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Advancing English Language Learning in China through Multimodal Content Area Teaching

Cheryl North
Nancy Rankie Shelton
University of Maryland Baltimore County

Abstract

During a ten-day teaching abroad experience in China, eight teachers from the United States implemented an interactive curriculum focusing on disciplinary literacy and authentic tasks. Employing multiliteracies and kidwatching, teachers encouraged Chinese students to compose while focusing primarily on communicating ideas rather than grammatical correctness. This article provides a one-student case study that serves as a representative example of the growth of 50 elementary-level students involved in the experience. Initially, Paul focused on writing correctness in response to prompts; his compositions were short and provided little detail. After we provided multimodal and interactive authentic experiences and encouraged risk-taking, Paul's representative compositions became more detailed and complex. The implications for engaging in this type of teaching experience underscore the benefits of providing students with authentic experiences that are multimodal and interactive while simultaneously encouraging risk-taking. The pedagogical growth that teachers made working with ELL students is also discussed.

We are citizens of a global society. The Internet has changed our world, and we are no longer limited by geographical constraints or location. As educators recognize global initiatives and the power of working across cultures through online formats, we also recognize the increasing importance of expanding our knowledge base and practical contact with others outside our geographical borders. Knowledge is a click away, but the transformative nature of experiencing the sights, sounds, smells, and movements of another culture remains challenging. Realizing that our U.S. population has been enriched by the immigration of over 1.8 million Chinese Nationals by 2010, an increase of 1.7 million between 1960 and 2010 (McCabe, 2012), we partnered with a private school in Nanjing, China to facilitate a ten-day teaching abroad experience for a small group of U.S. teachers. As Education faculty members, we facilitated a teaching experience for American teachers based on the ideological perspective that writing is not only a recursive process, but also a central component of fluid, complex, and transformational literacy. Further, literacy is multifaceted and multimodal and should not be taught as a set of discreet skills. During the teaching experience, we served as teachers for the Chinese students, provided support for other teachers, and collected field notes as observers and participant-observers.

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This article shares how teachers employed two elements, *multiliteracies* (New London Group, 1996) and *kidwatching* (Owicki &Goodman, 2002), to construct an environment of authentic literacy experiences that encouraged Chinese students to increase their familiarity with and use of English. We also share the impact of the experience on students and teachers. *Multiliteracies*, a term used by the New London Group, broadens the definition of literacy beyond reading, writing, and speaking to include viewing, digital literacies, art, and music. Expanding the modalities and literacies in which the teachers and students could communicate with each other offered increasing opportunities for successful communication and student engagement in authentic learning tasks. Since we knew little to no Mandarin, we relied on *kidwatching* (Owicki & Goodman) to be an integral aspect of this teaching experience. This technique involves close observation of students' social and academic behaviors.

For this teaching experience, pedagogy focused on multimodal means of presenting content and having students demonstrate what they learned in content area lessons, coupled with authentic literacy experiences that are crucial for instruction. "Multimodality expresses the complexity and interrelationship of more than one mode of meaning, combining linguistic, visual, auditory, gestural or spatial modes" (Mills, 2009, p. 106). *Authentic literacy* can be defined as literacy found in the real world and not tasks typically found only in classrooms (Duke, Purcell-Gates, Hall, & Tower, 2006). Whether it was pairing words with pictures for learning vocabulary or using students' drawings as springboards for writing, the visual world served as a bridge to text-based worlds and helped facilitate communication and reinforce vocabulary with specific attention given to academic vocabulary. Knowing that with the advent of new technologies authentic communication changes (Gee, 2000), we relied on multimodal literacies to help create authentic literacy tasks in order to strengthen our interactions during this teaching experience.

In this article, we focus on one student, Paul, to demonstrate language growth from the beginning to the end of the two-week summer teaching experience. We chose Paul because he seemed to be a typical student. He did not stand out as particularly precocious and his English language proficiency coming into the program was average as compared to the other students in his age group. Also, Paul was 10 years old; therefore, he was not one of the youngest or one of the oldest students. We demonstrate with Paul how kidwatching and multimodal teaching in different content areas, paired with a constant presence of writing to communicate, provided students with multifaceted learning opportunities while focusing on English as a second Language.

