaching and learning to 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.*

Teaching is a demanding job that is nestled within a complex ecology of people, systems, social practices and social norms. A teacher should thus incessantly develop his professional knowledge and skills to handle all the challenges arising in the ever-changing teaching and learning environment. On the one hand, commitment to a teaching career would mean a life-long learning process where the teacher keeps in contact with the community of language teaching professionals, unrelentingly updating himself with pedagogical theories and methodologies. On the other hand, a teacher's professionalism can be translated into an inquisitive mind about issues in language teaching and a willingness to probe into these issues by conducting research

independently or in collaboration with his colleagues. As action research practitioner, a teacher can make contributions to the current knowledge of language teaching and learning, and thus benefit not only himself but the broader teaching community as a whole.

The artifact that I present for this domain is a **literature review** that I wrote on developing **learners'** critical thinking (CT) in argumentative writing instruction (see Artifact H). Informed by previous studies on CT, this review explores the various definitions of CT and identifies a set of specific CT skills and dispositions undergirding argumentation, namely, argumentative logic and reasoning, open-mindedness and metacognition. Within such a framework, the review probes into each of these argument-related CT elements, and presents summaries and analyses of empirical studies on relevant pedagogical practices adopted to improve students' argumentative writing. This review demonstrates my unrelenting effort in keeping up with the writing research community for up-to-date knowledge in this field, and my inclination to conduct my own research in the future.

In this review, I shed new light on the significance of cultivating **learners'** CT in **curriculum** development by viewing CT as a set of core skills and dispositions underlying the “umbrella” of argument and by examining the relationship between learners' CT quality in argumentative writing and **learners'** academic success. This emphasis of CT cultivation in writing instruction echos the new K-12 Common Core State Standards issued in 2012 that sets the standard that learners achieve proficiency in “logical arguments based on substantive claims, sound reasoning, and relevant evidence” (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2010), which would reinforce the teaching community's belief in the value of developing **learners'** CT in argumentative writing instruction.

By reviewing and reflecting on formal theories and empirical research on CT and

argumentative writing instruction, I also show some research pathways which I hope would inform the teaching community. For instance, in this review, I devote a large portion of the text to Toulmin's model and synthesize some empirical studies on the effectiveness of its application in both L1 and L2 **learning contexts** that establish Toulmin's model as an effective heuristic tool to teach **learners** argumentative writing. However, to present a complete picture of the issue, I also cite views doubting its applicability in various extended discourses. In light of the lack of studies on how Toulmin's model can be modified in dealing with varied discourse situations and **learners** in different grade levels, I suggest that a more extended and fine-grained framework of argumentation structure would inform both argumentative writing research and instruction.

By analyzing and evaluating the previous studies on cultivating CT in argumentative writing instruction, I also detect a dearth of study in the research community on how non-native **learners** may apply CT differently in their argumentation compared with native **learners**. Hence, I propose that further research is needed to explore varied factors (e.g., linguistic, psychological, sociocultural factors) constraining ELLs in argumentative writing and how these factors might influence their CT development. I also highlight the value of a contrastive analysis between native and non-native learners in terms of application of CT elements in argumentative writing. I believe such research can provide theoretical and empirical knowledge for the teaching community to better aid ELLs in grasping argumentative writing.

In addition, this review also has implications on argumentative writing **assessment** as it highlights the importance of CT quality in argumentative writing and furthermore delineates a preliminary construct of CT in argument which will inform the design of relevant **assessment** tools. For example, in this review, learners' open-mindedness in their thinking is substantiated as a predictor of their argumentative writing quality. Future argumentative writing **assessment**

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rubrics can thus incorporate criteria that judge how open-minded and flexible the writer's thinking is. I believe such **assessments** can be more effective in evaluating **learners'** argumentative writing ability.

### **Application to Practice**

My M.Ed. studies in the ELL program at Peabody have built up my confidence to concentrate on English writing instruction and research as a lifelong professional pursuit. With the knowledge and experience I have gained from both the courses and the practicum in this program, I now possess a clear vision of my identities as a competent ELL writing teacher. Although challenges may always arise when I stride along the path of ELL writing instruction, I will stand up to any obstacles that may come along with my all the strengths I have obtained over the time. After all, my takeaways from ELL program at Peabody will always serve as valuable resources in my future career of English writing instruction.

### **The Ideal Me as an ELL Writing Teacher**

With a zeal for English writing instruction, I'm determined to devote myself to promoting ELL students' writing development in my future teaching career. My increased knowledge about writing instruction in different contexts that I have accrued from both course readings and practicum teaching has boosted my confidence in concentrating on ELL writing instruction and research. The vision of my ideal future as an ELL writing teacher emerges more clearly as I delve more deeply into this field.

I envision myself first as an expert English writer who writes English regularly to communicate in authentic settings. I understand the intellectual context of what it means to develop as a writer and try to pave the way for my students as they progress as professional English writers. I know what happens when people write, so I treat writing as a recursive process

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as opposed to a linear one and provide my students with appropriate support in different phases of their actual writing activity (planning, drafting, revision, editing), instead of merely focusing on their final written products. Since I am an English writer myself, I model writing through think-alouds in class to demonstrate that writing is a highly demanding activity of inquiry, problem solving and discovery that requires a whole set of strategies. I apprentice my students through modeling and then engaging them in writing for authentic purposes because I believe students only learn writing through practice in writing.

Equipped with sociocultural approaches, I also hold that writing is a social and cultural act, reflecting a web of relationships between the student writer and people around him, especially his teachers and peers, as well as the identity-shaping influence from the writer's family life, social status and cultural traditions. In my writing instruction, I concur with the statement that a sustained, trusting, respectful and reciprocal relationship with students is the cornerstone of learning. I honor my students' humanity by tapping into the cultural and linguistic resources they bring to school in curriculum design and instruction, creating opportunities for them to share their experiences and skills in class, and encouraging them to find their own voice through writing. I also deem the cultural structuring of students' households and their community as an integral aspect of their identity and thus collaborate closely with students' family and take advantage of community resources to support their writing development. In classroom instruction, I strive to forge a supportive writing community where students are engaged in constant interactions with the teacher and peers in their writing process. In most cases, I work as a facilitator in class to let the students take the dominant role from writing planning to writing evaluation, and provide scaffolding and feedback only when it is necessary.

In my future career as a writing teacher, I also envision myself as an action research

practitioner who keeps empowering his writing instruction by conducting research into various issues arising from daily teaching. I will always have an inquisitive mind and keep up with cutting-edge research occurring in the writing research community. I will conduct research in collaboration with my colleagues and more experienced writing researchers and share our research findings with a wider writing teaching community. With incremental knowledge gleaned from the action research, I believe I will better serve my students in their English writing development.

### **Challenges in Teaching Writing to ELL Students and Its Pedagogical Implications**

Lamott (1994) claimed that “we all often feel like we are pulling teeth” when writing. ELL students may find writing even more demanding because of their insufficient English proficiency. Thus, one of the challenges I anticipate in my future writing instruction arises from the requisite to help ELL students navigate the linguistic constraints they often meet in English writing.

Writing is a complex cognitive process encompassing reflection, text production and text interpretation and inflicts a heavy load on the writer’s working memory (McCutchen, 2006). ELL students are even more cognitively overloaded than native speakers. Their developing transcription ability in spelling competes for the limited working memory resources in writing and hinders them as they attempt to generate higher quality content. This situation is aggravated by their struggles with English at lexical, syntactic and discourse level. Their limited English vocabulary, emerging ability in structuring complex English sentences and potential unfamiliarity with the discourse organizing academic genres inhibit them as they put their thoughts into English words. ELL students’ struggle with written English is confirmed by Cummins (1981) who declared that it takes ELL students much longer time to achieve cognitive

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academic language proficiency (CALP) than to obtain basic interpersonal communicative skills (BICS). An ELL writing teacher should be aware of ELL students' struggle with academic language and try to help them negotiate linguistic constraint through a set of pedagogical endeavors.

Accordingly, I will incorporate nuanced scaffolding into my instructional plan to help my future ELL students cope with language challenges throughout their writing process. For instance, I will promote academic conversations in class through frequent teacher-student interactions, appropriating and recasting students' talk, and then lifting them to a more academic level of discourse. I believe this moment-to-moment interaction between teacher and students will enhance students' academic language incrementally and in turn refine their written language. For those emerging student writers who suffer from limited English, I plan to give them additional linguistic support through mini-lessons on vocabulary, sentence structure and grammar that they may use in writing. I can also support ELL students' academic language development by providing them with tailored feedback on their language use in teacher-student writing conferences.

ELL students feel the urge to use their native language to convey subtler meanings in specific contexts. Therefore, I deem "translanguaging" (Wei, 2015) as an effective approach in writing instruction to help ELL students better navigate linguistic barriers and focus more on the content of their writings. In my future writing instruction, I will allow my ELL students to rely on their native language in peer conversations and student-teacher interactions when necessary to facilitate a smooth flow of their thoughts. I will also recommend my students to use their native language in their English draft where they can't produce the exact English expression, and help them refine their language later in the editing phase.



### **Visions of My Future Professional Development**

In the future, I plan to delve deeper into the academic language features exhibited in English learners' writing (especially through the application of advanced analytic tools), in order to contribute to the current knowledge of what specific linguistic features predict second language (L2) writing proficiency. In particular, I will conduct comparison writing studies between L2 learners and native speakers to unravel how L2 learners differ from their native counterparts in terms of language use in writing and how these distinct linguistic features predict their overall writing quality respectively. I'm also interested in analyzing linguistic sophistication and cohesive features in compositions by L2 learners from different age groups to map out how L2 writing ability might develop across parameters of time. In addition, I aspire to explore to what degree L2 learners' individual differences (for instance, differences in sociocultural status, critical thinking and audience awareness) influence their choice of linguistic patterns and how this may correlate with their writing proficiency. I believe such research can yield new implications for L2 writing development and L2 writing pedagogy.

With these blueprints in my mind, I believe that a PhD degree in applied linguistics would be of critical significance to my professional development. Thus, I'm now determined to pursue my doctoral study in L2 writing after my graduation from Vanderbilt. In terms of my future career, I envision myself as a professor and scholar concentrating on L2 writing research and academic writing instruction in China. I aspire to make contributions to the L2 writing research community through my own research endeavors and meanwhile help cultivate quality English writing teachers. In particular, I plan to work closely with English teachers and students from areas where high-quality English writing instruction is rare. One of the major concerns in my future professional development is to focus on writing research and instruction through which I

can support English teachers and learners in these areas as a matter of equity and access.

### **Important Takeaways from ELL Program**

In retrospect, I have gained a deeper understanding of English writing instruction with English language learners. The takeaways I obtained from ELL program that I believe have significantly restructured and updated my prior knowledge in writing instruction are as follows: an increased inclination to adopt process approach to teaching writing, a better understanding of scaffolding, and first-hand experience in second language writing research.

**Inclination to teach writing as a process.** The courses that I took in the ELL program helped me to conceptualize writing as a recursive process that does not proceed linearly but instead cycles and recycles through subprocesses of planning, drafting, revising and editing in no fixed order (National Writing Project & Nagin, 2012). As a functional dynamic system, the writing process is bound by a multitude of constraints (i.e., cognitive, linguistic, communicative, contextual, textual and affective constraints)(Olson, Scarcella & Matuchniak, 2013). Teaching writing as a process enables teachers to zoom in on English learners' constraints and provide them with appropriate scaffolding to help relieve these constraints. In the future, I plan to practice this pedagogical approach in my English writing instruction to better aid ELLs in their writing development.

**Deepened understanding of scaffolding.** The courses and practicum helped me to gain an insight into the two levels of scaffolding: macro designed-in scaffolding and micro interactional scaffolding (Hammond & Gibbons, 2005). Macro-level scaffolding ties with teachers' conscious planning of the lesson. To make scaffolding effective at macro level, a teacher should plan the content based on students' prior knowledge, select appropriate tasks and sequence the tasks in a way that best facilitates the students to learn. The teacher should also take

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into consideration of class organization and the use of supplementary materials to make the content clear and meaningful to the students. Micro-level scaffolding, however, is related to teachers' interactions with students in response to dynamic teaching and learning opportunities presented in class. These interactions are more contingent than pre-scripted, accommodating the students' needs through their learning and supporting them to accomplish the learning goals. It is only through these moment-to-moment interactions that the teacher puts scaffolding in practice and leads the students as they move towards a higher level in their ZPD. Equipped with this insightful understanding of scaffolding, I believe I can better support my ELL students in writing instruction via a multitude of scaffolding techniques.

**First-hand writing research experience.** At Peabody, I initiated a research project that I hope will offer insight into how Mandarin-speaking adolescents make use of language resources as they construct written arguments. With support from Dr. Emily Phillips-Galloway, I have collected 50 argumentative essays from 9th graders in Beijing and have begun to explore whether the inclusion of particular linguistic features results in texts that are evaluated to be higher quality by human-raters. Preliminary analysis has yielded an intriguing set of findings that link the presence of nominalized words to higher quality texts, and has also found that the use of academic vocabulary broadly doesn't have much impact on argumentative text quality. In addition, I began to design a coding scheme that will capture methods used by writers to engage in argumentation. In the context of this project, I gained experience in designing language elicitation tasks, supervising data collection, scoring and transcription as well as in conducting automated analysis of language features using natural language processing tools. The excitement of engaging in this research has strengthened my interest in becoming a researcher specializing in understanding writing development in students acquiring English as an additional language.

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Appendix  
Artifact A: A Lesson Plan on Reflection writing

<p><b>Topic:</b> The author’s use of image-creating strategies in writing the text: <i>Build in a day: The Oklahoma Land Rush</i></p>	<p><b>Learners:</b> ELD 3 (Grade 5) students at Wright Middle School</p>	<p><b>Date:</b> November 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2017</p>	<p><b>Time:</b> 80 minutes</p>
<p><b>Key vocabulary:</b> Noun, verb, adjective, figurative language, image, reflection.</p>		<p><b>Materials:</b> <b>Textbook:</b> <i>Build in a day: The Oklahoma Land Rush</i> <b>Pictures:</b> <i>Obtained from :</i> <a href="http://library.uco.edu/archives/digital_collections/LandRush/">http://library.uco.edu/archives/digital_collections/LandRush/</a> <a href="https://indiancountrymedianetwork.com/history/events/native-history-land-rush-for-oklahoma-indian-territory-begins/">https://indiancountrymedianetwork.com/history/events/native-history-land-rush-for-oklahoma-indian-territory-begins/</a> <b>Reflection Graphic Organizer</b></p>	
<p><b>Content Objective:</b> SWBAT write a reflection essay on image-creating strategies <i>Build in a day: The Oklahoma Land Rush</i>. <b>Language Objective:</b> SWBAT to describe both orally and in writing how the author creates images in the text.</p>			
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Class Activities</b></p> <p><b>Game: Search and Match(10 mins):</b> Teacher shows students two pictures in front of the whole class.</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;">   </div> <p>Students compete each other in searching for sentences that best match the pictures and then state clearly why they choose the sentences.</p> <p><b>Class Discussion (10mins):</b> Teacher guides the students to reflect on their chosen sentences and engages the students in a discussion about how the author use language to create vivid images in writing the text, such as the use of concrete nouns, strong verbs, vivid adjectives and figurative language. Students are then encouraged to search in the text for more sentences containing these language features.</p>			

**Individual work(5mins):** Students pick out one of their favorite sentences that creates vivid images and then copy the sentence onto the Reflection Graphic Organizer. Students then underline words and phrases that help create the image.

**Pairwork (5mins):** Students work in pairs to read aloud their sentences to each other, and ask their partner to describe the images in their mind and how the author creates the images. Students exchange their ideas about image-creating strategies embodied in each other’s chosen sentences.

**Teacher Modeling (10mins):** Teachers demonstrates in class how to use the graphic organizer to first generate sentences in separate columns and then organize these sentences into a complete reflection essay.

**Reflection Writing (25mins):** Students work independently to write a reflection essay on the image-creating strategies exhibited in the text. Teacher gives support to individual students when necessary.

**Group Sharing(15mins):** Students share their reflection essays in groups and obtain feedback from their peers.

**Assessment**

Portfolio Self-assessment Questions:

1. What do you learn from writing the reflection essay?
2. Write one or two things in your essay that you think need to be improved in the future?

**Reflection Graphic Organizer**

Sentences with vivid images	How the write creates images	The images in my mind
<p><b>Example:</b> The people <u>went out like flies out of sugar cask</u>, and in five minutes a square of the prairie was <u>spotted</u> with squatters looking like <u>flies on a sticky paper</u>.</p>	<p>The write uses <b>figurative language and strong verbs</b> to create images.</p>	<p>When reading this sentence, I can see in my mind <b>a crowd of people racing out onto the prairie. Soon they became many dots on the prairie.</b></p>

## Artifact B: Persuasive Writing Lesson Plan

<p><b>Grade:</b> Grade 7  <b>Subject:</b> English Language Arts  <b>Theme:</b> Persuasive writing  <b>Content Objectives:</b>          SWBT come up with sound reasons for their positions.  <b>Language Objectives:</b>          I can orally or in writing to state my reasons for a claim.</p>		
<p><b>Key vocabulary and sentence structure</b></p> <p><i>There are several reasons for my position.          First,... Second,... Third,...          The reason why...is that...          Another reason that might be added to your list is that...</i></p>	<p><b>Supplementary Materials</b></p> <p>Mentor text of a persuasive essay          Reasons Development Guiding Sheet</p>	
<b>SIOP Features</b>		
<p><b>Preparation</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Adaptation of Content  <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Links to Background  <input type="checkbox"/> Links to Past Learning  <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Strategies incorporated</p>	<p><b>Scaffolding</b></p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Modeling  <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Guided Practice  <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Independent Practice  <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Comprehensible Input</p>	<p><b>Grouping Options</b></p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Whole Class  <input type="checkbox"/> Small Groups  <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Partners  <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Independent</p>
<p><b>Integration of Processes</b></p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Reading  <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Writing  <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Speaking  <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Listening</p>	<p><b>Application</b></p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Hands-on  <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Meaningful  <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Linked to Objectives  <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Promotes Engagement</p>	<p><b>Assessment</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Individual  <input type="checkbox"/> Group  <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Written  <input type="checkbox"/> Oral</p>
<b>Previous Learning</b>		
<p>In previous lessons, students have already learned about the characteristics of persuasive writing compared with other genres of writing, and discussed examples of persuasive writings in their daily life. The teacher has already introduced them to the writing prompt: “Write a persuasive essay about one school policy that you want to change and give convincing reasons why and how you want it to be changed”. After rounds of brainstorming and group discussion, students have decided on the policies they want to write about and who their audience is. In addition, students have also read in class a mentor text of persuasive essay on school policy and analyzed its features.</p>		
<b>Lesson Sequence</b>		
<p><b>Whole class (25mins):</b> Before distributing a mentor text of persuasive essay on school policy, show the students the title of the essay (Why Gum-chewing Ban In School Is A Bad Idea?). Ask students to think about and discuss the following questions: “What would be the intended readers of this article?” “How would the author support his claim?” Then ask the</p>		

students to read silently and see whether their guess based on the title is right.

**Pair work (10mins):** Ask the students to work in pairs and talk about the claim of the article and what reasons the author proposed to support his claim.

**Whole class (15mins):** Teacher guided the students in listing the reasons given by the mentor text to support its position. Teacher then models in front of the whole class how to come up with a list of sound reasons to support a position that “school should not allow iPad use in classroom.” Then teacher distributes the Reasons Development Guiding sheet and asks the students to first create a list of with at least 4 reasons to support their positions. Give individual help to students who may struggle with this task by asking them some questions related to their positions in order to guide them in generating thoughts.

**Pair work (10mins):** The teacher models how to use the sentence starters to discuss reasons. And then ask the students to share in pairs their reasons and give suggestions to each other. Stress that the goal for the pair work is to collect as many plausible reasons as possible to support their positions.

**Independent work (2mins):** Ask students to number their list of reasons based on their significance to the claim on their guiding sheet and choose the top 3 reasons that they would like to use in their essay.

**Pair work (13mins):** Distribute a list of critical questions: Are the reasons strongly related to your statement? In what cases may the reasons not work? What are the bad consequences if we change the school policy? If I were the intended audience, would I agree with the reasons and why? Ask the students to work in pairs to interrogate each other’s reasons with the above questions. Then ask the students to revise their list of reasons on their guiding list.

**Peer Assessment Checklist**

**Partner’s Name** \_\_\_\_\_ **Class Period** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_

Assign your partner a value for each listed attribute based on your observation of his/her performance in this class.