Preparing for the Teaching Experience

Prior to leaving for China, preparation focused on strategies used to (a) teach writing across the curriculum, (b) infuse authentic literature into content area units, and (c) develop lessons that valued multiliteracies, were responsive to the students'

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perceived needs, and could be adapted at a moment's notice. As coordinators of the project, we conducted workshops for the teachers to study the influence of writing on language learning. Meeting several times over the four months prior to our departure, we planned lessons providing rich oral language experiences for the Chinese students that would support and advance English language learning, particularly in the area of academic vocabulary.

As we prepared the program, we considered that native language expression is personal, emotionally charged, and maintains and demonstrates an appropriate level of maturity (Fu, 2003, 2009). As English language learners interact with new tools, they need to communicate regularly; putting language proficiency before content learning can cause deficits in both language and content learning. Therefore our units needed to focus primarily on content learning, with language learning taught as tools needed to successfully engage with the content. Becoming a bilingual writer is a complicated and transformative process; students are transforming rather than simply transitioning. Because language and personal identity are closely associated, an individual cannot detach language learning from self-expression or academic study from personal views (Fu). Thus, the Chinese students we were going to teach needed multiple opportunities to communicate during instruction. As effective educators, we needed to listen as much as we taught. Group work, peer collaboration, and problem solving were important components of our lessons because these elements provided opportunities for students to connect themselves to their work.

In this teaching experience, we designed multimodal lessons as part of every session. They each integrated one or more of the following components in order to engage the students:

- singing, appropriate to the topic of the lesson;
- creating and building, as demonstrated in the engineering lessons;
- movement sometimes used while teaching American pop culture;
- videotaping students acting out stories;
- recording oral reading of stories;
- and collages and expression of vocabulary through visuals and pictures.

We also operated under the philosophy that writing leads to more developed thinking (Olson, 2010). Language is best learned when students are motivated, immersed in rich language environments, and engaged in appropriate and relevant tasks (Cambourne, 2000). They do not become better writers only by writing more; they also must think about their writing, their expression of ideas, and the craft of writing. We were as much interested in our students' content knowledge as we were their language learning, and thus, we infused composition into all our work. The compositions took many forms including digital stories, explanatory essays, and collages. Different kinds of writing "lead students to focus on different kinds of information, to think about that Information in different ways, and in turn to take quantitatively and qualitatively different

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kinds of knowledge away from their writing experiences" (Langer & Applebee, 1987, p. 135). Literacy, then, is no longer confined to reading and writing; technology has enabled users to communicate in ways that rely on many different modalities which lead to more developed thinking (Mills, 2010).

With these theoretical underpinnings guiding our instruction, teachers prepared science and engineering lessons during which the students would construct a propulsion model and build bridges and boats, social studies units that included mapping and comparing and contrasting the monetary systems used in our respective countries, and literature lessons that explored the language and culture of the United States using picture books, adolescent literature, and graphic novels. Several weeks were spent planning to ensure our units included music, literature, multiliteracies, and movement.

Our primary goal in preparation was to design a teaching experience that would further our understanding of the role writing plays in learning a second language. Consequently, the teachers were also learners. Effective teaching would require kidwatching. Close observation of our students and each other would enable us to continually assess efforts to communicate competently. We created our own curriculum using authentic texts and multiple literacies in highly interactive and hands-on lessons that provided opportunities for our teachers to kidwatch during student language learning. Each unit was developed by the teacher who would be teaching the lesson and focused on the teacher's area of expertise. For example, the science and math teachers included engineering lessons; whereas, the English teachers read literature, which included a vast array of fiction and non-fiction, for example *Bridge to Terabithia* (Paterson, 2004) and *Kampung Boy* (Lat, 2006), depending on the students' language performance.

Aspects of the Teaching Partnership

Since this effort was a new program, we were uncertain how many students the school would be able to recruit, the physical environment in which we would be teaching, or the supplies that would be available to us in China. Although the second author had visited the country two years prior and interacted with Chinese teachers and the administrators at the school during that visit, the concept of the teaching partnership was new and several detail were still vague when we left for China.

The Teachers

The eight U.S. teachers participating in this mini-teaching abroad experience were experienced educators. We invited teachers we knew personally: some had graduated from our teacher education program and had become experienced teachers and some were colleagues from our own graduate studies. Additionally, each invited teacher was permitted to select a traveling partner – another teacher to participate in the project. Key to forming our group was that the participating teachers all held an

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appreciation for the importance of multiple literacies in any curriculum. This selection process ensured that the group consisted of capable teachers who had developed similar views of literacy that were consistent with our own, who were kidwatchers, and who would understand our goal to immerse the Chinese students in speaking, listening, reading, and writing in English.

Because we wanted to integrate content knowledge with language learning, we invited teachers from many disciplines who would plan together and share expertise from their collective experiences. Three of the U.S. teacher participants were certified elementary teachers; five were certified in secondary education. Because another goal was to enrich general education teachers' knowledge of teaching non-English speakers, no teacher with ESOL certification was selected for the team and none spoke Chinese.

The three Chinese teachers who were working with the U.S. teachers were interested in observing the U.S. pedagogical approach planned in this project. They only minimally acted as translators during lessons; rather, their role was to help the U.S. teachers *sort out* cultural differences. There was one Chinese teacher in each classroom of elementary-age students.

The School

We designed this experience as an initial interaction with an established school, but not as part of an established teaching-exchange program. The Shuren School is one of the largest after-school/summer programs in Nanjing, serving over 40,000 students. Shuren's primary goal in this project was to provide a summer enrichment program for their students that included an opportunity for the students to interact with and be taught by native speakers of English who would teach the language and culture of the United States.

The Students

The Chinese students who participated in our project were enrolled in a summer school program to learn English. There were 50 students who ranged in age from 8- to 14-years old; all the students had studied English in school as part of their normal curriculum. The school population was drawn from families who were actively involved in ensuring their children's success. The students were academically competitive.

Implementing Instruction

Just two days after we sat on the tarmac in Shanghai, still getting used to the time change, the new foods and smells of Nanjing, and transporting ourselves to and from the school without getting lost, we entered our new school and began our teaching. We immediately felt the effects of cross-cultural planning and long-distance collaboration.

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Introductions and Student Placements

Our first day in Nanjing, we visited the school and learned that we had no technology in four of the five classrooms and that there was no computer lab, which we had understood would be available to us during our time at the school. The seating consisted of long, thin tables, benches, and stools in small rooms, which made it difficult to arrange students in small groups while working on interactive lessons. Since we had prepared our lessons and materials in electronic formats, including digital stories and research projects, as part of our teaching, revisions started immediately. In addition, the start date for our teaching experience had been advanced by a full day giving us less time to acclimate to our new environment and to revise our units.

Responding to our hosts' request, we had designed a process to interact with the students in order to assess their levels of English proficiency so that we might quickly group the students for instruction. We began by interviewing each student individually and collecting a writing sample. The students stared at us, offering limited response when we spoke to them. Our first interactions were stilted with controlled communication between the teachers and students. There was virtually no verbal communication between the families and the U.S. teachers. As we interviewed students and asked them to respond in writing to questions we had prepared, we learned much more from our observations than we did from the written responses the students composed.

In China, testing for grouping is more rigid than what we had planned and carries with it status and accomplishment. With parents lining the already crowded halls, our Chinese colleagues explained our assessment approach to the parents and worked to calm their fears that their children were not being placed appropriately, all the while directing us to test the children more rigorously. As we shuffled students in and out of groups, interacting in a way very natural and routine to U.S. teachers, our hosts became nervous and stopped our placement process.

Each class was an hour-and-a-half long, and teachers were encouraged to assign at least one hour of homework a night. Consequently, the lessons needed to be hands-on and support each student's independent reading and writing at home. For example, students read several chapters at home and then in class engaged in lessons that clarified and reviewed vocabulary and checked for understanding and meaning making.