**1-- strong agree 2-- agree 3-- disagree 4--strong disagree**

My partner listened to and respected my ideas.	1	2	3	4
My partner compromised and cooperated.	1	2	3	4
My partner took initiative when needed.	1	2	3	4
My partner communicated effectively.	1	2	3	4
My partner raised strong reasons to support his claim.	1	2	3	4

Artifact C: An Assessment Analysis Project

**Part I. The Participant's Personal Information and Background**

My participant Sherwan is a 10-year-old Kurdish immigrant boy from a war-torn country Syria. He is now a Grade 5 student in Wright Middle School, attending EL program there in Block 1 ELD class. Having been in the U.S. for more than one year, Sherwan seems to adjust himself to the new environment quite well and is now progressing steadily in both his English and other subject areas. To give a deeper understanding of Sherwan's cultural and linguistic background, this project is to address some key issues revolving around his current acculturation stage and linguistic experiences informed by both informal interviews and formal relevant assessments. Sherwan's educational setting is also to be dealt with through my observation and conversations with Sherwan's English teacher.

**Sherwan's Current Stage of Acculturation**

“Acculturation is the type of culture change that occurs when an enculturated individual comes into proximity with a new or different culture.” (as cited in Herrera et al., 2013). Since Sherwan set his foot on the land of America with his family, he has been experiencing an inevitable acculturation anyhow as his home culture clashes with a brand new American culture in an English community. In order to gain an insight into Sherwan's current acculturation status, I made an observation using Level of Acculturation Observation Rubric (see Appendix A) devised by Collier (2007) and also conducted a survey (see Appendix B) with him concerning his emotional reactions towards the acculturation as well as his sense of cultural and linguistic identity.

According to my observation on October 17 from 9:00am to 10:20am, Sherwan remained upbeat and had a high level of affect as usual. He fully participated in the class activities and kept

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a high level of interaction with his peers especially his desk mate who is also a Kurdish boy. Although Sherwan is a friendly and outgoing boy, always ready to interact with his peers from different cultures, I didn't notice him exhibiting as much interaction with his classmates of different cultures and languages as with his Kurdish deskmate, except for once he offered his hand to Sung, a quiet boy who was struggling with spelling. However, when he was grouped for a short while with other students to work on a common project to create a flower by cutting and gluing pieces from papers of different colors, he became quite active and participated fully in the joint work and displayed a high level of engagement. Generally speaking, my in-class observation indicates a high emotional wellness on the part of Sherwan. This result implies that Sherwan has tackled with challenges in the process of acculturation quite well so far.

To further establish this impression resulting from my observation, I made a survey where a list of questions revolve around Sherwan's sense of ethnic and cultural identities as these identities are predictor of CLD students' overall wellness (Herrera et al., 2013). According to Herrera et al., Students' strong ethnic and cultural identities will help navigate the psychological distress more successfully in their acculturation process. The survey results suggest that Sherwan has quite positive attitudes towards his Kurdish identity and shows a high identification with both his own and the host culture. When I asked him how he likes his home country (Syria) and America, he rated both countries at "5" on a 0-5 scale where "0" is "Dislike" while "5" is "Really like". He considers himself a member of Kurdish and takes great pride in his Kurdish identity. When he was asked whether he would like to be an American or to go back to the Kurdish community in his home country, he replied without scruple that either choice would be equally acceptable to him. In the survey, I also checked with him about his emotional wellness to confirm what I found in my class observation. I asked him to choose among the differing emojis

to describe his mood of living here in America and he selected the “very happy” one without hesitation. He also rated Wright Middle School at the the highest level and expressed his pleasure of being able to study there. When I urged him to designate something that makes him unhappy here, he pondered for a few seconds before simply declaring that a few school mates’ ways of interacting with people might be a bit annoying.

According to the U-curve model, the process of acculturation comprises four stages in order, namely, “Honeymoon”, “Hostility”, “Humor ”and “Home” (as cited in Herrera et al., 2013). Based on the results of my observation and survey, Sherwan’s current acculturation stage shares some features of “Honeymoon”, but it might be facile to arrive at a conclusion that he would inevitably experience a “Hostility” stage and “Humor” before he is fully acculturated. Every individual’s acculturation process would be unique (Herrera et al., 2013). In light of his buoyant character, high sense of cultural and linguistic identity as well as the relatively supportive sociocultural environment, Sherwan stands a good chance of undergoing the acculturation process more peacefully and smoothly. After all, I haven’t detected on his part any sign of undesirable physical and psychological disorder related with acculturation.

### **Sherwan’s Linguistic Background**

Born into a Kurdish family, Sherwan acquired Kurdish as his native language. However, he admitted to me in a casual interview that he could barely read and write in Kurdish although he feels no difficulty conducting daily conversations in that language. He can also speak a little Arabic due to frequent contact with Arabian people. He learned no more English before his arrival in American than merely the most basic words and a few greeting sentences.

I used an Oral Language Use Survey (see Appendix C) to get a full picture of Sherwan’s daily language use. The survey results show that when with family or relatives, Sherwan mainly

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uses his native language Kurdish, but he would also use English occasionally to talk with his younger brother who, as he claimed, “really likes English”. When interacting with his friends and neighbors, he adjusts his language use to their linguistic backgrounds. If they speak Kurdish, he would preferably use Kurdish in their conversation, and if otherwise, he uses English or Arabic instead. The same principle can be applied to his language use around his neighborhood and school where people are from diverse linguistic and cultural groups. When he is at the store, restaurant, clinic, church or in the park, he capitalizes on all his linguistic repertoire: Kurdish, English and Arabic. At school, he talks in Kurdish with peers of Kurdish background, in basic Arabic with Arabian friends, but in most cases in English when interacting with teachers and most other kids.

### **Sherwan’s Educational Setting**

The school environment can exert a positive or negative influence on students’ ability to adjust to the new culture. An optimal educational setting in this sense should deem the diversity of their students’ cultural and linguistic backgrounds as a valuable asset, values students’ differing identities and promote integration among students from diverse groups (Herrera et al., 2013). With this principle borne in mind, I scrutinized Sherwan’s educational experiences, especially the school environment in Wright Middle School which he currently attends.

Before coming to America, Sherwan’s schooling was quite inconsecutive, disrupted occasionally by their family’s moving around. He finished kindergarten and first grade in Syria, and then his schooling was suspended for 6 months because of his family’s moving to Kurdistan. It was not until they returned back to Syria that he continued to study in second grade. But no sooner had he finished his second grade than their family moved again to Turkey. He had no schooling for a whole year there before he came to America with his family and enrolled into 4<sup>th</sup>



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grade at Nashville Granbery Elementary school and later 5<sup>th</sup> grade at Wright Middle School. In light of such a disrupted schooling experiences, Sherwan might not be that distraught when plunged into a new school environment here in America again.

Sherwan now was placed in Grade 5 at Wright Middle School, one of the Metro Nashville Public Schools. Wright has a school body of various demographic features (see figure 1 & figure 2). The cultural and linguistic diversity in Wright provides ample opportunities for Sherwan to get into contact with peers from different groups and at the same time find friends who share the same culture and language with him.

*Figure 1: Race/ethnicity of student population in Wright Middle School*

<b>Ethnicity of the Students</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Hispanics	49%
Black	22%
White	21%
Asian	7%

*Figure 2: Social rank of student population in Wright Middle School*

<b>Social Rank of the Students</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Low-income students	89%
Not low-income students	11%

(source:[https://www.greatschools.org/tennessee/nashville/1155-Wright-Middle-School/#Test\\_scores](https://www.greatschools.org/tennessee/nashville/1155-Wright-Middle-School/#Test_scores))

In order to know more about the educational settings in Wright Middle School, I collaborated with Sherwan's EL teacher to examine the sociocultural environment at Wright Middle School using a checklist (see Appendix D) devised by Collier (2007). According to the

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checklist, five aspects of the school were studied: culture, language, academics, families and community. Our examination shows that Wright meets basic needs but not the criteria at all of the five aspects. In terms of culture, the school generally values the students' diverse cultural backgrounds on principle but lacks concrete policies or practices to help students navigate through their acculturation process, nor does the school always mediate successfully cultural misperceptions and clashes between families and self or other staff. As for language, Wright deems students' diverse linguistic background as treasure and support them to use their native language at home. This can be evidenced in their library where books of a multitude of languages can be found as well as in their translation support given to parents who cannot speak English well. Teachers at Wright also have good knowledge of language acquisition and they provide sheltered intervention to students in need. But due to the monolingual language policy in Tennessee state, courses are given only in English. Therefore, students' first languages are hardly tapped as useful resources to facilitate their English learning. In academics, Wright's courses cover a full range of the academic domains for a middle schooler, but it fails to adjust the content of its course to fit the needs of CLD students. The monolingual policy also hinders CLD students' academic progress to some extent as a large part of their background knowledge is crouched in their native languages. In terms of families and policies, Wright also meets merely the basic needs without reaching the criteria. It encourages CLD family involvement and appreciates community resources that might benefit CLD students and their families. But disappointingly, what Wright currently does on this score are nothing more than the requirement by local policy.

### **Part II. Sherwan's Stage of English Language Acquisition**

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Upon his arrival in October 2016, Sherwan was given a WIDA-ACCESS Placement Test (W-APT) for registration and placement into appropriate grade level. The results of the placement test (see Appendix E) show that his English proficiency was rated as “entering” since he was put at Level 1 in all of the four aspects (namely, reading, writing, listening and speaking). In March 2017 he took the yearly progress test ACCESS, attaining an overall “1.8” and progressing remarkably especially at listening( “2” ) and speaking( “2.4” ) (see also Appendix E). Since the latest ACCESS data has already been almost 8 months away from today, I believe there has been considerable changes in his English proficiency especially in terms of oral English. Hence, I used a standardized assessment (OWLS Oral Expression Scale) and an observational protocol (SOLOM) to rate his current oral language level.

### **Oral and Written Language Scales (OWLS).**

OWLS is an individually administered standard assessment of receptive and expressive language for children and young adults aged 3 through 21 years (Carrow-Woolfolk, 1995). This part only applies and addresses OWLS’s Oral Expression Scale (OES) as the participant’s oral English is the major focus. OWLS OES stresses both the individual’s language knowledge and performance. Its questions are designed to examine the form and content of test-taker’s language and evaluate his/her ability to process language in both comprehension and expression.

**Reliability of OWLS OES.** Devised to be individually administered, the inter-rater reliability of OWLS OES would be a concern for examiners who consider using the assessment tool. Technical data pertaining inter-rater reliability provided in *OWLS Manual* however, can well dispel this doubt. The inter-rater reliability for OES, according to its *Manual*, is as high as .95. In addition, since the responses to items in OWLS OES are either part of a sentence or a complete sentence confined to fixed grammatical pattern or semantic/pragmatic scope, they can

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be judged objectively with specific scoring rules provided in the *Manual*, thus ensuring a high degree of test reliability. The internal reliability of OES is .87 and its test-retest reliability ranges from .77 to .86.

**Validity of OWLS OES.** Technical data in the *Manual* also evidences a high validity of OWLS OES. In terms of content validity, OES addresses both the form and content of an individual's utterance, covering its lexical, syntactic, pragmatic and superalinguistic aspects. As for construct validity, data provided in the *Manual* demonstrates an increase of raw scores for examinees with chronological order and a strong intercorrelation between OES and Listening Comprehension Scale. When the results from OES are compared with other significant measures of oral language, strong correlations (mostly above .75) are detected, indicating a high criterion validity of OWLS OES.

I used OWLS OES to assess Sherwan's English speaking level. Since Sherwan didn't respond correctly to the age-appropriate example, I started instead from the first item (item 25) in the 8-9 age group as mandated by the administration directions. Strictly following the directions and scoring rules, I established a basal (item 16) and a ceiling (item 45) and determined Sherwan's total raw score as "32". Then I converted this raw score into a standard score of "53" which is more than 3 standard deviations below the mean. When interpreted Sherwan's score through percentile, a percentile of 0.1 is attained, which means he scored as high or higher than merely 0.1% of the normative sample for his age. Gauged against OWLS OES standards, Sherwan's oral English is rated as far below the average (standard score of 100). This is not surprising considering that Sherwan hasn't had much instruction on standard English so far and lacks knowledge of English grammatical conventions while OWLS OES attaches much weight to the form of language production. For example, when Sherwan was asked to complete a

sentence “In this picture, the mother \_\_\_\_\_.” following the prompt “In this picture, the baby is kissed by the mother.”, he could not apply a passive voice as implied by the prompt and the picture, but simply stated that “the boy kissed the mother”. Besides, Sherwan’s insufficient vocabulary also hindered him from giving accurate descriptions. In item 24, he was supposed to give an antonym of “rough” to describe the baby’s face, but he couldn’t come up with an appropriate one either because he didn’t know “rough” or he couldn’t think of a word opposite in meaning to “rough”. In item 41, he described the table as “circle” instead of “round”, unable to differentiate a noun from an adjective.

### **Student Oral Language Observation Matrix(SOLOM).**

As its name indicates, SOLOM is an observational protocol aimed to assess students’ command of oral English. In order to observe Sherwan’s language performance in real life, I strove to make our talk as casual as possible, approximating a conversation between friends. Our topics were never predetermined, but popped up naturally as our conversation proceeded, covering Sherwan’s family, school life, hobbies, and his schooling before arriving in America.

I gave Sherwan a score of “3” in the aspect of “comprehension”. In most cases, he understood me quite well and responded accordingly, but when I used some words that are beyond his receptive vocabulary, he would give a puzzled expression or asked for my further clarification. For instance, when I asked “what subjects do you like?” he couldn’t figure out the meaning of “subject”. And I had to enumerate a list of concrete subject names to explain the concept. For another instance, he couldn’t understand “life goals” until I paraphrased it as “things you hope to do in the future”. In terms of “fluency”, Sherwan gained a score of “4”. Although he has very limited vocabulary, he could amazingly make good use of this basic vocabulary and conduct relatively fluent daily conversations without pausing from time to time

to search for the correct manner of expression. As for vocabulary, however, I rated him low and gave him a score of “2” in light of the meagre vocabulary at his disposal. I noticed that in his conversation he uttered only the most basic vocabulary. He used “big time” to substitute for “life goal” and “big trees” for “forest”, although he did use some more complex words such as “championship”, “space” and “helicopter” which are perhaps closely related to his interests. Lack of sufficient vocabulary caused a certain degree of difficulty for him to understand me and lowered the accuracy and clarity of his expression. When it comes to “pronunciation”, he did a fairly good job and scored “4” since his utterance was always intelligible. He articulated almost every word clearly with pronunciations close to those of native speaker although he couldn’t quite distinguish between /ð/ and /t/. Besides, the intonation patterns he applied in his speech were mostly appropriate. As for grammar, however, Sherwan scored only “2” due to frequent grammatical errors in his utterance. He followed the most basic grammatical rules but more often than not broke conventions especially those pertaining tense and word order and obscured his meaning. For instance, in our conversation he confused me a little bit by occasionally applying past tense to talk about current life. On a 25-score scale, Sherwan gained a total score of 15 and was rated as a little below the proficient level as a minimum of 19 points is required to achieve proficiency.

#### **Comparison between Sherwan’s Results on OWLS OES and those on SOLOM.**

At first sight, it might be confusing when we juxtapose Sherwan’s exceedingly low scores on OWLS OES with his fairly acceptable scores on SOLOM. A closer examination of the two assessment tools as well as of Sherwan’s performance, however, can help detect some inextricable correlations between the two sets of results. Although Sherwan achieved a decent score on SOLOM when his age and grade are taken into account, he struggled with vocabulary

and grammar and scored much lower than he did with comprehension, fluency and pronunciation. Sherwan's weakness in vocabulary and grammar can well explain his unsatisfying performance on OWLS OES that stresses grammatical conventions and accuracy in vocabulary use.

The different features characterizing the two assessment instruments lead to disparate results. The standard assessment OWLS OES is designed to be administered in very formal settings and requires the test-takers to give responses to each independent item mechanically corresponding to prompts provided by the examiner. The decontextualized features give the test-takers little leeway to negotiate meanings through active interaction with his/her interlocutor, and thus masking the dynamic nature of one's communicative language ability. In contrast, SOLOM does not require a dedicated testing situation. The examiner can conduct casual conversations with the test-taker, mimicking real-life talk and observing the individual's performance in authentic settings. Therefore, the flexibility of SOLOM in administration allows the test-takers to employ a whole battery of speaking strategies, including both verbal and nonverbal cues to achieve his/her communicative goals, and at the same time allows the observer to evaluate the full range of the test-taker's communicative language ability.

Based on the above analysis, we can draw a conclusion that Sherwan, benefiting from his multilingual background, displayed a strong communicative competence and exhibited little difficulty in conducting daily conversations as indicated in his performance on SOLOM. However, in light of his deficiency in vocabulary and conventions in English language, there is still a long way to go for him to achieve sufficient cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) in order to participate fully in school settings, as Cummins (1981) declared that while it takes a new arrival around 2 years to develop sufficient oral English proficiency to converse

easily with classmates, 5-7 years of time would be needed for him/her to acquire the adequate academic language for different academic subject areas.

### **Part III. State and Federal Assessment Requirement**

In light of state and federal assessment requirement, Sherwan's background information was collected with surveys and assessment tools mandated by Tennessee state and the federal government. His linguistic and academic needs were to be met through proper placement following a set of rules in the intake process at MNPS and the ensuing formal assessment approved by Tennessee state.

In order to register for Metro Nashville Public Schools, Sherwan's parents were required to complete a *Home Language Survey* according to Tennessee State requirement to check whether Sherwan needs language assistance services. Since Sherwan's home language is Kurdish, and Kurdish is also the language he uses among his family members, he was directed to one of the International Student Registration Center sites for a thorough registration and assessment. The State-approved WIDA ACCESS Placement Test (W-APT) was then administered to Sherwan to determine his placement. According to the W-APT data provided by Wright Middle School, Sherwan was rated as Level 1 in all of the four aspects (namely, reading, writing, listening and speaking), yielding an overall Level 1--Entering. In light of Sherwan's limited English proficiency, he was identified as eligible for EL services and is placed in EL program at Wright Middle School as Active EL in order that his linguistic and academic needs be better accommodated.

The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) has directed more attention to various subgroups (CLD students included) since its inception. Mandated by this act, local schools and districts are held accountable to demonstrate that students from subgroups make adequate yearly progress



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(AYP) to ensure that all of them eventually meet grade level expectations. All states were required to develop annual measurable achievement objectives (AMAOs) for ELLs as well as a set of English language proficiency standards. Schools and districts therefore have to make sure that their students make decent progress to meet AMAOs. Although with a waiver from certain portions in NCLB in 2012, Tennessee adopted a new accountability system to avoid expecting all districts to meet the same benchmarks year after year, it still “looks to districts to increase achievement levels for all students” ([www.tn.gov](http://www.tn.gov)). Required by Tennessee state policy, Sherwan, as many other ELLs, is given an annual assessment on English (ACCESS) to monitor his progress in English proficiency. Instructional support from his EL teacher are informed by these annual ACCESS data to make sure that his progress lives up to the state expectations. Even after his exit from English language program, he will still be monitored in terms of English proficiency for another 2 years in case he might need further language support as mandated by the state.

Despite the benefits NCLB may bring to CLD students, it might also exert a negative influence on CLD students’ linguistic and academic development if viewed from a bilingual lens since NCLB advocates monolingual educational settings where courses are offered solely in English. Instead of tapping into linguistic and cultural diversity as productive resources, Wright Middle School offers its courses and administers its tests merely in English. Thus, it is really rare for Sherwan to use his native language Kurdish in class, nor can he choose a language other than English to take tests including the state-wide high-stakes tests. This monolingual policy adds to the difficulty for Sherwan to proceed academically since he can hardly capitalize on his prior knowledge crouched mainly in his native language.

### **Part IV. Sherwan’s Language Ability in Content Areas**

### **Sherwan's Oral English Ability**

Academic language is characterized as context-embedded and cognitively demanding. A student who has developed basic conversational fluency, BICS, may still lack sufficient academic language proficiency, CALP (Freeman & Freeman, 2009). In observing and assessing Sherwan's oral language in school, I detected a striking distinction between his oral production of daily language and school language. Although Sherwan has little difficulty conversing with his peers and teachers including me, he still struggles when he talks about content knowledge at school. In one class session, for example, he volunteered to briefly summarize what he had known about Oklahoma land rush, a unit they had dealt with for several weeks. He stumbled through his expression, searching for appropriate vocabulary but to no avail, and ended up using the simplest and general words such as "people", "land", and "money" to produce some vague ideas. This resonates with his contrasting performances on OWLS OES and SOLOM aforementioned which suggested that although Sherwan displayed a strong communicative competence, his academic language proficiency was far below the requirement of his grade level.