While kidwatching, teachers observed the literacy development of each child in order to ensure that she or he was receiving instruction that was most appropriate developmentally and also personally. Thus, because kidwatching is based on the idea that knowing the whole child is necessary in order to understand his or her interests, individual strengths are noted within the context of the social and academic

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environment, and then students' interests and needs are paired with instruction to make sure students are engaged and wanted to learn.

Without teachers and students being able to communicate with each other in our respective first languages, we recognized the heightened need to kidwatch closely in order to understand what our students were capable of doing so that we could responsively adjust our lessons in order to teach the Chinese students to communicate in English more proficiently.

The lessons in which we immersed our students did not just expose them to the English language, but also provided rich content learning. This approach advanced our Chinese students' English language skills while simultaneously complementing our participating teachers' instruction for all their students upon their return to the US, opening their minds to further understanding the value of writing in a variety of genres and for a variety of purposes in any curriculum.

Working with the Students

Though the placement process was not completed exactly as we had planned, it did provide much-needed information so that we might begin teaching the students. We had asked our students to write what they knew about the US and to tell us about their home in China. Very few of the students' responses to our pretests or early writing assignments seemed to express original thought. Generally the students were able to answer questions and respond to prompts, but they were not accustomed to writing personal stories or sharing their opinions or individual points of view. The students were very concerned with the *correctness* of anything they wrote; they had been taught that spelling, grammar, punctuation, and format took precedence over expression of thoughts and ideas.

The students worked to get used to our accents while we worked to speak more slowly and with a more inclusive vocabulary. The students seemed at times confused and nervous, and their bodies and words were stiff. Often, they repeated English expressions in a way that seemed as if they were mimicking what we had said instead of creating original responses. Very few students were risk takers, and most answered our questions, but went no further. The only substantial writing expression in the beginning of our collaboration was written in Chinese. These interactions confirmed our initial planning: a continually responsive, multimodal approach would benefit our students. Our students knew more than they could express, and we needed to provide ways for them to communicate with us. We worked continually to communicate our message to help the students realize that we believed that expression of ideas was the most important part of learning a language. We worked with intention to help the students become risk-takers.

The students were encouraged to use bilingual writing to help them express their thoughts and knowledge. The teachers offered constant support for the students,

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taught the vocabulary needed to communicate their ideas, and accepted approximations of words in the students' writing. Knowing that grammar is learned best in context (Weaver, 1996) and in manageable increments (Hillocks, 2007), we supported the students based on their specific writing performance. Our teaching continually focused the students on content.

Below we share the work of one student, Paul, as a way to illuminate the progress that our students made in English expression and that we made as teachers.

Paul's Journey

Similar to other students, Paul's first writing sample included two English sentences and "Statue of Liberty, Mickey Mouse, Donald" in Chinese as his response to what he knew about the United States (Figure 1).

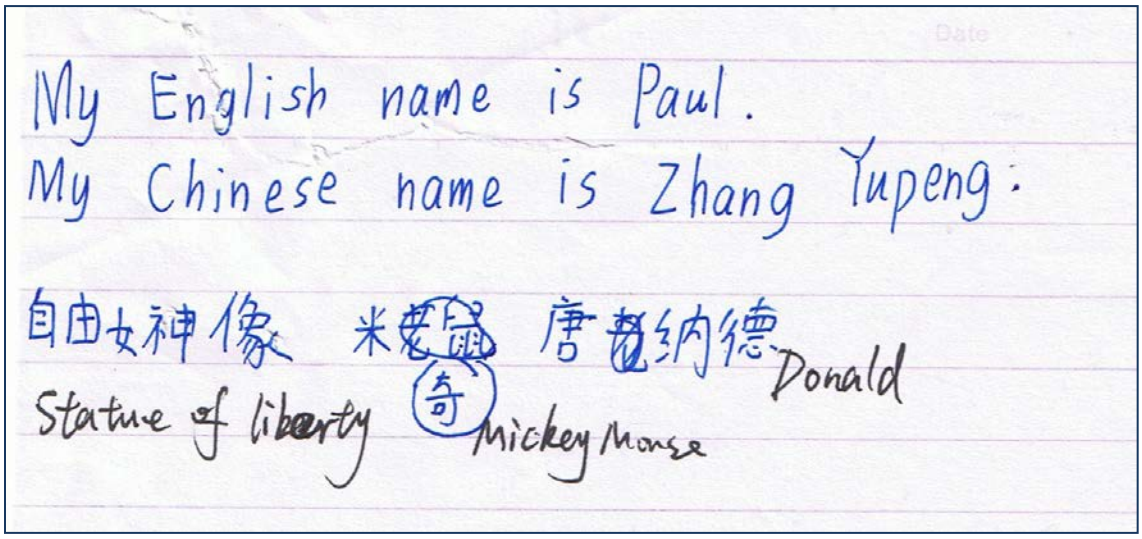

Figure 1: Paul's initial assessment on the first day of instruction.

According to our Chinese teaching partners, this writing was typical of what the students had learned in their English lessons conducted by Chinese educators. Paul's spelling, capitalization, punctuation, and grammar were all correct, but his expression was controlled. More importantly, his English seemed very limited. Paul was formal in his interactions with us but playful with his peers during breaks in instruction. He sat straight on his bench and spoke to his teachers only when spoken to.

Although our pretest did provide a starting point for our teaching, we quickly found it was not an accurate representation of our students' English proficiencies; their knowledge of English was more advanced than what we initially assessed it to be, thus reinforcing to us the importance of kidwatching. In addition, many of the students were very playful, even too much so at times. Time is required to develop relationships and

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communicate with ease; both the students and the teachers knew that with such a short summer program there was no time to waste. We not only had to overcome a language barrier, but also a pedagogical one; neither the Chinese students nor teachers were accustomed to the methods being employed by the U.S. teachers. Nevertheless, our oral interaction and the students' writing advanced on a daily basis. Based on our students' reactions and their responses to us, we believed that they were enjoying their learning. With the use of visuals, hands-on activities, and encouragement for students to use both English and Chinese to communicate in their writing, Paul's English proficiency continued to develop. As can be seen in Figure 2, Paul was able to describe his interests, hobbies, pets, and friends in one of his first lessons.