To gain a full picture of Sherwan's oral language performance in classroom interactions, I completed Classroom Language Interaction Inventory (CLIC) (see Appendix F) by referring to Sherwan's ELD teacher Ms. Taylor based on her daily observations. CLIC covers a whole list of classroom language interactions in oral language as well as through reading and writing. It investigate students' language use in both English and their L1. However, given the monolingual language policy in Tennessee, only Sherwan's English use in classroom interactions was observed.

First of all, Sherwan took an active role in social language interactions and earned a score of 13 out of 15. Although he possessed only limited vocabulary, he made good use of this

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vocabulary to conduct social interactions in classroom. He had no difficulty following the teacher's directions. He could answer basic questions from the teacher although in some cases he had to draw on a variety of communicative strategies, such as pointing, drawing, and gestures. He was able to use English to verbalize some key words, retell a familiar story or even narrate a simple story from his own life experiences. In class activities, he interacted actively with his peers. He could give commands to his classmates, initiate and respond to a conversation, and share in class his ideas without much effort. His weakness in this concern, however, tied with his meager receptive vocabulary (far less than 1000 words according to Ms. Taylor). That explains why he still grappled with describing objects and people.

Sherwan struggled with academic language interaction as indicated by his score (14 out of 40) in this session. He could use English to accomplish only basic academic tasks but not demanding ones. For instance, he used English to ask for clarification when he was required to do academic tasks, and raised questions about some specific topics such as Oklahoma Land Rush. He often volunteered to give intelligible responses to the teachers' questions although there might be some incorrect pronunciation and basic grammatical errors in his answers. He could communicate thoughts in sharing time but could not give in-depth ideas concerning specific topics, let alone discuss the language itself. In general, although Sherwan played an active role in class activities, he grappled with demanding academic tasks due to his insufficient academic language proficiency.

### **Sherwan's Reading Ability**

The CLIC also revealed some aspects in Sherwan's reading ability in academic language interactions. According to CLIC, Sherman demonstrated an interest in reading. In class, he could follow along during oral reading and use sound/symbol association to decode words in texts.

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However, his reading ability was confined to the most basic tasks. He could not understand the rules of punctuation and capitalization in reading, nor could he distinguish main ideas from supporting details in order to gain a better comprehension of the texts.

The latest formal assessment MAP Growth<sup>1</sup> administered to students in Wright Middle School provided an accurate view of how Sherwan performed in reading compared with students from the same grade level in the United States. According to Sherwan's MAP Growth Report on Reading (see Appendix G), he scored a total of 155. This score put him in the 1<sup>st</sup> percentile, far below the national standard for reading at his grade level. A more detailed examination into Sherwan's reading ability in different instructional areas revealed that he did a little bit better in Vocabulary Acquisition and Use (156) and Literature (155) than in Informational Text (153).

To gain an insight into Sherman's reading ability, I adopted the Running Record Sheet (see Appendix H) to record and analyze his oral reading. Following the suggestion of Sherman's ELD teacher, I chose a story book *The Little Bunny* which is a level 0.8 book as indicated by its AR (Accelerated Reader) label, far below his current grade level (Grade 5). For the sake of analysis, I selected out a 115-word part of the story and analyzed Sherman's reading ability mainly from the lenses of fluency and accuracy.

As for phrasing and fluency, Sherwan stumbled while reading through the book, taking a time longer than I had expected. To be specific, it took him 7 minutes and 31 seconds to finish the 115 words, yielding a 15.3 WPM (words per minute). Sherman read the story in a mostly word-by-word manner. He paused frequently to figure out some unfamiliar words, experimented with different pronunciations and in some cases repeated one word for several times before he

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<sup>1</sup> MAP Growth™ measures what students know and informs what they're ready to learn next. By dynamically adjusting to each student's performance, MAP Growth creates a personalized assessment experience that accurately measures performance—whether a student performs on, above, or below grade level (<https://www.nwea.org/map-growth/>).

could move on to next word--I added up the words that he repeated while reading and divided the number by the total of words to yield a repetition rate of approximately 13%. Besides, there was also scarce effective phrasing to indicate information chunks in the sentences, which suggests that his focus was merely on single words instead of the sentences as a whole.

In terms of accuracy, Sherwan exhibited no difficulty with the basic vocabulary (e.g., “not”, “it”, “baby”, “look”, “can”, “what”, “too”, “mother”), but kept struggling with more unfamiliar words (e.g., “bunny”, “find”, “little”, “jump”). In reading the 115 words, he made 9 errors and 3 self-corrections, producing an accuracy rate of 92.17% and a self-correction rate of 4. According to my observation, Sherman employed a strategy of figuring out the pronunciation of an unfamiliar word by connecting the letter sounds together although he might have no idea about the meaning of the word. Therefore, his reading difficulty was mainly attributed to his meager lexical knowledge.

To further check Sherwan’s understanding of the story, I raised some questions about both the main idea and some detailed information in the story after he finished his reading. Sherwan’s responses indicated that he grasped a general idea about the main characters (the bunny and her mother) in the story but failed to fathom details and some implied meanings (e.g., the unsafe surroundings). Therefore, he still needed instruction and guidance in reading the level 0.8 story book.

### **Sherwan’s Writing Ability**

As an emergent English writer, Sherwan showed great difficulty expressing himself through writing. According to my observation, he always lagged behind when doing writing tasks in class, such as copying or completing sentences. Sherwan’s struggling with English writing was also established in the CLIC. As for academic language interactions, although Sherwan could

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generate simple sentences or complete simple unfinished sentences, he could not correctly use conventions in English writing such as punctuation, capitalization, paragraphing and margins, nor could he write more complex sentences or weave sentences into paragraphs.

As a Grade 5 student, Sherwan still wrestled with spelling. According to the *Words Their Way Elementary Spelling Inventory Feature Guide* (See Appendix I) that I obtained from Sherwan's ELD teacher, Sherwan only spelled one word ("ripen") correct out of 25 dictated, among which were some most common words such as "bed", "ship", "when". A detailed spelling examination revealed that Sherwan could spell out most consonants and digraphs correctly, but struggled with blends, syllable junctures and unaccented final syllables, and could not handle other features such as short and long vowels, inflected endings, harder suffixes as well as bases or roots.

In order to investigate how Sherman wrote independently in authentic settings, I asked Sherwan to write an English letter to me to introduce himself. I seated himself in a small meeting room in the school library without additional help except for a paper and a pen. In around 15 minutes, he ground out a few sentences on the paper (see Appendix J for the Sherwan's original writing):

mine name is sherwan and I am 5 girat and I am firome sirery and I am youspic kurdish  
and brn 2006 and I am 11 heres ohde

Sherwan exhibited transitional spelling strategies as an emergent English writer. In many cases, his spellings were just transcriptions of the sounds in her mind. He used a series of strategies to enact this transcription. For instance, in some of his words, consonant letters were followed by a vowel letter due to a lack of knowledge about some common blends, as in "girat" ("grade") and "firome" ("from"). In some other words where vocalic consonant dominates the

vowel, he would omit the vowel in the syllable, as in “brn” (“born”) where vowel letter “o” was left out. Some of his spelling decisions were made based on his knowledge of English sounds and morphemes in written words but ended up incorrect. For example, in “heres” (“years”) he used “ere” to substitute for “ear” and in “ohde” (old) he wrote “oh” in place of “o”. All these features in Sherwan’s spelling suggest that he was still trudging along the orthographic continuum towards a conventional speller.

Sherwan’s writing also revealed that he lacked knowledge about writing conventions. In the sentences he wrote above, capitalization and punctuation were not even considered. Sherwan applied the conjunction “and” to connect the chunks of information instead of using period to split them into a few short sentences. The spelling mistakes were the results of his scanty vocabulary which precluded him from expressing more complex ideas.

#### **Part V. Instructional Recommendations and Assessment Plan for Sherwan**

##### **Instructional Recommendations for Sherwan**

The most effective learning occurs when the learners move within their zone of proximal development (ZPD), bridging the gap between what they can do unaided and what they are able to achieve with outside help from more experienced peers or adults (Vygotsky, 1978). The above analysis of Sherwan’s language ability provides an overview of his current English proficiency level in terms of oral language and literacy development. Informed by the analysis, a set of instructional recommendations is hereby raised to provide appropriate scaffolding for Sherwan in order to help him march towards a higher level in his English development.

**Develop Sherwan’s academic vocabulary.** Previous assessments have shown that although Sherwan could carry on daily conversations without effort, his lack of vocabulary especially those in content areas attributed his academic difficulties and greatly impeded him

from participating in classroom activities. Therefore, extending academic vocabulary is essential for Sherwan's English development and significant for his future academic success.

There are a couple of strategies teachers can adopt to help Sherwan develop his academic vocabulary. First, teachers can give Sherwan language support through oral interaction in class conversations. Sherwan never shies away from expressing himself in class, but his expressions are characterized by daily language features and inaccurate use of vocabulary. Teachers can correspondingly provide guidance for Sherwan by recasting his utterance and putting it into academically appropriate discourse. Through such effective teacher-student interactions in class, Sherwan is likely to acquire the academic language gradually. Second, teachers can help Sherwan extend his vocabulary through extended reading. Krashen (2004) concludes that students read for extended periods of time on a regular basis improve all aspects of their language proficiency. Exposure to a rich variety of vocabulary in reading would definitely help Sherwan build up his vocabulary inadvertently. However, Sherwan might need some guidance and support from the teacher or more proficient peers, as has been suggested by the Running Record Sheet above. Finally, it would also help if teachers can explicitly teach Sherwan academic vocabulary. Various strategies for teaching individual words are available for teachers to choose from. One strategy that might be appropriate for Sherwan was devised by Marzano (2005) who suggested students can use a form to construct a picture, symbol or graphic representation for a new word.

**Expose Sherwan to more informational texts.** Although Sherwan's current English proficiency is far below the grade level, it doesn't necessarily mean that he should only read kindergarten kids' books. Since Sherwan is already 10 years old and displays an interest in science and history issues, he should be guided to read more informational texts to further spark



his interest in reading and expand his reading experiences. The necessity for Sherwan to read informational texts was also established by Sherwan's MAP Growth Report on Reading which showed that he scored lowest in informational text reading.

Informational texts should be carefully selected for Sherwan in order to suit his current English proficiency level and interests. Informational books with simple language, vivid pictures and graphs, and hopefully in both English and Kurdish versions would be optimal choices for Sherwan. When it comes to teaching Sherwan to read informational texts, it is suggested that the teacher adopt a reading aloud plus thinking aloud strategy. Since Sherwan is now still struggling with pronouncing words, teachers' reading aloud can help Sherwan acquire content-specific words and understand the texts better. Thinking aloud, on the other hand, can expose Sherwan to a set of strategies that the teacher employs to comprehend the text, which will help Sherwan to develop his own reading strategies. Graphic organizers can also be used as an instructional tool to help Sherwan comprehend the informational texts in an organized way.

**Nudge Sherwan forward in his writing development.** Previous assessments and analyses about Sherwan's writing ability indicate that Sherwan struggled with spelling and writing conventions. There are a couple of recommendations for teachers to help Sherwan in this concern. First, the teacher can explicitly teach Sherwan how the alphabetic system works, particularly with attention to phonics and how chunks of letter patterns work for a writer. An explicit instruction on basic phonetic patterns such as C-V-C for short vowels, C-V-C-e for long vowels and some high frequency C-V-V-C patterns would accommodate Sherwan's current needs in spelling as was shown in his Elementary Spelling Inventory. Second, as Sherwan has no command of capitalization and punctuation, an instructional support on some relevant conventional rules in this concern would help him to improve his writing. Third, since Sherwan

overused a common connector (“and”) in his writing due to his limited vocabulary, building his vocabulary by introducing other, more precise words to show the relationship between ideas would be also helpful.

Some instructional strategies can be adopted to help Sherwan produce more sentences in his writing. For instance, the teacher can guide Sherwan throughout his writing by raising a series of questions to elicit more thoughts from him. The teacher can also adopt a dialogic approach to engage Sherwan in interaction with a peer during planning stage. This might be a useful way for the students to build on each other’s ideas. The teacher can also model on writing in front of Sherwan and other students in order to demonstrate the use of relevant strategies in real writing activity. With such scaffolding in place, Sherwan will probably rely on less and less assistance from the teacher until he can write independently.

#### **Assessment Plan Recommendations**

A comprehensive assessment plan should be initiated to investigate every aspect in Sherwan’s language development in order to give a full picture of his English proficiency level at specific stages. Such a plan should also comprise both formative and summative assessment in order to monitor his progress over time and inform effective instructions.

**Daily assessment.** Sherwan’s language development can be monitored daily in class through a set of assessment tools. These assessments can reflect Sherwan’s performances in class, how well he achieves the content and language objectives and what additional help should be provided in next class.

**Self-assessment form.** These forms should be completed by Sherwan at the end of each class to help him reflect on his learning experiences in the lesson. It should feature self-reflective

questions concerning what he has learned from the lesson and what he feels he still struggles with.

***Peer-assessment form.*** Peer-assessment form can provide an alternative perspective on Sherwan's performance in class. Such a form should include a checklist to necessitate evaluation and a place to write down suggestions for the peer.

***Spelling quiz.*** In light of Sherwan's meager vocabulary and difficulty with spelling. A spelling quiz every day should be necessary to help promote Sherwan's vocabulary acquisition and improve his spelling. The Words Their Way Elementary Spelling Inventory Feature Guide can be useful for the teacher to conduct a scrutiny of Sherwan's spelling stages.

***Sentence completion test.*** A sentence completion test that stresses writing conventions such as capitalization, punctuation, some common grammatical rules and sentence structures will be beneficial to check Sherwan's daily progress in writing development and give him effective feedback.

***Classroom language interaction observation.*** The CLIC form can be used on a daily basis to monitor how Sherwan interacts with the teacher and his peers through academic language use. Changes detected over time will help the teacher to track the growth of Sherwan's English ability and to provide scaffolding accordingly.

***Weekly assessment.*** A unit usually covers a whole week in the teacher's instructional plan. Therefore, it is advisable for the teacher to assess Sherwan on a weekly basis to investigate how he learns the whole unit. Informed by such information, the teacher can modify his/her plan to better accommodate Sherwan's needs in learning next unit.

***Oral presentation.*** A 5-minute oral presentation on some core concepts or issues in the unit will help the teacher gain an insight into how Sherwan approaches the content knowledge

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through academic discourse. In this way, the teacher can monitor Sherwan's academic English development and give him correspondent support.

***Reading aloud assessment.*** Since Sherwan still lacks accuracy and fluency in reading story books. The teacher can use the Running Record Sheet to test Sherwan's reading ability every week and monitor his progress in reading.

***Writing portfolio.*** The teacher could collect Sherwan's writing works weekly to create a writing portfolio for him. The portfolio can include anything Sherwan writes in a week, such as a short composition, a picture-cued writing task or a poster. A self-assessment checklist can be included in Sherwan's portfolio to help him make evaluations of his own progress in writing. Such a portfolio can help the teacher track how Sherwan's writing ability develops over time.

***Quarterly assessment.*** Changes in Sherwan's language development over time can be detected when a quarterly assessment is in place. Quarterly assessments can be standardized tests that are aimed to examine the four basic skills (listening, reading, speaking and writing ) in an integrated way. With quarterly assessments, teachers can gain an overview of Sherwan's language ability as a whole.

***State required standardized tests.*** The state required standardized tests such as W-APT and MAP Growth. The data gained from these tests can provide the teacher an accurate view of how well Sherwan's English is in different areas compared with his counterparts on a national or state level.

***Oral and Written Language Scales (OWLS).*** OWLS can be administered to Sherwan individually on a quarterly basis to examine his growth in oral and written English. The teacher can also conduct an accurate evaluation of Sherwan's English ability by calculating his standardized scores and finding his percentile.

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Appendix A

Assessing Level of Acculturation 109

**Figure 4.2** Level of Acculturation Observation Rubric

LOA\* Observation Rubric

Student: <u>Sherwan Amin</u>			
Date of Observation: <u>10-17-17</u>		Time of Observation: <u>9:00-10:20</u>	
Criterion	Range & Rating	Anecdotal Notes	Monitor Status**
Level of affect	5 Upbeat 0 Sullen and/or Angry		
Data:	<u>5</u> -4-3-2-1-0		
Level of interaction with peers of a similar culture and/or language	5 Highly Interactive 0 Withdrawn		
Data:	<u>5</u> -4-3-2-1-0		
Level of interaction with peers of a different culture and/or language	5 Highly Interactive 0 Withdrawn		
Data:	5- <u>4</u> -3-2-1-0		
Communication effectiveness with peers of a different culture and/or language	5 Highly Effective 0 Ineffective		
Data:	5-4- <u>3</u> -2-1-0		
Level of participation in group learning	5 Highly Participative 0 Nonparticipative		
Data:	<u>5</u> -4-3-2-1-0		
Level of student engagement with classroom learning activities	5 Highly Engaged 0 Not Engaged		
Data:	<u>5</u> -4-3-2-1-0		
Legend:	* LOA = Level of Acculturation ** Status Range = Enhance, Maintain, or Reduce Monitoring of LOA		

Appendix B

Survey on Emotional Status and Identity Awareness

Sherwan Grade 5

1. How do you feel about your life here in America? Select one that most approximate your feeling.



2. How do you like Wright Middle School? (Rate on a 0-5 scale. 5 is "really like" and 0 is "dislike".)

0    1    2    3    4    5 ✓

3. Is there anything here that makes you unhappy, worried or angry? Please specify that if any.

Some students' ways of dealing with people

4. Have you made friends with some local American kids?

Yes, 2

5. Do you like your home country? (Rate on a 0-5 scale. 5 is "really like" and 0 is "dislike".)

0    1    2    3    4    5 ✓

6. How do you feel about Kurdish people? Do you feel you are one of them?

Great!      Yes!

7. Are you proud of being a Kurdish? (Rate on a 0-5 scale. 5 is "really proud" and 0 is "not proud at all".)

0    1    2    3    4    5 ✓

8. If you were faced a choice to either become an American or go back to the Kurdish community in your home country, what would you like to choose?

equal  
either would be good!

Appendix C

A Sample Oral Language Use Survey

sherwan Grade 5

Directions: I am going to ask you which language or languages you use around your home, neighborhood, and school. Tell me if you use your first (or native ) language (L1), Kurdish, English (L2), or both languages with the people and places that I name. As the student responds, mark the designated box.

	First or Native Language (L1)	Second Language, English (L2)	Both Languages (L1+L2) <i>plus Arabic</i>	Not Applicable
<i>Around Your Home</i>				
With your parents or guardians	✓			
With your grandparents	✓			
With your brothers and sisters			✓	
With other relatives who live with you	✓			
With your caregivers (if any)				✓
With your neighbors			✓	
With your friends			✓	
<i>Around Your Neighborhood</i>				
At the store			✓	
At the clinic or doctor's office			✓	
At church (if applicable)			✓	
Outside, as in a park			✓	
At a restaurant or fast food place			✓	
<i>Around Your School</i>				
On the playground or outside			✓	
In the lunchroom			✓	
In the halls			✓	
During free time			✓	

SOURCE: Adapted from Gottlieb, M., & Hamayan, E. (in press). Assessing language proficiency of English language learners in special education contexts. In G. B. Esquivel, E. C. Lopez, & S. Nahari (Eds.). *Handbook of multicultural school psychology*. New York: Lawrence Erlbaum.



Appendix D

Table 4.3 Sociocultural Environment: Educator Views of Student, Family, and Community Assets

Component	Meets Criteria	Level of Performance		
		Basic Needs	Improvement	Unsatisfactory
Culture	The student's culture is respected and valued as a source of knowledge and experiences that advance learning and enhance the cultural climate of the school. Issues and behaviors related to acculturation processes are identified and mediated with sensitivity and knowledge of research-based approaches that are appropriate for the CLD student/family/community involved.	The student's culture is respected and valued on principle. General implications and stages of acculturation are understood as influencing student learning and behavior. Recognizes but is unable to comfortably mediate cultural misperceptions and conflicts between families and self or other staff.	Behaviors that arise from cultural differences or acculturation are viewed as interfering with student achievement and long-range success. Instructional strategies and interventions emphasize acculturation to the dominant culture.	The CLD student's culture is viewed as a negative influence on the student and school. Cultural considerations are rejected as irrelevant to the development of appropriate instructional practices and intervention.
Language	Supports L1 use at home and school. Understands, models, and is able to explain the rationale for L1 and sheltered instructional strategies. Is knowledgeable about language acquisition phenomena, including language loss and implications of language support, or lack thereof, on student achievement.	Supports L1 use at home. Understands basic language acquisition stages and time lines. Can explain the benefits of sheltered instruction. Considers CLD student's language as potentially affecting behavior and/or achievement.	Regards continued use of home language as an obstacle to English acquisition and school success. Is supportive of, but cannot describe or model, instructional strategies that benefit CLD students.	Regards the student's home language as a deficit to be overcome. Is unsupportive of ongoing adaptations and instructional modifications for CLD students.

Academics	Is able to articulate the relationship between L1 and L2 learning and analyze classroom tasks in terms of prerequisite language, academic, or social experiences. Makes specific recommendations regarding instructional modifications and assessment of CLD student progress.	Understands the impact of language and acculturation on CLD student academic progress. Identifies general instructional strategies that benefit CLD students.	Provides strategies to meet the academic needs of general students performing below grade level but does not understand or provide strategies particular to the needs of CLD students.	Considers the academic difficulties of CLD students to be either environmental or innate and therefore is resistant to long-range change regardless of interventions.
Families	Exemplifies a respect for CLD families that is evident through greetings, verbal and nonverbal communication, and overall accessibility. Advocates for programs, events, and activities that engage families. Demonstrates an understanding of, and respect for, culturally different family dynamics. Respectfully mediates cultural issues and behaviors that conflict with a student's positive school participation.	Expresses respect and value for CLD families. Encourages CLD family involvement but has little direct contact with parents beyond those required by policy or events. Recognizes when cultural issues affect school-family communications but does not initiate or engage in actions to address potential conflicts or concerns.	Feels that truly interested families are already involved. Communication with CLD families is limited to required procedural or behavioral matters.	Regards CLD families as unsupportive of education. Is opposed to initiatives or incentives to increase CLD family involvement. Avoids communicating with CLD families.

*more w/ open house*  
*interview*

Using Acculturation Information to Inform Instruction

(continued)

Table 4.3 (Continued)

Component	Meets Criteria	Level of Performance		
		Basic Needs	Improvement	Unsatisfactory
Community	<p>Is knowledgeable about, and communicates with, community resources that can provide or assist CLD students and families. Regards community resources as potential assets and partners in the educational, linguistic, and social-emotional learning of CLD students.</p> <p>Involves members of the local neighborhood and CLD community in schoolwide events and celebrations.</p>	<p>Is knowledgeable about and appreciates, but does not personally communicate with, community resources that can provide or assist CLD students and families.</p> <p>Recognizes selected organizations (e.g., religious, fraternal) as valuable to the positive overall development of CLD students.</p>	<p>Provides CLD students/families with referrals only to school-based professionals such as social workers, nurses, and counselors.</p> <p>Does not communicate with community or seek additional resources for meeting the essential and/or enrichment needs of CLD students and families.</p>	<p>Speaks in generalities about community support but feels resources and influences in the student's community conflict with school ideals of what "is best" for the student. Is unable or unwilling to provide resources or contacts appropriate to the needs of CLD students and families.</p>

Appendix E

EL Student Profile

Name: <i>Sherwan Amin</i>	
Grade: <i>5</i>	EL Teacher: <i>P. Taylor</i>
Entry Date into US:	Native Language:

*only once → placement*

W-APT Data	Reading PL	Writing PL <sup>†</sup>	Listening PL	Speaking PL	Overall PL
<i>10-27-16</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>

*Yearly progress*

ACCESS Data	Reading PL	Writing PL	Listening PL	Speaking PL	Literacy PL	Overall PL
2015						
2016						
2017 <i>3-6-</i>	<i>1.7</i>	<i>1.7</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>2.4</i>	<i>1.7</i>	<i>1.8</i>

Analyze Data Results

What is your strongest English Proficiency Domain? Listening, Speaking, Reading, or Writing? _____
What is your weakest English Proficiency Domain? Listening, Speaking, Reading or Writing? _____
What else do you notice about your ACCESS scores?
How does knowing this information affect your content learning?

## Appendix F

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**CLIC**  
**Classroom Language Interaction Inventory**  
 To be completed by referring teacher(s).

Social Language Interactions	Native Language	English
1. Follows general directions.	_____	1
2. Acts out common school activities.	_____	1
3. Points, draws, or gesture responses	_____	1
4. Verbalizes key words	_____	1
5. Gives commands to peers.	_____	1
6. Exchanges common greetings.	_____	1
7. Uses limited vocabulary	_____	1
8. Describes objects; describes people.	_____	0
9. Retells a familiar story.	_____	1
10. Initiates and responds to a conversation.	_____	1
11. Appears to attend to what is going on.	_____	1
12. Appropriately answers basic questions.	_____	1
13. Participates in sharing time.	_____	1
14. Narrates a simple story.	_____	1
15. Between 1000-6000 receptive vocabulary.	_____	0
<b>Total classroom social language interactions used:</b>	_____	13
<b>Total possible classroom social language interactions:</b>	15	15
Academic Language Interactions		
16. Follows specific directions for academic task.	_____	0
17. Follows along during oral reading.	_____	1
18. Understands teacher's discussion.	_____	0
19. Uses sound/symbol association.	_____	1
20. Decodes words.	_____	1
21. Generates simple sentences.	_____	1
22. Completes simple unfinished sentences.	_____	1
23. Makes some pronunciation & basic grammatical errors but is understood	_____	1
24. Asks for clarification during academic tasks.	_____	1
25. Asks/answers specific questions regarding topic.	_____	1
26. Actively participates in class discussions; volunteers to answer questions.	_____	1
27. Responds orally and in written form	_____	0
28. Can explain simple instructional tasks to peers.	_____	0
29. Adds an appropriate ending after listening to a story.	_____	0

		28
30. Initiates conversation and questions		1
31. Demonstrates an interest in reading.		1
32. Understands and uses temporal and spatial concepts.		0
33. Distinguishes main ideas from supporting details.		0
34. Understands rules of punctuation and capitalization for reading.		0
35. Engage in and produce connected narrative		0
36. Can communicate thoughts		1
37. Makes complex grammatical errors		1
38. Writes from dictation.		0
39. Understands and uses academic vocabulary appropriately.		0
40. Reads for comprehension.		0
41. Can discuss vocabulary.		0
42. Uses glossary, index, appendix, etc.		0
43. Uses expanded vocabulary		0
44. Functions on academic level with peers		0
45. Maintains two-way conversation		1
46. Writes short paragraphs.		0
47. Writes in cursive.		0
48. Uses correct punctuation, capitalization, paragraphing, margins.		0
49. Demonstrates an interest in writing.		0
50. Can discuss aspects of language/grammar.		0
51. Initiates writing activities.		0
52. Composes and edits over one page papers.		0
53. Can explain complex instructional tasks to others.		0
54. Demonstrates decontextualized comprehension.		0
55. Beyond 12,000 word vocabulary		0
<b>Total academic language interactions used:</b>		<u>14</u>
<b>Total possible academic language interactions:</b>	40	40
<b>Total classroom interactions used</b>		<u>13+14=27</u>
.....	55	55
<b>Total possible classroom interactions used</b>		

<b>Scoring the CLIC</b>	
Pre-Production	0-4
Early Production	5-10
Speech Emergence	11-17
<u>Intermediate Fluency</u>	18-32 ✓
Advance Intermediate Fluency	33-44
Advanced Fluency	45-55

Appendix G


08/10/2017

Sherwan Amin
Grade: 5 | ID: 190267126

**READING**


Error Margin: +/- 4.1  
Possible range: 151-159  
8/23/2017 - 11 minutes

Growth: Reading 2-5 TN 2016  
\*Fall 2017-18

155\*

**HIGHLIGHTS**

To help Sherwan boost his performance in reading and better match his U.S. national peers, review his scores in the Instructional Areas to find skills and concepts that he is ready to learn.

COMPARISONS	INSTRUCTIONAL AREAS	GROWTH GOALS
<p><b>1<sup>ST</sup></b> <b>Norms Percentile</b> Achievement for this term, ranked against NWEA 2015 Norms Study</p>	<p><b>153</b> <b>Informational Text</b></p>	<p><b>WINTER 2018</b></p> <p> Customize the growth target for this student by setting a growth goal</p>
<p><b>Below Standards</b> <b>NWEA Generic Linking Study</b> Projected result for test taken in <b>spring</b></p>	<p><b>155</b> <b>Literature</b></p>	<p style="color: #ccc; font-size: 0.8em;">Past Goals</p> <p>There are no previous goals for this student.</p>
<p><b>Not On Track</b> <b>ACT College Readiness</b> Projected result for test taken in <b>spring</b></p>	<p><b>156</b> <b>Vocabulary Acquisition and Use</b></p>	

10/46

Appendix H

RUNNING RECORD SHEET

Student Sherwan Amin Grade 5 Date Dec 4, 2017  
 Recorder Yu Tian School Wright Middle School

**Accuracy**

97% - 100% - Independent  
 93% - 96% - Instructional/Guided  
 92% and Below Frustrational/Shared

Self-Correction Rate 1: \_\_\_\_\_

Comments:

**Phrasing and Fluency: (circle appropriate descriptors)**

<b>Intonation/Expression</b>	Little expression; monotone	Some expression that conveys meaning <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Expression reflects mood, pace, and tension at times	Expression reflects mood, pace, and tension most of the time
<b>Phrasing</b>	Mostly word-by-word <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Short phrases most of the time; inappropriate pauses	*NF Longer phrases most of the time; heeds most punctuation	**NF Consistently longer, meaningful phrases; heeds all punctuation

\*NF - Expression emphasizing key phrases and words at times  
 \*\*NF - Expression emphasizing key phrases and words most of the time

Calculating oral reading fluency rate: Total Time 45 sec  
115 words ÷ 45 seconds = 0.255 WPS x 60 = 15.3 WPM

Page 1	Start Time <u>7</u> min. <u>31</u> sec. Text Title: <u>The little Bunny</u> Level: <u>0.8</u> Genre: <u>Story</u> Total Words: <u>115</u>	E	SC	Language Cueing Systems					
				E			SC		
				M	S	V	M	S	V
	<u>R</u> ✓ ✓ ✓ Here is a baby.								
	<u>Ice</u> ✓ ✓ <u>bunny</u> Is it a bunny?	2		(M)	S	✓			
	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ <u>bunny</u> No, it is not a bunny.	1		(M)	S	✓			
	<u>Hex/sc</u> ✓ ✓ ✓ Here is a baby.		1				(M)	(S)	(V)
	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ Is it a bunny?								
	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ No, it is not a bunny.								
	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ <u>R</u> Where is the baby bunny?		1	(M)	S	(V)			
	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ Do you see it now?								
	✓ ✓ Look, look.								
	✓ ✓ <u>friend</u> ✓ Can you find it?		1	(M)	S	(V)			
	✓ ✓ <u>R</u> ✓ ✓ ✓ What a little baby it is.								
	✓ ✓ <u>R</u> ✓ Can it run?		1	(M)	S	✓			
	✓ ✓ <u>jump/sc</u> Can it jump?		1	(M)	S	(V)			
	✓ ✓ No, no.								

4-14-09F

I:\Docs and Records\CURRIC\READING\HERS\Assessment forms\running record sheet DOC

CAPSTONE ELL PORTFOLIO

Page 2	Start Time ____ min. ____ sec. Text Title: _____ Level: _____ Genre: _____ Total Words: _____	E	SC	Language Cueing Systems						
				E			SC			
				M	S	V	M	S	V	
	<p>R - ✓ R It is too little.</p> <p>✓ R went ✓ ✓ The bunny wants to eat.</p> <p>R ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ See what the mother can do.</p> <p>✓ ✓ ✓ R The mother can help.</p> <p>✓ ✓ ✓ R ✓ The mother can do this too.</p> <p>✓ ✓ ✓ R See the mother work.</p> <p>✓ R ✓ ✓ The bunny likes it.</p> <p>✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ R Now see the baby bunny.</p> <p>✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ R It is not too little.</p> <p>✓ ✓ <del>came</del> <del>at</del> <del>to</del> her It can come out here.</p> <p>✓ ✓ ✓ It can run.</p> <p>✓ ✓ ✓ It can jump.</p> <p>✓ ✓ help It can play.</p>	1		(M)	S	(V)				
		2	1	(M)	S	(V)	(M)	S	(V)	
		1		M	S	(V)				
		<b>Total</b>	9	3						

Error Rate = 115/9

Accuracy Rate = (115-9)/115 = 92.17%

Self-correction Rate = 12/3 = 4



Appendix I

Student's Name Sherman Amin Words Their Way Elementary Spelling Inventory Feature Guide  
 Words Spelled Correctly 1/25 Feature Points: 17/62 Teacher Taylor Grade 5 Date 10-23-17  
 Total: 18/87 Spelling Stage: \_\_\_\_\_

SPELLING STAGES →	EMERGENT		LETTER NAME-ALPHABETIC				WITHIN WORD PATTERN				SYLLABLES AND AFFIXES				DERIVATIONAL RELATIONS			
	LATE	EARLY	MIDDLE	LATE	EARLY	MIDDLE	LATE	EARLY	MIDDLE	LATE	EARLY	MIDDLE	LATE	EARLY	MIDDLE	LATE		
Features →	Initial	Final	Short Vowels	Digraphs	Blends	Long Vowels	Other Vowels	Inflected Endings	Syllable Junctures	Unaccented Final Syllables	Harder Suffixes	Base or Roots	Feature Points	Words Spelled Correctly				
1. bed	b ✓	d ✓	e	sh		ea							2	0				
2. ship	p ✓	i		wh									0	0				
3. when													0	0				
4. lump	l ✓		u		mp ✓								2	0				
5. float		t ✓			fl ✓	oa							1	0				
6. train		n ✓			tr ✓	ai							1	0				
7. place					pl ✓	a-e							1	0				
8. drive		v			dr ✓	l-e							1	0				
9. bright					br ✓	igh		pling					1	0				
10. shopping			o		sh ✓								1	0				
11. spoll					sp		oi						0	0				
12. serving							br	ving					0	0				
13. chewed				ch ✓			bw	ed					1	0				
14. carries							ar	less	ir				1	0				
15. marched				ch ✓			ar	ad		er			1	0				
16. shower				sh ✓			ow ✓			le			2	0				
17. bottle									tt	or			1	0				
18. favor									v ✓				1	0				
19. ribbon									b ✓	er			2	0				
20. cellar									ll	ar			1	0				
21. pleasure											ure		0	0				
22. fortunate							or				ate		0	0				
23. confident											ent		0	0				
24. civilize											ize		0	0				
25. opposition											tion		0	0				
Totals		17	0/15	4/16	3/17	1/5	1/17	1/5	2/15	1/15	1/5	1/5	17/62	1/125				

Appendix I

Appendix J

E-mail

mine Name is sherwan and I am 5 grade  
and I am firame Sinery and I am Youspic  
kurdish and brn 2006 and I am 11 heres ohde

Appendix K

Modified Descriptive Review of a Learner

Learner: Shirwan		Presenter: Yu Tian Partner: Xinyue Wu Anqi Cheng	Date: Dec. 7, 2017
1. Evidence/Artifacts:		3. Context: Sherwan: 10-year-old boy in Grade 5 at Wright Middle School. He studies at ELD class Block One.	
2. Question(s): What <del>re</del> instructional recommendations can we give to my participant What assessment plans are appropriate to monitor Sherwan's progress and inform effective instructions			
4. Description/Data	5. Thoughts/Impressions		6. Actions/next steps
Data = 1. Running Record Sheet 2. Words Their Way Elementary Spelling Inventory Feature Guide 3. MAP Growth Report on Reading 4. Classroom Language Interaction Inventory 5. Sherwan's writing Sample	1. Use thinking map to develop thoughts for writing. 2. Provide spelling task to distinguish words with same vowels. 3. choose appropriate reading materials for Sherwan or adapt the Grade 5 texts to meet his language proficiency 4. Use color coding in reading to figure out the main idea and supporting details 5. Use running record sheet 6. Think about timing of the tests. 7. Use assessments to substitute those where he scored low.		Vocabulary instruction and quizz every day. self-evaluation and peer-evaluation every day. sentence correction tasks weekly writing portfolio

Artifact D: Community Literacy in Beijing and Its Instructional Implications

**Introduction**

Advances in technologies of communication and travel and the increasing integration of economies in capital and labor flow facilitate transnational migration while still keep the migrant connected with the places they left (Lam, 2012). Transnational experience is now a common scene in Beijing, the capital of China. In 2014, around 4.28 million people toured in Beijing with 884 thousand from the U.S. and the U.K.(Beijing Annual Statistics, 2015). National Census in 2010 showed that the number of immigrants reached 107 thousand among which Americans claimed the largest part (<http://www.stats.gov.cn>). Today community literacies with Western cultural elements are not hard to be found in Beijing (See Appendix). Besides, around 410 thousand students who studied abroad went back to China in 2015 and most of them chose to stay at large cities like Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou (<http://edu.people.com.cn/>). Some students, after several years of study in an English speaking country, went back to attend a junior or senior high school in China. In light of Beijing's transnational characteristics, this paper attempts to provide a conceptual rationale for the significance and possibility of including transnational and community literacies into English teaching in secondary schools of China.

**Interview with students who have transnational experiences**

In order to depict a picture of what it is like for secondary school students with transnational experiences learning English at home, I interviewed two students: Yuyao Jing and Jiande Xiao through WeChat<sup>1</sup>. Both of them are from Beijing National Day School where Yuyao Jing is now an 8th grade Junior middle school student while Jiande Xiao is in his second year of high school.

## CAPSTONE ELL PORTFOLIO

Yuyao Jing and Jiande Xiao are both from middle-class families in Beijing and their parents can afford all their expenses abroad. Yuyao Jing went to Canada at the age of 4 when her father was pursuing his doctoral degree there. She attended a local preschool for two years before she enrolled into a primary school and completed four years of schooling there. Jiande Xiao went to Canada with her mother when he was 12. He attended a local public school called West Vancouver Secondary School and studied there for 3 years. Both of the two students made some friends during their stay in Canada and they still keep in touch with their friends through digital forms of communication like Skype and email.

Their transnational experiences make a difference to both their lives and people around them. Yuyao Jing mentioned that their experiences abroad made her more open and outgoing, more willing to interact with people around them. Jiande Xiao proudly claimed that years of living in Canada developed his personal skills and built up his confidence when expressing his ideas, which contributed a large part to his maturity. Both of them stated that their English listening and speaking skills as well as their knowledge of Western culture enhanced remarkably during their study abroad. At home, they can now use their language strength to help people around. Yuyao Jing always introduces her classmates to some new books coming out in the U.S. and Canada and is ready to help her classmates with English. Jiande Xiao likes to correct his peers' pronunciation. And he is often asked to act as an interpreter for his family members when they are conversing with foreigners or reading English instructions.

That being said, both Yuyao Jing and Jiande Xiao expressed their dissatisfaction with English courses in school because they find the course content mostly easier compared with their English proficiency levels. "Sometimes I prefer to bring a novel and read in the back row of the classroom when they are learning something I've already grasped." Yuyao Jing confessed. Jiande

Xiao said that often times his English teacher seems reluctant to ask him questions because “My English is far above that of my peers and I always talks too much in English”. The best choice for him, as he admitted, is to do some reading and writing drills while the teacher is lecturing.

The interview discovers that due to the disparity between the language goals stipulated in the Curriculum and language proficiency of these students in question, they are somewhat ignored because they have already achieved the curriculum goals. They can’t feel deserved caring in the classroom nor can they get correspondingly high expectation from the teachers in English learning.

To show authentic caring to these students, teachers should adjust their attitudes, expectations, and behaviors about their human value, intellectual capability, and performance responsibilities (Gay, 2010). Activity design should take into consideration these students’ prior knowledge in English language and culture to get them more involved. In addition, their language proficiency and experiences abroad can serve as valuable teaching resources to facilitate English teaching and learning. And this practice also helps to change the school literacy practices that are sometimes thought of as sterile and lacking in generative possibilities (Au, 2006; Luke, 2007).

### **Experimenting with a design of class activities.**

Based on the analysis above, I designed a series of class activities with mainly two considerations. First, language learning is always intertwined with experiencing a new culture. In *National English Curriculum for Chinese Primary Schools and Junior/Senior Middle Schools* issued in 2011, one of the goals in English teaching is to help students “build an awareness of and respect for cultural differences”(www.pep.com.cn). The western cultural elements in communities of Beijing and the transnational experiences from students should be tapped to help

## CAPSTONE ELL PORTFOLIO

achieve this goal in classroom teaching. Second, the students' prior knowledge should be taken into consideration when designing class activities because "The students' background knowledge profoundly affects how they interpret subject matter" (Windschitl, 1999, p.752). In this sense, by capitalizing on household and other community resources, we can organize classroom instruction that far exceeds in quality the rote-like instruction students commonly encounter in schools (Moll et al., 1992)

The one week's worth of activities focus on Christmas because getting students to know more about Christmas as well as literally celebrate the special day will help them develop a deeper insight into Western culture and enhance their awareness of cultural differences. These activities will at the same time give those who have transnational experiences an opportunity to bring their strengths into full play.