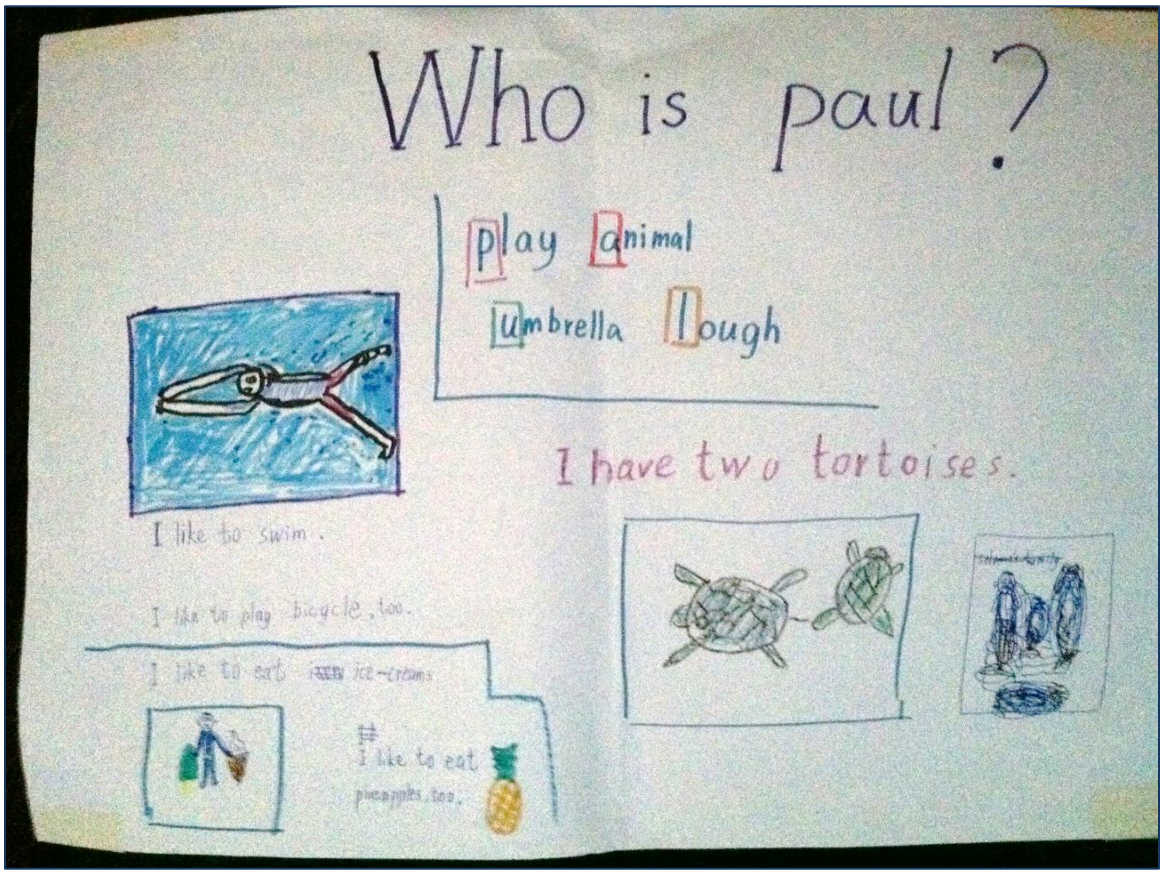

Figure 2: An example of Paul's work from a lesson early during our intervention.

Paul wrote an acrostic poem and five complete sentences in response to the focus of the lesson: "Who is Paul?" This response provided a much more accurate representation of Paul's English proficiency than his pretest.

In order to increase expressive language, we continued to structure our lessons around our observations of the students' responses to teaching as well as their composing process and the products of their efforts. All of this writing was coupled with

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pictures to help with the composing process and to continually reinforce vocabulary. Paul's writing illustrates the progress many students exhibited. We perceived Paul to be a patient, polite, happy, and collaborative student; Paul always seemed to be either smiling or in deep concentration. He never lost his temper and even though it seemed that one of the other students was constantly touching him or trying to get his attention, Paul would gently brush his peer's hand away or ignore him altogether. Paul exerted effort on every assignment and while he did not always know the correct answer, he showed humble leadership, especially when students conducted experiments or built structures for the science and engineering lessons led by his teachers.

As part of a unit teaching about American eating habits, including describing grocery stores and restaurants, our teachers asked students to search magazines for pictures that represented their own eating habits. Paul created a collage about food. Using the collage as a guide to develop his ideas, expression, and vocabulary, Paul wrote several paragraphs about his own dietary preferences (Figure 3).