**Day One: A field trip.** School trips organized right before Christmas Day with clear aims and careful arrangement will be an effective and inspiring way for the students to search for Christmas artifacts in Beijing. Students should be divided into several groups during the trip and specific goals and tasks are allocated to each group to make sure they are all clear about what kind of artifacts they are supposed to collect and their use in classroom activities thereafter. Students can be guided into communities where Christmas atmosphere is most evident to take pictures, talk with people there and buy what they would use in following activities. Lectures by English speakers can also be given to the students on the origin of Christmas and its celebration today.

**Day Two: Classroom Decoration.** Each group will be assigned to decorate a specific area in the classroom. Assessment standards should be made clear beforehand to make sure each group make good use of what they've learned from the school trip. When all the groups finish

their decoration, each student will be given a couple of colorful stars and be allowed to tag the stars onto the bottom of a decoration area that they like best.

**Day Three: Card Writing.** Each group will share the blessing sentences that they collected during their trip. The teacher should give students some guidance on the format of card writing and the traits of the blessing language. Moral education is encouraged to be included into this lesson to foster the students' sense of gratitude and friendliness towards people around. Then the students can work in groups to write Christmas cards for their friends and relatives. The teacher is supposed to give help when necessary.

**Day Four: Group Presentation.** In this lesson, each group gets an opportunity to present what they know about Christmas. Themes like “The origin of Christmas”, “Christmas celebration around the world”, “Comparison between Chinese Lunar New Year and Christmas”, etc. can be chosen from by the groups in advance to make sure they have ample time for preparation. The ways to give presentation can be encouraged to be various and fun. Students can sing, act, tell a story or lecture as they wish.

**Day Five: Christmas Party.** A party can be organized in the classroom for the students and the teacher to celebrate Christmas together. Students are encouraged to make or buy western food and bring them to the party. They can sing English songs, watch English videos and dance to music to get immersed in a festive atmosphere.

## **Conclusion**

Beijing, an increasingly multicultural cosmopolitan with a growing number of citizens who have transnational experiences, boasts rich language and cultural resources manifested in its communities. An ELL teacher can tap these resources to design class activities that introduce students into the cultural elements in language learning. In addition, students with transnational



## CAPSTONE ELL PORTFOLIO

experiences whose English proficiency far surpasses that of their peers deserve enough caring in class. Their experiences in an English-speaking country and background knowledge should be brought into full play to get them more involved in class activities. Artifacts displaying community literacies are useful when included into class to intrigue students' interest and enhance their awareness of cultural difference. And activities based on these artifacts can play a key role in achieving the goals above.

References

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Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> WeChat is a cross-platform instant messaging service developed by Tencent in China, first released in January 2011

Appendix

Picture 1



Picture 2



Picture 3



Picture 4





Picture 5

**圣诞狂欢节儿童早午餐**  
**Christmas Carnival Children's Brunch**

2015.12.19 11:30am-15:00pm

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Artifact E: Negative L1 Transfer in L2 Writing and Its Implications to English Writing  
Instruction in Chinese Middle Schools

**Introduction**

L1 transfer and its impact on L2 writing quality has been investigated by a number of studies. Some studies explored positive transfer from learners' L1 and identified its contribution to the enhancement of their L2 writing quality. These studies used translation as an approach to test the influence that positive transfer can effect to learners' L2 writing quality. Kobayashi and Rinnert (1992)'s study compared English compositions written by 48 Japanese university students divided into two groups: one group writing first in Japanese and then translating into English, the other writing directly in English. The study identifies in the translations greater syntactic complexity and more satisfying content, organization and style than in compositions directly written in English. Uzawa (1996) explored differences in the quality of language use by Japanese ESL students' writings and also recognizes a higher quality of language use in translation task than in writing directly in L2. Although positive L1 transfer can be conducive to learners' L2 writing, negative transfer from learners' native language should not be neglected as they are the two sides of one coin. Mahmoud (2000) probed into the negative transfer caused by L1 translation by conducting an error analysis some Arabic-speaking students' English writings. The study detected an apparent transfer of Arabic language features to their English writings, which is in part attributed to the grammatical and lexical errors showing in their writings.

In light of the above studies conducted on L1 transfer, this study holds a dialectical view towards the issue and admits the coexistence of both positive and negative L1 transfer in learning a second language. While advocating the promotion of positive L1 transfer in learner's L2 writing acquisition, this study takes a special look into the negative side of L1 transfer. It first

explores the possible factors leading to negative L1 transfer, then examines the relationship between negative transfer overcoming ability and L2 English writing quality by testing a group of Chinese Grade 8 learners of English, and finally discusses the pedagogical approaches that can be applied to help Chinese middle school learners to mitigate the negative transfer in their English writing practice.

### **Negative L1 transfer and its contributing factors**

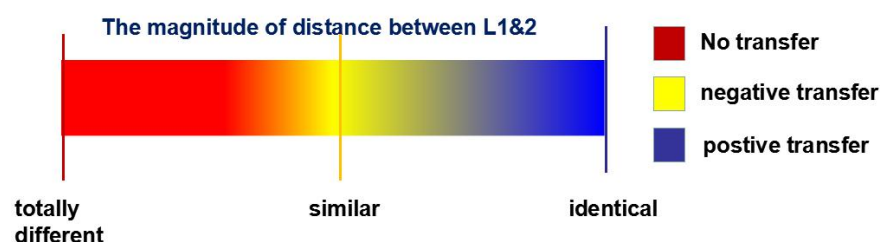
According to behaviorist learning theory, previous learning habits may inhibit the learning of new habits, which generates what is called “proactive inhibition”(Ellis, 1994). In learning a second language, learners’ L1 serves as prior knowledge and plays an important part in the construction of L2 knowledge. Learners would fall back on their L1 knowledge purposefully or inadvertently and transfer knowledge from L1 to L2 when his L2 knowledge is insufficient to achieve their communicative goals. Proactive inhibition may set in where the learners’ L1 and L2 share a similar meaning but express it in different ways, which may lead to errors or inappropriate expressions. For instance, a Chinese learner of L2 English who has a low proficiency level in English may literally translate from his Chinese into English to produce such a sentence as “I very like this book” which may sound a little weird to a native English speaker.

Negative transfer is more likely to appear where there is a certain degree of similarity between learners’ L1 and L2 (Ellis, 1994). In a famous study conducted by Schachter (1974), English relative clauses produced by two groups of adult L2 learners were examined for errors. One group was composed of Chinese and Japanese learners whose native languages have no relative clauses while the other group comprised Persian and Arabic learners whose native languages resemble English in terms of relative clause structure. The study showed that Chinese and Japanese learners exhibited fewer errors in their relative clauses than in those produced by



Persian and Arabic learners although the former displayed greater degree of avoidance in using English relative clauses than the latter. To give a more vivid illustration, Figure 1 shows where negative transfer is most likely to set in.

Figure 1



Psychological aspect of Contrastive Analysis explored some non-linguistic variables and identified classroom SLA learners as more susceptible to negative transfer compared with naturalist SLA learners, because the former use more of their L1 in and outside school and their exposure to L2 resources is mainly confined to English classroom settings, which strengthens the proactive inhibition. This is the case with most English learners in Chinese middle and high schools who learn English as a foreign language mainly in classroom settings.

Based on the above analysis, it can be summarized that negative transfer from the learners' first language is more likely to show up 1) where the learners' first language and target language share a certain degree of similarity and 2) when classroom SLA learners who use their first language most of the time communicate in L2 language.

## Methods

**Participants.** Six Grade 8 students from a middle school in Jinan, Shandong province, China participated in this study. These students can be labeled as classroom SLA learners because all of them were born in China with Mandarin as their native language and learned English solely in school classroom settings. The quality of their English writings were well

documented by their teacher Hu who kept a record of the grades for their weekly writing assignments and the scores of their writings in every middle and final English exams. With the help of teacher Hu, these 6 students were evenly divided into three groups based on their English writing ability, namely, high-level English writers, medium-level English writers and low-level English writers. Each group was composed of 2 students with similar level of English writing ability.

**The design of negative transfer test.** According to Schachter (1974), negative transfer is most likely to take place where L1 and L2 share a certain degree of similarity. Thus this test (see Appendix), informed by a contrastive analysis between Mandarin and English by Chen Dezhang (2011), centers on similar expressions between Mandarin and English in such aspects as word use, word order and sentence structure, in order to see whether or not these students exhibit negative transfer from their native language and test the students' ability to overcome negative transfer from their native language. To focus merely on transfer factor, the language materials used in the test were examined by their teacher Hu and contain no vocabulary, sentence structure or grammar beyond the students' current English proficiency level. Besides, to lower of the difficulty level, the test is designed in the form of paired choice questions. Each paired choice item contains two contrastive English sentences with one tinged with negative transfer from Mandarin and the other considered as more conventional expression. For each paired choice question, students are supposed to choose the more conventional and accurate English expression to match the Mandarin expression provided as a hint in the stem.

### **Data collection**

Six copies of the test was printed out and distributed to the participants who were then required to work independently. They were asked to choose the more appropriate answer based

on their own knowledge and understanding, with neither help from other people nor reference to other resources. The papers were then scored after they were handed in, with 1 point for each right choice and 0 point for wrong choice.

## Results

Figure 2

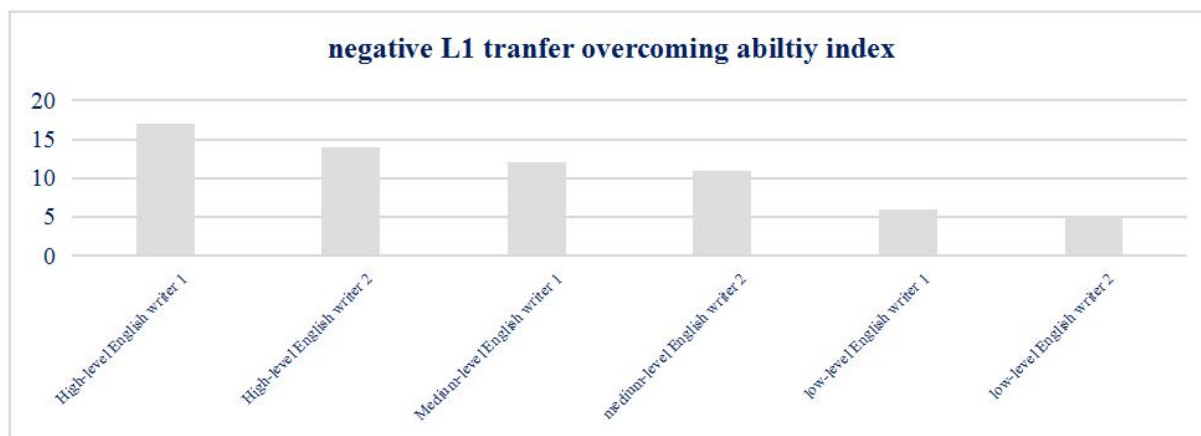


Figure 2 shows all the 6 participants, regardless of their English writing level, displayed their susceptibility to negative transfer from their Mandarin to their L2 English (with a full score of 25, the highest score achieved is 17, the lowest 5), which echoes the declaration of Psychological aspect of Contrastive Analysis that classroom SLA setting is one significant contributing factor to negative transfer. Besides, considering that the test questions were designed to cover similar aspects shared by the two languages, this results can also confirm Schachter's finding that L1 negative transfer is strongly related to similarity between L1 and L2. More importantly, the six students' performances on the test also displayed a significant correlation between their negative L1 transfer overcoming ability with their writing quality, with the high-level English writers scored the highest and the low-level English writers scored the lowest.

## Discussion

In this study, a negative L1 transfer overcoming ability test was designed centering on some similar expressions from both Mandarin and English. The test was then used to test six Chinese middle school students who learned English as a foreign language mainly in classroom settings. The results of the study detected these students' omnipresent vulnerability to L1 negative transfer, thus substantiating the two factors contributing to negative transfer, namely, a certain degree of similarity between L1 and L2 and classroom SLA setting. The results also reveal a significant correlation between students' negative L1 transfer overcoming ability and their L2 English writing quality. The results indicate the necessity of providing instructions on the subtle differences between Mandarin and English expressions where the two languages share some similarities. High quality translations between Mandarin and English can also be adopted as mentor texts to direct students' attention on nuanced difference to help them combat against negative transfer from their native language.

**Explicit instruction on subtle differences between Mandarin and English.** Without sufficient knowledge on similarities and differences between Mandarin and English, Chinese middle school students would transfer some language features from Mandarin to English without even knowing if it is appropriate or not. Thus, erroneous or unconventional expressions would appear in their writings. In light of this, it is advisable for English teachers to give writing mini-lessons on nuances in English word use, word order and sentence structure in English compared with Mandarin. For example, in explaining the meanings and uses of "hand" in English, it would be really helpful if the teacher can make a contrastive analysis between the semantic range of "hand" and that of its counterpart "手" in Mandarin which has a broader semantic range than the former. The teacher can move on to point out the similarities and differences between the

meanings and uses of “hand” and “手” in case students may feel confused and transfer negatively from their Mandarin to English.

**Complement grammar instruction with contrastive analysis between L1 and L2.** An explicit knowledge of grammar plus the ability to use them, has been proved beneficial to writers (Locke, 2009). For second language learners, especially for classroom SLA learners as Chinese middle school students who learn English mainly in classroom settings, a conscious knowledge about grammatical rules in the target language can keep them on the right track in using the language. While English grammar instruction informs the Chinese students how they can use and manipulate the language in their writing, it is still ambiguous to what extent some grammatical rules could be universal to both Mandarin and English. Thus, some comparisons between Mandarin and English grammatical rules can be embedded into English grammar instruction to help Chinese students form a clearer image about the subtle differences between the two to avoid potential negative transfer in this regard. For example, when instructing on English sentence structure, teacher can complement the instruction by pointing out that English puts more emphasis on the first part of the sentence while Mandarin put the emphasis on the last part of the sentence (Taub, 2015) and give some examples. This will help Chinese students combat against their tendency to put the emphasis on the last part of sentence when they write in English as a result of negative interference from their Mandarin.

**Use high quality translations between Mandarin and English as mentor texts.** High quality translations embody an implicit knowledge about the similarities and differences between the two languages. Good examples of translation would show students how to negotiate between the two languages, or rather, how to take advantage of positive transfer while at the same time overcoming negative transfer. Considering that translation is quite a necessary strategy for L2

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students to achieve communicative goals in their writing, especially for those at a relatively low proficiency level of the target language (Kobayashi & Rinnert, 1992), it would be desirable if the teacher can guide the students in reading and analyzing some high quality examples of translation between Mandarin and English, and then engage the students in some translating practices. This translation-related experiences plus the teacher's feedback would help students make more sensible choices in terms of L1 transfer in their writing.

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**Appendix**

Negative L1 Transfer Overcoming Ability Test

Paired choice questions:选择下列你认为最准确、最地道的英文翻译。

( )1.我非常喜欢这本书。

A.I really like this book. B.I very like this book.

( )2.他从济南坐长途汽车到北京。

A.He took a bus from Jinan to Beijing. B. He came to Beijing from Jinan by bus.

( )3.我去学校要花 20 分钟。

A. It takes me 20 minutes to go to school. B.I take 20 minutes to go to school.

( )4.不要堵在门口。

A. Stand clear of the door. B.Don't stand near the door.

( )5.水果, 我最喜欢苹果。

A.Fruit, I like apples best. B. My favorite fruit is apples.

( )6.听了这些话我很开心。

A. These words made me happy. B.I became very happy after I heard these words.

( )7.别忘了吃药。

A. Don't forget to eat your medicine. B. Don't forget to take your medicine.

( )8.今天一所美国高中的校长汤姆来我们学校参观。

A. Tom, an American high school principal, visited our school today.

B.Today an American high school principal Tom visited our school.

( )9.黑板上写着几个英文词。

A. There are a few English words on the blackboard.



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B. The blackboard has a few English words on it.

( )10.门打不开。

A. The door doesn't open. B.The door cannot be opened.

( )11.朋友来了，是多么快乐的事情！

A. Friends come. What a pleasure! B. What a pleasure to have friends!

( )12.他最终还是决定留下来参加他同学的生日聚会。

A. He finally decided to stay and attend his classmate's birthday party.

B. He finally decided to stay for his classmate's birthday party.

( )13.我们都盼望情况会好转。

A. We all expect a better situation. B.We all expect that the situation can be better.

( )14.你没说到重点。

A. You didn't get to the emphasis. B. You didn't get to the point.

( )15.我感觉不太舒服。

A.I don't feel well. B.I feel uncomfortable.

( )16.我认为这不是一个难题。

A. I don't think it is a problem. B.I think it isn't a problem.

( )17.慢慢来，不用着急。

A.Take your time. B.Don't be in a hurry.

( )18.他跟着老师穿过草坪来到一间很大的教室。

A.He followed the teacher to walk through the lawn and came into a large classroom.

B. He followed the teacher through the lawn, into a large classroom.

( )19.不要对我期望太高。

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A. Don't expect too much from me. B. Don't expect me too much.

( )20.这台电脑出问题了吗?

A. Does this computer have a problem? B. Is there something wrong with this computer?

( )21.今天我想把一本书介绍给大家。

A. Today I'm going to introduce all of you to a book.

B. Today I'm going to introduce a book to all of you.

( )22.这个男孩为 John 和 Amy 所生。

A. This boy was born by John and Amy. B. This boy was born to John and Amy.

( )23. John 很惊讶地看着 Emily。

A. John looked at Emily in surprise. B. John looked at Emily and felt surprised.

( )24.那块石头击中了他的脸。

A. That stone hit his face. B. That stone hit him in the face.

( )25.经历过许多失败后才能成功。

A. After you experience a lot of failures you can finally succeed.

B. You may experience a lot of failures before you can finally succeed.

Artifact F: A Case Study on Keming Li's English Development

**Introduction to the Participant**

The participant in this case study is one of my former students in a public middle school in Beijing where I taught him English for half a year. Now we still keep in touch and talk with each other online. Thus a large part of the information about this participation is based on my previous knowledge of him and current online interviews. Besides, in order to gain a deeper insight into his linguistic and sociocultural background, I conducted an interview with his mother, which casts a new light on his linguistic capability and the underlying factors contributing to his current English proficiency level.

**Brief Participant Overview on Personal Characters**

Keming Li, a 13-years-old boy, is an average Grade 8 student in Beijing National Day School. He is relatively more outgoing than average Chinese teenagers of his age, fond of making friends and hanging out with them in leisure time. He is never afraid of expressing his opinions in class. In my English classes last year, he played an active role in joining group discussion and voicing his ideas. He has a couple of hobbies and has kept them for a long span of time. He has an affinity for music such as heavy metal, rock and roll and rap. Because of his gift in playing the drums, he was recruited as a member in the school's symphony orchestra where he serves as one of the drum players. He is also keen on playing basketball and plays with his friends regularly after school or on the weekend.

Common to teenagers of his age, he lacks discipline in study and is not quite motivated in applying himself to his schoolwork. His mother concerns a lot about his obsession with mobile games and social media like Wechat<sup>2</sup>. In a recent interview, she complains about the large

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<sup>2</sup> WeChat is a cross-platform instant messaging service developed by Tencent in China, first released in January 2011.

amount of time that Keming spends playing with his phones. She states that Keming still needs some push from the parents and self-discipline to get daily schoolwork done in time. However, Keming also displays persistence in doing what he likes. According to his mother, he has exerted an unrelenting effort to practice the drum and never swerves in his decision.

### **Linguistic Background**

Born in Beijing, China, Keming Li acquired Mandarin as his first language. He has never picked up another language or dialect since his birth. According to his mother, as a baby Keming showed no distinct individual difference in L1 acquisition although he uttered his first word a little later than the average babies. Even when he was 3 or 4 years old he still struggled with some specific sounds in Mandarin and occasionally uttered some sentences intelligible only to his mom. However, he gradually caught up and achieved an average level when he reached 7. In his first year of elementary school he attended a training program for children guides and did a fairly good job by delivering an unambiguous introduction of the exhibitions, as far as his mother recalls.

Keming's Mandarin literacy level is about the average according to school assessments. His writings in Mandarin are always scored average, seldom reaching an excellent level. Given a scale from 1 to 10 to indicate his Mandarin where 10 is the top level, Keming chose 6 while his mother chose somewhere between 4 and 5. Based on the analysis above, Keming shows no noticeable strength nor weakness in terms of linguistic capability. And still quite common as most Chinese kids, he has no special experiences in language learning.

### **Family Background**

Keming Li was born into a typical middle-class family in Beijing. Being the only child in the family, he is always the focus of his parents and grandparents. His father attended Beijing

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Normal University, a prestigious university for cultivating teachers in China and majored in Chinese literature there. After graduation, he practiced journalism and took up a job as a reporter and editor. Now he has quit the job and worked as a freelancer and an individual investor. His father's personal interest in reading and writing has some positive influence on Keming who has also developed a habit of reading since a very early age. His mother once worked in a hospital as a doctor but finally gave up the job due to overwhelming pressure from the workload and unsatisfactory salary. She ended up as a claims manager in an insurance company. Like most middle-class mothers, she is always concerned with her son's academic performance in school and often checks with his English assignment, corrects some of mistakes and even gives him some instructions on grammar and vocabulary.

Their decent family income allows for abundant educational resources for their son. They bought additional courses to develop Keming's musical talent in playing the drums, purchased online oral English courses and even paid around 5 thousand dollars for their son to join the 2-week study tour in America. Recently they hosted an exchange student from Australia and created opportunities for their son to interact and make friends with a native English speaker. They are now considering sending Keming to attend an international school in Beijing in order to pave the road for his future study in America. One of Keming's cousins who had completed her schooling from high school all the way to college in the U.K. and finally found a decent job in a government-funded institution in Beijing sets a good example for Keming and constitutes a good spur for the family to make such a decision.

### **Educational Background**

Keming's educational experiences are quite similar to those of his friends and classmates in Beijing. At the age of 3, he was sent to kindergarten where he learned some most common

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English words and sentences. He went on to attend elementary school and began to learn English at the age of 8. Since then he has spent 6 years on English.

Beijing National Day School (BNDS) where Keming is now studying is one of the top middle schools in Beijing. The school offers English oral classes given by native speakers and a wide range of English electives such as English Movies, English Novels and English News, etc. The students can also attend various activities to celebrate cultures and traditions of different countries around the world.

Subjected to an educational system where test scores are what universities and colleges rely on to make admission decisions, English instruction in most Chinese schools is heavily exam-oriented. In BNDS, for example, a large amount of time in a typical English class goes to language drills and reading exercises. Students have few opportunities to engage in communicative activities such as situational conversations, group discussion and debate, etc., which to some extent impedes their development of communicative capability in English. Besides, English as an independent subject in China has little connection with other subjects so students cannot use English as a tool to acquire knowledge nor can they discuss in English what they have already learned in other subjects. This practice in English education quite constrains students' ability from engaging in in-depth discussion with each other.

In order to complement the English instruction in BNDS, Keming's parents purchased for him online one-to-one oral English courses given by Filipinos. In this course, Keming has ample opportunities to express himself in English and gets corrective feedback from the online teachers. By the time I conducted the interview with him, Keming has had this online course for about 100 hours, which boosts his confidence and comfort in communicating with others in English. Besides, this summer Keming took a 2-week study tour with some of his schoolmates in

America. They visited the cities and schools, experienced the local cultures and interacted with local people. This experience, although not long enough, provides him some first-hand information on what English speakers interact with each other in real life and gives him a chance to test what he learned in and out of school.

### **Analysis of Participant's Language Abilities**

In order to obtain a first-hand data on Keming's current English proficiency level, I had an online interview with him and got an oral sample for 20-odd minutes. In the first part of the interview, we talked in a casual way on some common topics easily seen in his current English textbooks, such as school subjects and activities, hobbies, future career and last summer vacation, mimicking a small talk between friends. In the latter part of the online chat, however, I asked him to tell a story with the help of a series of pictures, which is a rare scene in his classroom instruction, aiming at testing his language performance when narrating an event in a somewhat impromptu way. I also collected two of his writings to help me get to know his written capability in English. The first writing sample was randomly chosen from his weekly writing assignments in school and shows his effort in putting what he learned from class to writing practice. The second writing sample, however, is a mid-term exam composition he wrote on November 27. Its topic, which pertains to his classroom English instruction in this term, is about giving advice to one classmate in trouble.

With the language production samples in both oral and written forms, this paper attempts to conduct a thorough analysis of Keming's current stage of English language acquisition and map out his strengths as well as areas of improvement by implementing linguistic theories that I learned from SLA class instruction and relevant books. The analysis is laid out from four aspects, namely, phonology, semantics, grammar and pragmatics.

## Phonology

Keming's overall oral English proficiency is somewhere around Level 3 by SOLOM standards (see Appendix). In his conversation, he understands my questions and comments fairly well and produces most of the phonemes clearly to a point where his ideas can get across to me without difficulty, except for 6 mispronunciations which prompt me to confirm with him after the interview. His speech is characterized by a relatively slow rate and a lot of pauses whenever he has difficulty searching for appropriate vocabulary to express himself. I marked his pauses with "...” in the transcription and counted them up to get a number of 197 in the 20-minute conversation.

Keming displays his strength in terms of phoneme accuracy in the conversation sample. He can convey his ideas intelligibly by pronouncing most of the vowels and consonants in a relatively correct way. One evidence is his accurate articulation of some of the most marked phonemes such as /ð/(they) /dʒ/(subject) and /r/(faster) that emerge and stabilize at a later acquisition stage even for native speakers (Lin&Johnson, 2010). Keming can also distinguish between English /i/ (reading) and /ɪ/ (history) better than most of his peers who are struggling with these two vowels. Another fact supportive of his phonological strength is that he has little difficulty in producing English lexical stress, even for some polysyllabic words like “dictionary” and “memorize”. And in terms of intonation, he never fails to apply a rising tone at the end of yes/no questions.

The most tricky phonemes for Keming as revealed in the conversation are monophthong /ʌ/, diphthong /aɪ/, alveolar lateral approximant /l/ and dental fricative /θ/. Deviations are detected in his production of the phonemes above in different words (see Table1). A post-test interview (see Table 2) confirms his lack of phonological knowledge of /aɪ/, /l/ and /θ/, which



explains his frequent mispronunciation of /aɪ/ into /ɛ/, /θ/ into /s/ and frequent devoicing of /l/ when it is placed in word final position. However, the test also discovers that he can produce the phonetic symbol /ʌ/ correctly sometimes but occasionally substitutes the variants /ɑ/(but /bɑt/) and /æ/(lunch/læntʃ/) for it.

Keming's Mandarin accent is transferred in a large part to his L2 English at the prosody level. In the conversation sample, he renders his pitch peak more like the high tone pattern in Mandarin and employs a large number of rising tones in his sentences, as can be noticed in the following sentences: "He also don't know↗ the woman ↗ and the baby's↗ ...is set↗ ...the woman↗ is...um...the...finally he know it↗ because he think...she think...his...shes old student is this... oh...is this...young woman↗ is a thief." In production of sentences, he stresses each word evenly without specific accent and longer duration on central words in the sentences, making the rhythmic patterns more Mandarin-like. Each syllable is produced distinctly and separately so that allophonic variations due to the interaction of adjacent phonemes common in native speakers' language are hardly detected in Keming's speech.

**Table 1:** *Keming's Mispronunciation Patterns*

Patterns	Variants
<b>Consonant Patterns</b>	
Final consonant /l/ deletion	/'bæskɪtbɔ:l/ (basketball) → /'bæskɪtbɔ:/ /sku:l/(school) → /sku:/ /'ju:sfəl/ (useful) → /'ju:sfu:/
/θ/ → /s/	/θɪf/(thief) → /sɪf/ /mæθ/ (math) → /mæs/ /θɪŋk/ (think) → /sɪŋk/

Vowel Patterns	
/ʌ/ → /ɑ/, /æ/	/bʌt/ (but) → /bat/ /lʌntʃ/ (lunch) → /ləntʃ/ /fʌn/ (fun) → /fæn/ /drʌm/ (drum) → /dræm/
/aɪ/ → /ɛ/	/raɪt/ (right) → /rɛt/ /taɪm/ (time) → /tɛm/ /laɪk/ (like) → /lɛk/ /faɪnd/ (find) → /fɛnd/

**Table 2:** *Phoneme Production Post-Test*

Target Phonemes	Representative Words	Accuracy Rates
/l/	useful, tail, basketball, hill, smell	0.2
/θ/	math, path, fifth, thick, thought	0
/ʌ/	but, love, drum, unhappy, lunch	0.4
/aɪ/	right, find, like, memorize, time	0.2

### Semantics

Keming's language in both the conversation and writing samples exhibits features of interlanguage at an early stage of development. The conversation sample shows his lack of vocabulary diversity with a total words of 1512 among which only 286 unique words exist, making a lexical density of 18.92% (see Table 3). This figure is relatively low considering that a lexically dense text has a lexical density measure of around 60-70% (UsingEnglish.com). In

company of the low lexical density, Keming's oral sample also features a high percentage (71.8%) of 1-4 letter words as well as repetitions of some high-frequency words, which hinders an in-depth expression of his ideas and detailed descriptions. In his conversation, Keming repeats some adjectives to describe different situations. In the conversation sample, "good" was repeated 6 times where adjectives like "worthwhile", "beneficial", "wise", "useful", "reasonable", "meaningful" would have been more accurate to convey his meanings. Some other instances are "hard"(repeated 6 times), "interesting" (4 times) and "difficult"(3 times) .

What surprised me is that when I tested Keming on synonyms for the adjectives above in a random order, he could recognize many of them although he couldn't put them into use (see Table 4). And a later online vocabulary test shows that he has a receptive vocabulary of 3300 words(<http://testyourvocab.com/>), which contrasts his relatively small productive oral vocabulary as is shown in the conversation sample since "a 2,000-word vocabulary works fairly well for social purposes" (Peregoy & Boyle, 2013).

His writing sample displays a more diverse vocabulary and low word repetition rates. The text content of his writing sample scores a 59.63% in terms of lexical density with the percentage of short words (1-4 letter words) dropping down to 62.4%. This may be due to the ample time and low anxiety in writing whereby a larger part of his vocabulary can be productive.

Traces of L1 interference in semantic level can be easily detected when going over both his conversation and writing samples. An apparent evidence in his conversation sample is his confusion of personal pronouns "he" and "she" as well as adjective possessive pronoun "his" and "her". In describing the sequence of pictures, he used "he" and "his" 34 times to refer to the female gender but used the gender pronouns correctly for merely 5 times. Keming's struggling

with English gender-specific pronouns derives from the interference of his primary language Mandarin where “他”(he)and “她”(she) have the same pronunciation.

**Table 3:** *Text Content Analysis*

	<b>Total word count</b>	<b>Total unique words</b>	<b>Hard words</b>	<b>Lexical Density</b>	<b>1-4 letter words</b>
<b>Conversation sample</b>	1512	286	32(2.12%)	18.92%	71.8%
<b>Writing sample</b>	109	65	2(1.83%)	59.63%	62.4%

**Table 4:** *Synonyms Test Results*

<b>Productive adjectives</b>	<b>Receptive synonyms</b>
hard, difficult	tricky, tough
interesting, fun	pleasing, exciting, awesome, fantastic
good	useful, reasonable, meaningful, important, pleasant enjoyable, excellent, perfect, wonderful

### **Grammar**

Gauged by the tool of Mean Length of Utterance (MLU), Keming has relatively high scores in both his oral and written samples. In his oral sample, 66 utterances are detected with a total of 745 morphemes, yielding a 11.28 in terms of MLU(see Table 5). This number is remarkable considering that the average MLU for the expressive language of a 60-month-old

native speaker is only 5.63 ([www.sltinfo.com](http://www.sltinfo.com)). His two written samples produce an even higher number of 19.85 with 278 morphemes contained in 14 utterances(see Table 5).

The major contributor to his relatively high MLU scores is the abundant use of conjunctions in both his oral and written samples. These conjunctions such as “and”, “but”, “so”, “because”, “if”, “when” link meaning groups together to make longer compound sentences. In his writing samples, more marked conjunctions that are rare in his oral samples like “unless”, “while”, “instead of” are employed to make his sentences more cohesive. Besides the application of linking words, Keming also exhibits a good command of contraction in his language production, as in “It’s very hard”, “I don’t know”, “I can’t play basketball”, “You won’t...”, “You needn’t...”, etc.

Despite the morphological strengths above, however, Keming still struggles with the use of irregular past forms and inflectional affixes to indicate plurality. This is not uncommon among English learners in China because Mandarin has no inflection. But one particular aspect in Keming’s oral production is that when he was asked to narrate a story, he frequently failed to use irregular past forms although he successfully placed past-tense ending to regular verbs for most of the time, as in “...maybe the old woman find the young woman’s daughter take his money and take somethings in the shop. So she called the police.” This contrasts the acquisition order of native speakers who usually acquire irregular past forms prior to past-tense endings for regular verbs (Byrnes & Wasik, 2009), which echos Krashen’s distinction between language acquisition and learning. In addition, inflectional suffix “-s” is often missing where plural meanings exist in his samples. Examples in this case are never rare in his samples, such as “I have a lot of sentence that I don’t know”.

Keming demonstrates a remarkable strength in terms of syntax with a multitude of linking words and complex sentences in both his oral and written samples. Besides the conjunctions stated above, pronouns are also used when necessary to form reference chains and add to cohesion. Complicated sentences containing adverbial and attributive clauses can also be detected in his language production although complex sentences account for a larger part in his writing than his conversation.

That being said, a trace of L1 interference is detectable in the samples concerning word order. In both his oral and written language, he invariably puts temporal adverbials at the beginning of the sentences, although this is acceptable while he often fails to apply prepositions. Take as an example “(On the) First day we went to the White House” in his conversation or “I think (after) few days your parents will give them back to you” in his writing. This may be due to the interference of his Mandarin which puts more emphasis on the last part of the sentence as opposed to English that stresses the first part (Taub, 2015). Interestingly, if you translate some of his “weird” sentences literally into Mandarin, you’ll get standard character order in that language. For example, “...because(因为)I(我) don’t have(没有) a long time(很长的时间) to play(来玩), so(所以) I(我) just(只) finish(完成了) my(我的) homework(作业) .... every day(每天) I(我) just (只)can(能) play basketball(打篮球).” This example illustrates that he was using Mandarin character order to construct English sentence when expressing himself.

In comparison with his oral sample, Keming’s writings show a higher percentage of GFWs, longer and more complex sentences, better cohesion and logic with abundant linking words and phrases, and last but not least, less grammatical errors.

However, generally speaking, Keming performs fairly well in employing GFWs and other grammatical forms to get himself across when producing language. He can also employ

various linking devices and complex sentences to make his sentences natural, smooth and cohesive. His struggling with such grammatical morphemes as irregular past forms and plural endings as well as his occasionally application of Mandarin-like word order in sentence construction reveal just another aspect of the interlanguage features in his L2 development.

**Table 5:** *Mean Length of Utterance (MLU) in Keming's oral and written samples*

SAMPLES	NUMBER OF MORPHEMES	NUMBER OF UTTERANCES	MLU
Oral Sample	745	66	11.3
Written Sample	278	14	19.85

### Pragmatics

Since the conversation was conducted online between me and my former student Li Keming, the authority that a teacher in China has when dealing with students and the deference that a student is supposed to show to the teacher put the two interlocutors in this conversation on an unequal footing. Throughout the interview, Keming was in a state of unease, merely answering my questions mechanically. Although I made a point of creating a relaxing atmosphere by telling some jokes and choosing daily topics, we still couldn't talk like friends. The whole conversation was thus tinged with a color of oral test where Q&A pattern dominates with little evident give-and-take between us two.

My predominance of the interview constitutes such a linguistic context where Keming's utterances hinge merely on the topics provided by my questions. In answer to my inquiry of his

favorite subjects for example, he directly replies “The subject is math and English” and then waits for my response with no intention of starting a new topic himself. Corresponding to the unequal standings of the teacher and the student, Keming never ventures to kick the conversation ball back by asking me questions and always speaks politely when he misspeaks or seeks repetition of my questions. The language he uses in the conversation therefore is largely the formal “textbook English” with little trace of colloquial color. This unique social context also explains why he always resigns himself to the questions that he may have no clue about. For instance, when he is asked about his future job he first displays an “I-have-no-idea” stance but then manages to utter some sentences at the pressure of my unrelenting inquires. In terms of situational context, because of the online setting, I cannot sit together with him and give him a friendly pat on his shoulder. The physical distance extends the emotional distance and the conversation turns out to be more formal than I expected.

To account for how Keming derives his communicative intention from both the linguistic form of the utterances and the context, I apply here Grice’s maxims as they are the assumed principles that a speaker complies with in conversations (Hu, 2001).

In his oral production, Keming basically conforms to the four categories of maxims but occasionally fails to do so, which causes difficulties on the part of the listener in decoding his communicative intentions. To be specific, he makes a special effort in keeping relevant to the topic and providing truthful information. He tries to speak in a concise and ordered way although now and then his ideas get entangled in some redundant words and frequent pauses, cloaking his expressions with obscurity and ambiguity. Therefore, he shows a steady adherence to the Relevance and Quality maxims while occasionally breaks the Quantity and Manner.



To have a closer look at his communicative use of English, a comprehensive analysis is given to an excerpt from the conversation as follows:

*“ Yu Tian: ...what about the extracurricular activities, like clubs, sports or something like that.*

*Keming: Yes. Um...we had some relax time in the afternoon. Uhm...I...uhm...I always play basketball in the afternoon or if I can't play basketball like afternoon had the rain or something was wrong and I can't to...play the basketball I always stay at the classes...classroom and do my homework. ”*

In this excerpt, Keming keeps to the point by talking about playing basketball as his extracurricular activity. And he states honestly that the activity is contingent on the weather and some changes on the schedule. Thus, in this sense he shows compliance with the maxims of Relevance and Quality. However, he fails to take into consideration our shared knowledge about the school when providing the background information “we have some relax time in the afternoon” that turns out to be superfluous here. And still, he doesn't need to inform me of his alternative of doing homework since I only ask about his extracurricular activities. Instead, he should have provided more information on other after-class activities or offered some details about playing basketball. In this sense there's an inconformity to the maxim of Quantity. In terms of the principle of Manner, he expresses his ideas relatively orderly but not concise enough when he repeats “in the afternoon” and “play basketball” where deixis should be employed.

#### **Assessment of the Participant's Current Stage of English Proficiency Level**

In order to get an overall view of Keming's English proficiency level, this paper resorts to a set of rating scale: the Student Oral Language Observation Matrix (SOLOM). SOLOM is aimed to gauge the students' oral language based on their performance in and out of class from five aspects: listening comprehension, fluency, vocabulary, pronunciation and grammar (Gordon, et al, 2013). SOLOM gives a score range of “5” through “25” where “5” is the lowest score and approximately 19 or 20 can be considered proficient (Gordon, et al, 2013). An overall assessment

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against the standards provided in SOLOM chart would put Keming's English proficiency at an intermediate level with a holistic score of "15". More detailed assessment in the five mains are as follows:

Listening comprehension: 3 points. Keming can understand daily talk at a slower-than-normal speed with repetitions. In the online interview that I conducted with him, he understood well what I said although occasionally failed to follow me when I spoke fast. He did fairly well in the listening comprehension part in last mid-term examination administered in his school where daily talk was delivered at a much slower speed. But he still struggles with Toefl Junior listening tests where conversations or lectures are about content knowledge common in American classroom settings and the speech rate is quite normal.

Fluency: 3 points. Currently, Keming has a difficulty producing his oral language in a fluent manner. He frequently pauses to search for vocabulary or correct way of expression. To be accurate, his pauses in the transcription that I marked with "..." add up to a total of 197 in the 20-minute conversation. This is really a big number considering that there are only 1512 words in the conversation sample.

Vocabulary: 3 points. Keming can basically use English to get his ideas across. But he doesn't display a large vocabulary in his conversation with a total of 286 unique words out of 1512-word oral sample (see Table 1). He frequently misuses words in his expression, which sometimes makes comprehension difficult. For example, in the interview he replaced "test" with the word "past" and misused "catch" to convey the meaning of "arrest" and causes some confusion to me. Due to his inadequate vocabulary, he can not engage himself in a more in-depth discussion with me.

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Pronunciation: 3 points. As stated above, although Keming can produce most of the phonemes in the correct way, he is now still struggling with monophthong /ʌ/, diphthong /aɪ/, alveolar lateral approximant /l/ and dental fricative /θ/. These pronunciation difficulties occasionally makes his expression somewhat hard to get across to me. Besides, a distinct Mandarin accent as well as some inappropriate intonation patterns are also detected in his conversation.

Grammar: 3 points. Keming makes frequent errors in the use of irregular past forms and inflectional affixes to indicate plurality. And the word order in some of his sentences demonstrates a typical Mandarin feature and appears a little weird for a native speaker. However, these morphological and syntactic errors are not serious enough to cause much confusion in comprehension.

To sum up, the total score of “15” indicates that there’s still a lot of room for Keming to improve his English skills and also a fairly long way to go before he can achieve a proficient level. However, compared with many of his Chinese peers from Grade 8 whose oral language level is usually disproportionately low, this score is far from disappointing.

### **Theoretical Framework**

In analyzing Keming’s conversational and written samples, I draw on some SLA theories that help me gain a deeper insight into the current characteristics of his English acquisition as well as the underlying factors leading to his English proficiency level. Interlanguage (IL) hypothesis is the major theoretical tool that I adopt to describe the features of his English at current level. However, I also employs a whole bunch of other theories since IL alone cannot give a satisfactory answer in some cases.

### **Interlanguage Hypothesis**

Interlanguage, a set of interim linguistic systems, is a natural stage of development in second language learning. It exhibits traces of interference from the primary language as well as the developmental sequences common to first language learners (Ellis, 1994). Keming's inaccurate production of some phonemes, inadequate productive vocabularies, frequent grammatical errors such as failure to apply irregular past forms and inflectional affixes, as well as his current stage of communicative competence are just some features in the natural route of his L2 development, quite similar to the way English speakers acquire their mother tongue.

Keming's current stage of interlanguage continuum is also attributed to a strong interference from his L1. The interlanguage features in Keming's phonological development can be explained in the framework of a contrastive analysis between Mandarin and English phonology. Contrastive Analysis (CA) model posited that errors would occur inevitably where L1 differs from L2 due to negative transfer (Ellis, 1994), which explains why Keming struggles with some phonemes like /aɪ/, /l/ and /θ/ that have no counterparts in Mandarin sound system. CA model can also provide explanations in analyzing Keming's prosody patterns as distinctive Mandarin features can be found in his employment of pitch, stress, rhythm and intonation at sentence level. This can be ascribed to the fact that Mandarin is a lexical tone language with undifferentiated stress evenly distributed in sentences while English as an intonation language uses different pitches and stresses at both word and sentence level to convey linguistic meanings (Lin&Johnson, 2010).

Keming's confusion of personal pronouns "he" and "she" as well as their possessive adjectives "his" and "her" can be also ascribed to a negative interference from his L1 since in Mandarin "他"(he) and "她"(she) have the same pronunciation. In his Mandarin production,

Keming never gives a thought to the issue of gender when he refers to a third person. This caused difficulty for him to automatically apply the proper personal pronouns to a specific gender.

The fact that some of his sentences with weird word order is another illustration of L1 interference since Mandarin character order is employed here to weave all the English words into sentences as is shown by the sentence literally translated into Mandarin in phonology analysis above. This substantiates that there is also a distinct L1 interference in Keming's English production at syntactic level.

Thus, some features in Keming's samples exhibit his own evolving rules and patterns that will gradually resemble more closely those of the target language (Peregoy & Boyle, 2013). Some errors, however, stem from interference of his primary language. These two forces work together and constitute to a large part Keming's current English proficiency level.

### **Input Hypothesis**

The prerequisite for L2 to concretely take place is some data of that language serving as input (Ellis, 1994). The role of input in second language acquisition should not be underestimated. Behaviorists deem linguistic environment comprised by input stimuli as "the crucial determining factor" (Ellis, 1994). Nativists largely regard input as an important "trigger that activates the internal mechanisms" (Ellis, 1994). Krashen even claims that "second language acquisition is the direct result of learner's understanding of the target language in natural communication situations" (Byrnes & Wasik, 2009).

Input Hypothesis is effective in explaining some features revealed in Keming's oral and written samples. The quantity and quality of input plays an important role in determining his English production. For instance, he is relatively more comfortable with topics common in his classroom English instruction, such as hobbies, school life, and future plan, but apparently

stumbled through the story-telling section when he was asked to narrate an incident shown in a sequence of pictures for which he'd had no input beforehand.

Input in the form of listening practice is an undeniable factor contributing to some of the traits in his oral production. In his L2 learning experience, Keming mainly depends on reading as a major way to learn English. Exposure to native speakers' oral language, which greatly influences his phonological development, is largely confined in classroom listening practice. Although he would occasionally listen to textbook passages after school, he admits that his time spared for listening is far from enough. An approximate rate of 4:6 was given when he was asked to compare the amount of time he usually spends on listening and speaking respectively. This explains the occasional inaccurate pronunciation, stress and intonation as well as the inadequate vocabulary in his oral sample.

### **Interactive Perspective in SLA**

Interactionists give much weight to the role of natural conversations between native and non-native speakers in second language acquisition (Peregoy & Boyle, 2013). They attach importance to output that facilitates language acquisition by negotiating with the speaker to make input more comprehensible to them and by gaining a deeper understanding of the usage of the language (Peregoy & Boyle, 2013).

Interactive perspective proves effective in explaining Keming's communicative competence development. Keming has now attended one-to-one online oral classes given by English speakers in Philippines for over 100 hours. He also took a two-week study tour to USA where he had ample opportunities to talk with local people there. Besides, with an aspiration to further study in the U.S. he pays more attention to oral English by watching English movies. That's why he demonstrates a stronger ability in English communicative skills than the average

students. That being said, his communicative knowledge mainly comes from classroom instruction and online oral courses where teachers takes control and Q&A is the dominant model in his conversation. Interactions with peers in daily conversational situations are rare in his learning experiences. These factors impede the development of his comprehensive communicative skills.

### **Speech Learning Model (SLM).**

Since Contrastive Analysis model cannot give proof for Keming's accurate production of a whole bunch of English phonemes missing in Mandarin and why Keming frequently struggles with /ʌ/ which is similar to /a/ and /æ/ (when followed by /n/) in Mandarin, I draw on Speech Learning Model (SLM) to give more convincing explanation. According to SLM, Keming may have developed his own phoneme categories for new L2 sounds instead of just transferring the sounds from his L1. However, a new mental category for L2 phonemes may not be easily created if they are very similar to his L1 sounds, which explains Keming's struggling with the L2 phoneme /ʌ/.

### **Other SLA Theories Used in the Analysis**

In addition to the theories stated above, some other theories are borrowed to facilitate the analysis of Keming's English acquisition process. For instance, Krashen's Monitor Hypothesis is wielded to account for the relatively higher lexical density, more accurate use of vocabulary and word order and better linking devices in his writing samples than oral one. According to Monitor Hypothesis, the apparently more morphological, semantic and syntactic strength in his writing samples can be attributed to his internal grammar monitor that functions better with sufficient time to focus on the grammatical forms in writing than in speaking. Besides, in order to give a clear view of Keming's pragmatic strengths and weaknesses, Grice's Cooperative Principles are

also used to explain how Keming derives his communicative intention from both the linguistic form of the utterances and the context.

### **Instructional Plans for Keming Li Based on the Analysis**

#### **More Comprehensible Listening Input**

In light of the importance of input in one's L2 oral language development, it is highly recommended that Keming spend more of his time in listening. The listening materials should be authentic with native speakers' conversations and should be chosen under the rule of "i+1" in case the content is either too difficult or too easy. The listening efforts should include a first listening step to grasp the main ideas of the materials followed by an intensive listening so that attention can be paid to the language itself (phonology, vocabulary, sentence structure, etc). Transcriptions can be referred to if incomprehension takes place. After-listening tasks like imitation, retelling and summarizing orally is quite advisable to help Keming enhance his pronunciation and intonation as well as practice vocabulary and sentences structures that he has just learned from listening.

#### **Extra Instructions on English Pronunciation, Stress and Intonation.**

Keming still needs some instruction on how to pronounce monophthong /ʌ/, diphthong /aɪ/, alveolar lateral approximant /l/ and dental fricative /θ/. A native speaker's vivid demonstration of how to pronounce these phonemes by a collaboration of different parts in the vocal tract would be of great help. Special attention should also be directed to the words with these specific phonemes in listening and speaking practices in the hope that he can crack these sounds more efficiently. In addition, instruction on stress and intonation can also be necessary since Keming has long been neglecting these fields. A contrastive analysis between Mandarin and English on stress and intonation would help Keming grow more aware of his problem.



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Keming can also learn how to put stress in a sentence with correct intonation by listening and reading some ballads or poems. Some special marks are useful in this sense to highlight the stressed words and indicate both rising tones and falling tones in sentences to aid his reading.

### **Word Cards**

Word cards can be an effective way for him to enlarge his vocabulary and deepen his understanding of words. The words that he picked out to write down on the cards can be from any sources that he encounters in his everyday learning. They can be from his daily reading, listening practice, movies, songs or classroom instruction. It is very useful if he can put down new words with definitions on one side of the card and synonyms on the other. When expressing himself in English, it is advisable for him to use new words intentionally and vary his vocabulary with synonyms.

### **Instruction and Practice on Some Specific Grammatical Points.**

Since Keming is still struggling with past-tense irregular forms, plural endings and derivation, it is quite beneficial for him to refer to a grammar book or ask for the teacher's clarification on some grammatical rules. Additional practices in oral or written format can help him gain a better understanding of these rules. It would be also helpful if he can use a notebook to keep a record of the correct form of sentences embodying the grammar points that he frequently misuses.

### **Model Sentences Notebook**

Keming's frequent pauses when searching for proper words or thinking about ways to organize sentences as detected in the conversation sample greatly influence his fluency in oral production. In learning English, it is of significance for him to pay more attention to the sentence as a whole and try to acquire new words and phrases in sentences. In this sense, A notebook

where he can collect “sentence models” from his daily listening and reading can be extremely beneficial in this concern. Reading aloud and reciting these sentences is a good way to help him obtain more knowledge about well-formed sentence structure and develop an automatic mechanism in his mind to produce sentences. And it is also quite recommended that he should practice blurting out phrases, vocabulary groups or even sentences as a whole instead of expressing himself in a word-by-word fashion.

### **Situational Conversations.**

“Learners become proficient by using the language, and not by just merely learning about the language” (Kabilan, 2000). The best way to improve pragmatic skills lies in frequent conversations with a variety of communicative goals. For a Chinese student like Keming to whom interactions with native speakers is a problem, class activities such as situational conversations intended to get students involved in mimic daily situations are quite beneficial. Topics of these conversations should be close to students’ life and related to what they just learned from class. Attentions should also be paid to surroundings to make the situation as lifelike as possible. It is inadvisable for teachers to interfere with or disrupt the conversations when the conversations are going on. However, instructive feedback after the activity from the teacher focusing on language proficiency and communicative skills is both necessary and helpful.

### **English Corner**

It is also worthwhile if Keming could set up or attend an after-class English Corner where students engage themselves in English conversations by using what they learn from class. English corner is quite different from class oral activities in that students can choose both the topics they want to talk on and the partners they want to talk with. And more significantly, they can practice daily communicative skills with far less stress in real context. In order to make

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English corner more effective in helping students improve their English, there should be an administration group comprised by students themselves to provide some recommended topics, organize activities, and even give evaluations to each member's English proficiency level periodically.

### **Online English Chatting**

Online chatting using social media like Skype or WhatsApp with native speakers is also interesting and helpful. This will give Keming a real sense of what English speakers interact with each other in various conversations.

### **Critical Reflections on This Case Study**

In conducting this case study I developed a deeper understanding of many SLA theories by applying them to the analysis of a teenager student's English proficiency level. The approaches that I adopt to carry out this case study in combination with all the results that I get from it present great implications for my future teaching.

### **What I Learned From This Case Study**

First, learning materials should be comprehensible to the learners to make input really take place. Before this case study, I had a misconception that intensive exposure to language materials will be effective as long as the materials are authentic enough. Thus, I recommended the students to watch English movies, TV programs regardless of their current English proficiency level. Now Keming's case demonstrates to me that learning materials should be comprehensible enough and follow the rule of "i+1" in case the content is either too difficult or too easy. Only in this way can the learner have the prerequisite to learn as much from the material as possible.

Second, first language can serve as both positive and negative agents in one's second language acquisition. Keming's current stage of English proficiency shows strong L1 traces in both his oral and written samples while at the same time his L1 facilitates his learning of English. This fact dispels my previously negative attitude towards L1 in L2 acquisition. Instead of asking my students to forget L1 when using L2, which would be impossible, I will try to think up ways to make L1 a more positive factor to facilitate students' L2 learning.

Third, one cannot have a good command of English unless by putting the language into frequent use in multiple contexts. Merely input cannot guarantee satisfactory production in the target language as well as necessary communicative skills. By using the language to interact with people in real situations, one can process the language more deeply and learn how to fit the language to different occasions.

Fourth, useful assessment tools like SOLOM can give the learner a clear idea of their current level of English proficiency. Before conducting this case study, I merely rely on exam scores to evaluate the students' English level. The results are always changeable and unreliable because the difficulty indexes varies from exam to exam. Now with the help of SOLOM and other assessment tools, I can give detailed evaluations and map out their improvement over the time.

### **Implications For My Future Teaching**

In the future, I will follow the rule of "i+1" to choose cautiously authentic but comprehensible learning materials for my students. The language of the learning materials represents features of standard modern English without any traces of tampering by non-native speakers. They should also be neither too easy nor too difficult, just a little above the students'

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current English level. The content of the material would be close to the students' life or of interest to them so that students don't feel bored in their learning.

I plan to give my students some instructions on the similarities and differences between Mandarin and English based on a contrastive analysis. I believe this comparison will help students better negotiate between these two language systems to combat against the negative interference while at the same time using Mandarin when necessary to facilitate their learning of English. In this sense, translation can also serve as a good approach in teaching to practice and consolidate their knowledge in the two languages and help them grow more comfortable switching between L1&2.

I will also stress the use of language in different contexts to help my students improve their communicative skills. In my class, I will design activities with various situations to get them engaged in mimic daily conversations or academic interactions. I will also introduce my students to the differences between colloquial language and academic language and how to fit these different forms of language into a variety of contexts.

Finally, I will choose some useful and reliable assessment tools to evaluate the students' current English proficiency level and give them a vivid picture of which stage their English levels are now at and how far they still need to go in order to achieve a satisfactory proficient level. The assessment results serves as foundations for me and other teachers to design classes and give individual learning recommendations.

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Appendix

Teacher Oral Language Observation Matrix (TOLOM)

Name of Credential Candidate or Teaching Applicant:		Date:		Administered by:	
	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
English Comprehension	Cannot be said to understand even simple conversation.  1	Has great difficulty following what is said. Can comprehend only social conversation spoken slowly and with frequent repetitions.  2	Understands most of what is said at slower-than-normal speed with repetitions.  3	Understands nearly everything at normal speech although occasional repetition may be necessary.  4	Understands everyday conversation and normal discussions.  5
English Fluency	Speech is so halting and fragmentary as to make conversation virtually impossible.  1	Usually hesitant. Often forced into silence by language limitations.  2	Speech in everyday conversation and discussions frequently disrupted by the person's search for the correct manner of expression.  3	Speech in everyday conversation and discussions generally fluent with occasional lapses while the person searches for the correct manner of expression.  4	Speech in everyday conversation and discussions fluent and effortless approximating that of a native speaker.  5
English Vocabulary	Vocabulary limitations so extreme as to make conversation virtually impossible.  1	Misuse of words and very limited use of words. Comprehension quite difficult.  2	Frequently uses wrong words. Conversation somewhat limited because of inadequate vocabulary.  3	Occasionally uses inappropriate terms and/or must rephrase ideas because of lexical inadequacies.  4	Use of vocabulary and idioms approximate that of a native speaker.  5
English Pronunciation	Pronunciation problems so severe as to make speech virtually unintelligible.  1	Very hard to understand because of pronunciation problems. Must frequently repeat in order to make him/herself understood.  2	Pronunciation problems necessitate concentration on the part of the listener and occasionally lead to misunderstanding.  3	Always intelligible, although the listener is conscious of a definite accent and occasional inappropriate intonation patterns.  4	Pronunciation and intonation approximate that of a native speaker.  5
English Grammar	Errors in grammar and word order so severe as to make speech virtually unintelligible.  1	Grammar and word order errors make comprehension difficult. Must often rephrase and/or restrict him/herself to basic patterns.  2	Makes frequent errors of grammar and word order that occasionally obscure meaning.  3	Occasionally makes grammatical and/or word order errors that do not obscure meaning.  4	Grammar and word order approximate that of a native speaker.  5

**Scoring Directions:** First, circle the description or mark the box that best matches the applicant or credential candidate's observed level of English oral language competency in each category: Comprehension, Fluency, Vocabulary, Pronunciation, and Grammar. Next, add up the total score by summing the scores in each category. Circle total score at right.

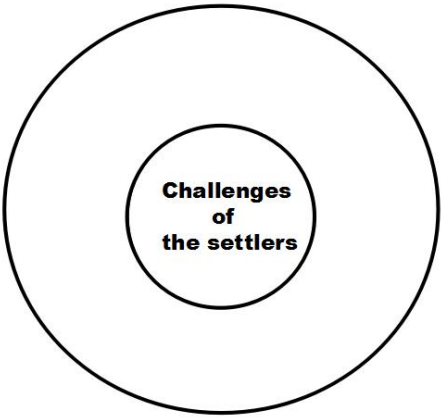
Total score																								
5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25				

The TOLOM was adapted from the California SOLOM. The TOLOM may be copied, modified, or adapted to meet local needs. See Gordon, L.M., Chang, T., Collier, S., & Holle S. (2013). The teacher oral language matrix. *Academic Exchange Quarterly*.

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Artifact G: A Lesson Plan on Summary Writing Planning

<b>Summary Writing Lesson Plan--Period One</b>
<p><b>Learners:</b> ELD 3 (Grade 5) students at Wright Middle School</p> <p><b>Subject:</b> English Language Arts</p> <p><b>Theme:</b> The Oklahoma Land Rush</p> <p><b>Content Objectives:</b> SWBAT identify from the text the challenges settlers met in the land rush and use a Circle Map to organize their thoughts about these challenges.</p> <p><b>Language Objectives:</b> SWBAT use their own language to summarize the challenges they identify from the text and express their thoughts orally about these challenges.</p> <p><b>Key vocabulary and sentence structure:</b> challenge, settler, safety, transportation, competition, fair, equal, opportunity, sooner. The reason why...is that...</p> <p><b>Materials:</b> Textbook: <i>Build in a day: The Oklahoma Land Rush</i> Circle Map Peer Assessment Checklist</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Class Activities (50mins)</b></p> <p><i>Warm up (5mins).</i> Teacher guides the students to talk about what “challenge” is. Students brainstorm what challenges they have in their life to further understand the word.</p> <p><i>Introduce the use of Circle Map (5mins).</i> Teacher hands out the Circle Map and introduces how to use the Circle Map to summarize the challenges the settlers met in the land rush. Teacher demonstrates by picking out one sentence from the text “Even the fleetest of the horsemen found upon reaching their chosen localities that men in wagons and men on foot were there before them” (Line 43-44) and guide the students to discuss the challenges displayed in the sentence. Teacher writes down the challenge on the Circle Map.</p> <div style="text-align: center;"></div> <p><i>Group work (20mins).</i> Teacher divides the class into four groups and assign each group with a few lines selected from the texts. Teacher asks the students to work with their group members to identify and summarize the challenges settlers met as</p>

indicated in their sentences using the Circle Map. Teacher then asks each group to share their sentences and their summaries of the challenges in class. Teacher encourages questions and alternative ideas from the students during the sharing section.

Sentences selected from the text:

Line 61-65: Small, previously unknown border towns became bustling metropolises. Most of them had no sidewalks, street lighting, or other conveniences. What they did have were gambling halls, saloons, and thousands of bored, heavily armed people walking around. More than one person was shot down before having the chance to file for 160 acres of land.

Line 75-78: Knowing that not all who wanted land would have a horse or wagon, the government had ordered trains to be available to carry prospective settlers into Oklahoma. The trains were ordered to go exactly 15 miles per hour, which was estimated to be the approximate speed of the average horse.

Line 78-79: Noise, dust, and confusion abounded as approximately 50,000 men, women, and children rushed for only 12,000 available tracts of land.

Line 90-94: Two hopeful settlers on fast horses were quite surprised to come upon one old man who had already plowed a field and had four-inch garden onions rising from it. The old man explained that he was no sooner; he simply had the fastest team of oxen in the world, and the Oklahoma soil was so rich that his onions had grown that high in just 15 minutes.

Class Discussion (10mins). Teacher asks the students to search through the text for any other challenges that are indicated in the text. Teacher allows the students to discuss in class and wrap up their findings using the Circle Map.

Pair work (10mins). Teacher provides a set of questions to facilitate dialogues among peers:

Ponder upon the challenges you listed on your Circle Map. Rate them according to your view of their importance using numbers 1-10 (10 the most important, 1 the least). Then share with your partner how you think about these challenges based on your rating.

Teacher encourage students to share their views in class and asks the students to take notes about what they have learned about the challenges.

**Peer Assessment Checklist**

**Partner's Name** \_\_\_\_\_ **Class Period** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_

Assign your partner a value for each listed attribute based on your observation of his/her performance in this class.

**1-- strong agree 2-- agree 3-- disagree 4--strong disagree**

My partner can fully understand the challenges the settlers met.	4	3	2	1
My partner can use his own words to summarize the challenges.	4	3	2	1
My partner effectively used Circle Map to organize his thoughts.	4	3	2	1
My partner listened to and respected my ideas.	4	3	2	1
My partner expressed his ideas clearly.	4	3	2	1

Artifact H: Developing Students' Critical Thinking in Argumentative Writing Instruction

Argumentation is defined as the rational process of increasing or decreasing the acceptability of a claim by offering a constellation of propositions to justify or refute it (Ferretti & Lewis, 2013). Underlying the “umbrella” of argument are specific forms of reasoning skills (Kuhn & Crowell, 2011). Hillocks (2011) declared that argument is mainly about logical appeals and at its core lie critical thinking (CT) and academic discourse. Therefore, argumentative writing is not simply a verbal activity but a challenging problem-solving process closely related to students' cognitive development. Asfhar, Movassagh and Arbabi (2017) investigated the relationship between CT and students' argumentative writing ability and documented a significant correlation between their overall scores in CT and the quality of their argumentative writing. The interrelationship between argumentative writing quality and CT makes this specific genre of writing a significant indicator of students' academic success (Preiss, Castillo, Grigorenko, & Manzi, 2013). In light of the role of argumentative writing in students' cognitive development and academic learning, the new K-12 Common Standards (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2010) puts a premium on CT cultivation in argumentative writing instruction and sets the standard that students achieve proficiency in “logical arguments based on substantive claims, sound reasoning, and relevant evidence.”

The new standard, although innovative in drawing attention to students' CT development in writing instruction, doesn't provide a useful scheme for classifying approaches to teaching CT in argumentative writing instruction. Nevertheless, CT skills and dispositions in argumentative writing are neither intangible nor unreachable. Instead, they can be identified, assessed and developed in facilitative settings (Kuhn & Crowell, 2011). Building on previous studies, this review will primarily focus on the issue of CT development in argumentative writing instruction.

It will address two questions: What specific CT skills and dispositions are necessary for argumentation? And consequently, what instructional strategies can teachers use to help develop students' CT to improve the quality of their argumentative writing? The review will first give an overview of CT definitions from different disciplines in an attempt to delineate the construct of CT embodied in argumentation. These specific elements of CT in argumentation will then be discussed in depth, followed by a synthesis of empirical studies on how correspondent pedagogical approaches can be applied to help foster students' CT in argumentative writing.

### **CT in Argumentation**

CT has been widely acknowledged as an important educational outcome, but consensus on how to conceptualize it still remains unachieved (Bensley, 2011; Cody, 2006; Dwyer, Hogan, & Stewart, 2011; Smith, 2010). Multiple concepts from philosophy, education, psychology, and other disciplines have contributed to CT's rich construct. Various definitions and measures of CT have been proposed in an attempt to settle the discussion (e.g., Allegretti & Frederick, 1995; Bensley, 1998; Ennis, 1987; Caputo, 1994; Halpern, 2014; Wilkinson, 1996). Ennis (1987) for instance, defined CT as "rational, reflective thinking, the purpose of which is to help us make decisions about our beliefs and actions", while Caputo (1994) regards CT as "intelligent reasoning with supporting evidence to help make wise decisions".

Debate on conceptualizing CT is still ongoing and definitional clarity and specificity in CT terms have not been sufficiently achieved. However, the definition of CT and its list of skills conceptualized in 1988 by a committee of 46 scholars, known as the *Delphi Committee* stands out as widely accepted (Dwyer et al., 2011). In *The Delphi Report* written by Facione (1990), CT was defined as:

...purposeful, self-regulatory judgment which results in interpretation, analysis, evaluation, and inference, as well as explanation of the evidential, conceptual, methodological, criteriological, or contextual considerations upon which that judgment is based.

Bensley (2011) examined the issue of defining CT and pointed out that there is a widespread agreement on more “general and high-level ” terms but less agreement on “discipline-and task-specific” identification of terms. Therefore, CT rules should be identified and contextualized within discourse in order to provide a concrete framework for the instruction and assessment of CT (Bensley, 2011). In light of this, specific CT rules and procedures in the domain of argumentative writing need to be identified to better inform the pedagogical approaches aimed at fostering students’ CT development in argumentation.

### **Argumentative Logic and Reasoning**

The tradition of deriving logic rules from analysis of argumentation and criticism can be traced back to the ancient Greeks. Arguably, Socratic Method is a set of concrete logic rules to examine opinions and beliefs. It is a type of cooperative argumentative dialogue between individuals aimed at stimulating CT in order to discover the “truth” instead of merely providing information by means of statement. According to Socratic Method, Socrates would not state his own opinion in the first place but challenge the interlocutor’s claim by raising a series of questions for which the undeniably right answers are “yes”. The result of this dialectic questioning called “elenchus” leads the interlocutor to contradict his initial claim and renders him in a confused state which is “aporia”, and finally prompts him to revise his own claim. The Socratic Method can still be used as a pedagogical approach to help students strengthen their argument (Starr, 2013).

Aristotle helped developed the dialectic by inventing syllogistic reasoning. Following Aristotle's logical rules, we can draw a self-evident conclusion from a set of valid statements (major premises, minor premises) that share a common term (Gensler, 2013). Although syllogism delineates a simple and clear formula for philosophers to seek universal and rational standards for the truth of propositions, it fails to "account for the process of practical, informal reasoning that characterizes most real world argument" (Warren, 2010).

Syllogism had been at the core of the logic taught in school since the time of Aristotle and through the early 20<sup>th</sup> century until Stephen Toulmin (1958) initiated informal logic in *The Uses of Argument* to redress the "narrow approach to ordinary argument taken in syllogistic logic". The scheme of argumentation devised by Toulmin mapped out a universal system of norms to judge all sorts of argument in both everyday life and academic domain. Toulmin's conception of argument comprises 6 parts: claim, evidence, warrant, backing, qualifications and rebuttals. According to this model, argument starts with a claim substantiated by data. The movement from claim to data is authorized by warrants pertaining to "common sense rules that people accept as generally true, laws, scientific principles or studies, and thoughtfully argued definitions" (Hillocks, 2011). Beneath is what Toulmin called backing in support of the warrant. In order to place limits on the force of the claim to make it more convincing, qualifiers are also put in place with rebuttals that take into consideration the exceptions of the claim. The Toulmin model presents a comprehensive but clear structure of rhetorical argumentation and is considered an efficacious tool in argumentative writing instruction.

Studies have indicated that the key elements in Toulmin's model were significant indicators of argumentative writing quality on the part of high school and college students (Cooper, Cherry, Copley, Fleischer, Pollard, & Startisky, 1984; McCann, 1989). McCann (1989)

examined the ability of students at grades 6, 9, and 12 to write argumentative essays. The results of the study revealed that the ninth and twelfth grade students scored significantly higher in overall argumentative writing quality. A scrutiny of individual argumentative traits in their essays showed that the ninth and twelfth grade students were more adept and effective in stating claims and using warrants although no significant discrepancy was detected among grades in the use of supporting data. Cooper et al. (1984) investigated the structural features and depth of elaboration in argumentative papers written by ten college freshmen. The study indicated that there was a dearth of Toulmin elements such as data and warrants in less effective argumentative papers. By contrast, papers exhibiting higher quality were more elaborate in using Toulmin elements, such as data, warrants, backing, etc.

Toulmin's model has been widely used as a heuristic tool to teach students argumentative writing (Rex, Thomas, & Engel, 2010; Warren, 2017). Multiple studies have been conducted to explore the efficacy of using Toulmin model as an instructional strategy in this concern. In their research project, Rex et al. (2010) modified Toulmin's model and devised a basic framework focusing on three critical components: stance, evidence and warrant. They used this framework to teach argument in persuasive essay writing to high school students who grappled with this genre. Satisfying and encouraging improvement was detected in these students' ability to create and articulate soundly reasoned arguments in their revised essays after they were instructed under the framework. Warren (2017) claimed that the ability to identify warrants in argument is among the essential CT skills. In light of a common misidentification of warrants in the "claim + data statement" manifested in the textbooks, Warren proposed that English teachers can better help students develop the ability to identify and use warrants in argument by guiding the students to first locate warrants accurately, and then working with students to produce phrasings of

warrant. The importance of including counterarguments and rebuttals into argumentation was also documented by research. Liu and Stapleton (2014) conducted a study on the correlation between the ability to incorporate counterargument and the overall quality of essay writing. The results of their experiment proved the efficacy of explicit classroom instruction on counterargument and rebuttal. There was a significant increase of rebuttal incorporation into essay writing by the students and accordingly their argumentative writing scores in high-stakes test improved remarkably. The study also suggested that counterargumentation be taken into account when designing the writing prompts and rubrics of high-stakes English tests.

### **Open-mindedness in Argumentation**

CT can be identified and described in terms of both cognitive skills (a set of higher order thinking skills) and affective factors (disposition) (Afshar et al., 2017). Bensley (2011) deemed CT dispositions as “individual differences in attitudes, traits, habits of mind and cognitive style” conducive to thinking critically. Although there are considerable disagreement in the identification of specific CT dispositions, many endorse open-mindedness as an important component (e.g., Ennis, 1987; Halpern, 1998; Paul, 1984).

Open-mindedness is closely related with the flexibility of adjusting one’s prior belief to be consistent with good evidence that refutes that belief. Nickerson (1987) identified the disposition of open-mindedness as the tendency to “recognize the fallibility of one’s own opinions, the probability of bias in those opinions, and the danger of differentially weighting evidence according to personal preferences”. People who are considered more open-minded and flexible in their argument are disposed to think critically (Bensley, 2011). Paul (1984) differentiated strong-sense critical thinkers from weak-sense critical thinkers against the benchmark of open-mindedness and flexibility in thinking. According to Paul, the strong-sense



critical thinkers tend to revise their belief when it is proved fallacious by some fair evidence while the weak-sense critical thinkers are more one-sided in their thinking and more reluctant to adjust their unsupported beliefs even though they may have adequate skills for reasoning. Kuhn and Crowell (2011) declared that a critical thinking about a complex issue “requires identifying and weighing positive and negative attributes of contrasting positions on the issue, drawing on relevant evidence to inform the judgment involved”. Stanovich and West (1997) conducted an empirical research with 349 college students to investigate the relationship between open-minded thinking and argument evaluation ability. The study established open-minded thinking as a strong indicator of one’s argument evaluation performance even after cognitive ability was partialled out.

The inclusion of dialogue in argumentative writing instruction has been proved effective in cultivating students towards open-minded thinkers (e.g., Ferretti & Lewis, 2013; Kuhn & Crowell, 2011; Morgan & Beaumont, 2003; Tanaka, 2014). Dialogic approach engages students in various communicative activities with each other so that their own standpoints towards one issue would be examined in a collaborative way and their understandings of other perspectives are also promoted (Ferretti & Lewis, 2013). This dialogic discourse would hopefully promote the students’ tendency to consider alternative perspectives, anticipate possible criticisms they may pose and furthermore adjust their argumentation by including corresponding reactions to deal with the potential opposing ideas. Tanaka (2014) advocated a dialectical approach in critical thinking instruction (CTI) in college writing course in English for Academic Purposes (EAP). In his study, Tanaka engaged his adult L2 English learners in rigorous assessment of various viewpoints derived from differentiating belief systems and systematic evaluation of differences in norms, values and concepts that shape opposing views. The effectiveness of such a dialectical

approach in CTI was substantiated by the data gained through student interviews. Morgan and Beaumont (2003) devised some strategies to implement dialogical approach to help students bridge between speaking and writing. Supported by their empirical research, they suggested using an online chat room to facilitate the dialogue among young adolescent students in order to promote their audience awareness and flexibility in thinking when dealing with argumentative writing. Kuhn and Crowell (2011)'s research proved the viability of adopting a dialogical approach to improve students' argument quality. In their study, they provided intervention instruction to a group of middle school students who were engaged in electronically conducted dialogues that featured online debating, debriefing and discussion on some controversial social issues. The essays produced at the end of the intervention by these students exhibited more dual-perspective and integrative-perspective arguments and demonstrated higher argument quality than those of comparison group who were taught in traditional ways.

### **Metacognition**

From a psychological perspective, CT can be viewed as a “deliberate and purposeful cognitive activity that involves regulation of one’s own thinking and behavior to meet certain standards” (Bensley, 2011). This view resonates with the term “reflective thinking” proposed by Dewey (1910) to stress the importance of actively reflecting on thinking itself. Chittooran (2015) pointed out that the purpose of critical reflection is to “challenge our own assumptions and to arrive at a deeper, more complex understanding of a phenomenon”. This psychological perspective identifies “meta-cognition” as an important element in CT construct. Metacognition is defined as “awareness and knowledge of one’s mental processes such that one can monitor, regulate and direct them as a desired end” (Harris & Hodges, 1995). According to this definition, metacognition requires monitoring and controlling one’s own cognitive process to achieve some

cognitive goals. Metacognitive ability plays an important role when people deal with such a complex task as argumentative writing. Smith (2010), after reviewing a 40-year study on the writing and thinking process, pointed out that the problem with basic writers' thinking lies not in their deficiency in higher order thinking but in the difficulty they have controlling their thinking in constructive ways. The best way to help these underprepared writers to take constructive control of their thinking, according to Smith, is to teach them about metacognition.

The process of thinking, although intangible, can be visualized and manipulated in metacognitive activities to generate solutions to problems. Various visualizing strategies have been proved useful to foster students' reflective thinking in argumentative writing (e.g., Benetos & Bétrancourt, 2015; Dwyer et al., 2011; Lott & Read, 2015; Meyer, 2005). Graphic organizers were established as effective tools to aid pre-adolescent students in their argumentative writing (Lott & Read, 2015). With the help of a variety of graphic organizers, students construct their explanations by laying out their claims, evidence and reasoning in a vivid way. Heather Meyer (2005) proposed to teach senior secondary students to draw a concept map of their essay. Such a diagram, claimed Meyer, exposes the structural design of the writing and helps make the contradictions and ambiguities become obvious. Dwyer et al. (2011) suggested using argument mapping in education as a tool for CT instruction. In such an argument map, a text-based argument can be visually represented through a box-and-arrow style flow chart that displays all the connections amongst the propositions within the argument. The argument map enables the writers to monitor and manipulate their own thinking by organizing these propositions visually. The study conducted by Dwyer et al. documented the efficacy of argument mapping as a method of visually diagramming argument in cultivating students' CT. In their study, 81 undergraduate participants were allocated evenly into three groups: an argument mapping group, an outlining

group and a control group. After 8-week long intervention courses a CT skills test was administered to test the three groups' performances on their CT ability. The results revealed that both argument mapping and outlining group outperformed the control group in terms of such CT skills as analysis, evaluation and inductive reasoning. No significant performance differences were shown between argument mapping group and outlining group at the critical thinking ability test, which indicated that argument mapping parallels hierarchical outlining as an efficacious way to cultivate students' CT. Computer-supported visualizing tools are also efficacious to engage students in self-aware reflective process in argumentative writing. Benetos and Bétrancourt (2015) evaluated how a computer-supported argumentative writing application C-SAW could affect college students' argumentative writing. C-SAW offers multiple representations of the structure of an argumentative essay and gives students dynamic visual feedback to aid self-monitoring in the process of writing. Data collected by recording the 8 participants' uses of C-SAW's self-regulatory devices and conducting retrospective interviews evidenced the effectiveness of C-SAW: participants who used C-SAW's self-regulatory devices with moderate and high frequency generally exhibited higher quality in their writings than those with low frequency of use.

Metacognitive revision is a key step to improve the quality of argumentative writing because revision allows for an opportunity to reflect on one's own thoughts, form and apply evaluative criteria, and enhance one's writing ability (Scardamalia & Bereiter, 1986). Smith (2010) stated that "it is during the revision process that students can analyze their writing, think about their thinking, and reflect on how that thinking is communicated". As for pedagogical approaches to teach metacognitive revision, Smith advocated peer-review and student-teacher dialogue guided by a set of metacognitive questions whereby students are taught to become

“others” for their own texts. Smith also promotes online discussion forums to facilitate students’ feedback to their peers’ writings.

Engaging the students in asking and answering critical questions about their own argument has been identified by empirical studies as an effective self-regulated revision strategy to foster their thinking and improve the quality of their argumentative writings (e.g., Graham and MacArthur, 1988; Song and Ferretti, 2012). Graham and MacArthur (1988) used the SCAN strategy to aid learning disabled students from fifth and sixth grades in revising their argumentative essays on a word processor. Under the guidance of the SCAN strategy, these students were taught to ask and answer a set of reflective questions in revision: Does it make Sense? Is it Connected to my belief? Can I Add more? Note errors. The SCAN strategy was found to have a positive impact on students’ revising behavior and improved the quality of their argumentative essays. After the instruction, 62% of the students’ revisions included the addition of reasons to support the writer’s claim, in contrast with prior to the instruction, when only 31% of the revisions involved the addition of reasons. Furthermore, students’ argumentative essays were longer and of higher quality after instruction. Song and Ferretti (2012) established the efficacy of Ask and Answer Critical Questions (ASCQ) strategy in helping college students revise argumentative essays. In their study, participants (30 undergraduate students) were allocated into three groups based on a pretest of argumentative writing. One group of the participants were offered a course on asking and answering critical questions about “argument from consequences scheme” and “argument from example scheme”; one group of the participants were instructed on argumentation schemes to justify their standpoint, but without any teaching on the critical questions; the last control group of participants, however, received no instruction on either the critical questions or argumentation schemes. After the 2-3 week long

instruction, the three groups of participants were given a posttest on essay writing. Results of the study showed that the group that received instruction on asking and answering critical questions exhibited in their essays greater consideration of the alternative perspectives, as evidenced by the incorporation of counterarguments, alternative standpoints and rebuttals, and thus produced overall higher quality argumentative essays than the other two groups.

### **Conclusion and Implications for Future Research**

Argumentative writing involves key CT skills and dispositions that exert a far-reaching influence on students' academic success (Preiss et al., 2012). Given the correlation of students' CT and the quality of their argumentative writing, this review probed into the connotations of CT and delineated a set of CT elements in argumentation, namely, argumentative logic and reasoning, open-mindedness, and metacognition. Within such a framework, this review presented an overview of studies on pedagogical approaches teachers can employ in order to foster students' CT in argumentative writing instruction. However, given the limits concerning scope and depth of this review, the list of CT elements addressed is far from exhaustive and hence the pedagogical strategies may not represent a full picture of developments in this field. Comprehensive studies are needed to synthesize the more fine-grained, argumentation-related CT skills and dispositions in order to better inform argumentative writing instruction and assessment. Moreover, although research by Cooper et al. (1984) and McCann (1989) identified that the frequencies and the qualities of CT elements embodied in Toulmin's model develop across grade or expertise levels, there is still a lack of research conducted to tease out a clear route of students' CT development in acquiring argumentative writing as they progressively mature. Such information will help educators to provide more age-appropriate instructional support for students struggling with argumentative writing.

In approaching studies on CT and argumentative writing development, this review attempted to offer a comprehensive picture in both L1 and L2 contexts. However, there is a dearth of study on how non-native speakers may apply CT differently in their argumentation compared with native speakers. Further research is needed to explore varied factors (e.g., linguistic, psychological, sociocultural factors) constraining non-native speakers in argumentative writings and how these factors might influence their CT development. A contrastive analysis between native speakers and non-native speakers in terms of application of CT elements in argumentative writings would be equally informative. Such research can provide theoretical and empirical knowledge for teachers to better aid this group of students in grasping argumentative writing.

This review devoted a large portion of its text to Toulmin's model in light of its wide application in argumentative writing instruction in school settings. Although Toulmin's model captures the type of organizational and higher level semantic structures in argumentative writing and serves as an effective heuristic to analyze and generate arguments (McCann, 1989; Qin & Karabacak, 2010), it provides little information about how the structures might be presented or identified in extended discourse (Crammond, 1998). Crammond (1998) therefore suggested to adapt Toulmin's model to the various domains and purposes of argumentative discourse. Further research needs to investigate how Toulmin's model can be modified in dealing with varied discourse situations and students of different grade levels. There is also a need to conduct a comprehensive analysis of argumentation and map out the range of possible structures comprising an argument. An extended and fine-grained framework on this score would inform both research and instructional practice in argumentative writing.

Finally, this review approached CT and argumentative writing mainly from a cognitive perspective that underrepresents the social and cultural contexts constituting the writing of argumentative texts (Newell et al., 2011). It failed to address how students practice CT to construct meaning and affect each other through argumentative writing in authentic settings. Future research conducted from a social perspective can investigate how students' CT use in argument relates to such factors as writers' sociocultural backgrounds, social relationship with audience, and peer interaction. Research from a social perspective will shed new lights on how teachers can better develop students' CT in argumentative writing instruction.



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