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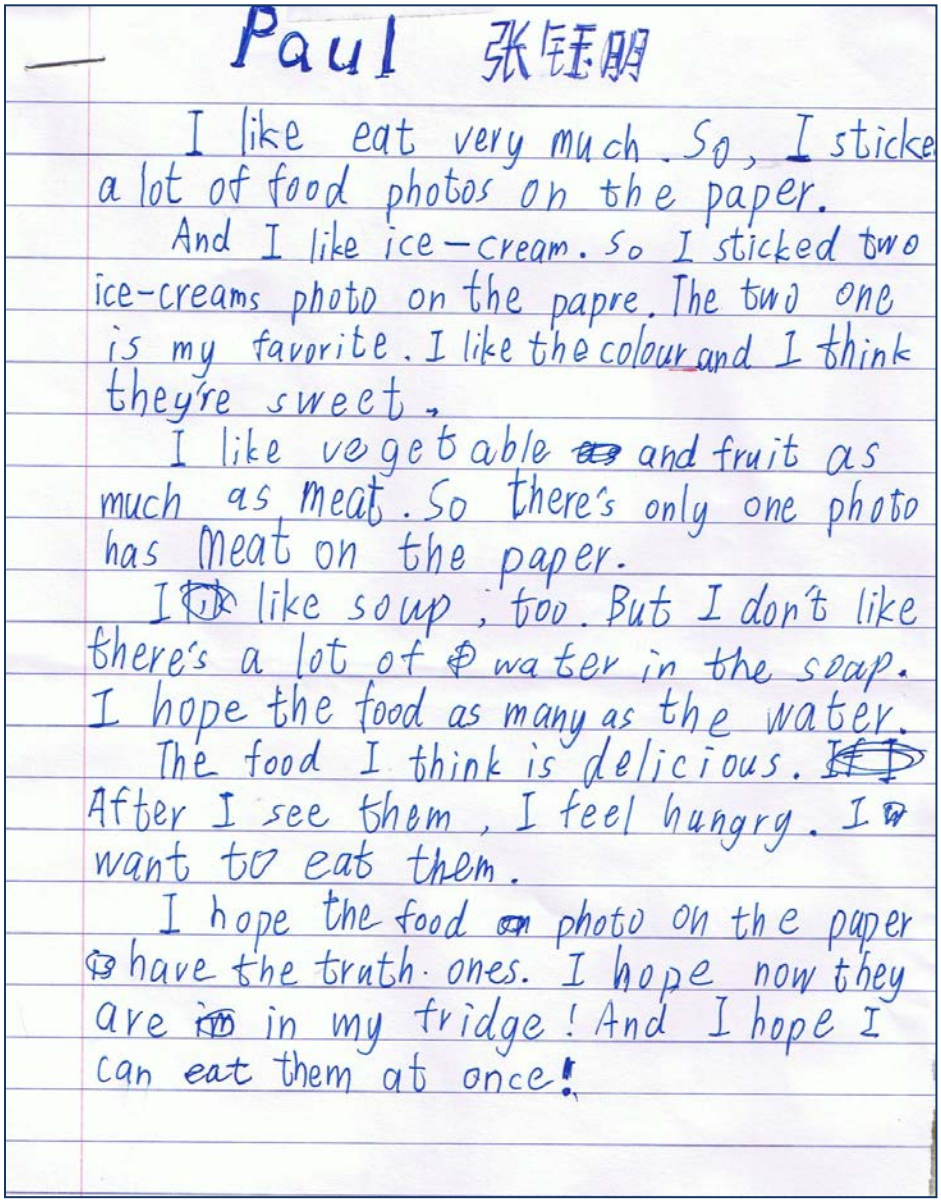
Paul 张钰朋

I like eat very much. So, I sticke a lot of food photos on the paper.

And I like ice-cream. So I sticked two ice-creams photo on the papre. The two one is my favorite. I like the colour and I think they're sweet.

I like vegetable and fruit as much as meat. So there's only one photo has meat on the paper.

I like soup, too. But I don't like there's a lot of water in the soap. I hope the food as many as the water.

The food I think is delicious. After I see them, I feel hungry. I want to eat them.

I hope the food photo on the paper have the truth ones. I hope now they are in my fridge! And I hope I can eat them at once!

Figure 3: Paul's written response to his collage.

Many of the sentences in Paul's essay follow a predictable pattern and are of similar sentence structure; however, this response reflects improvement in his expression. The multimodal nature of the tasks Paul completed provided support for him to expand his writing and vocabulary. Eventually, as he became increasingly more comfortable with the teachers and interested in the content of the lessons, Paul took more risks in his writing. His expression became more personal and less patterned. In one exercise, Paul wrote about his friend, Solomon.

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> My friend is Solomon. He is a lovely boy. Today, he put my water bottle after me and on my chair. But I don't know it. Then, he push me. The water bottle is drop off the chair an on the floor.

Paul started this communication with two risk-free sentences, noting that Solomon is "lovely." This term, lovely, is a descriptor that students used often; however, Paul was not sharing an experience that matched his description of Solomon as lovely. In fact, Solomon was quite mischievous in the interaction Paul wrote about and the characterization of Solomon as lovely results in a somewhat confusing account of his friend.

After the students had completed their writing, the teachers held brief one-on-one conferences with them during which the students read their work aloud and the teachers commented on one or two elements in their writing to help them communicate more clearly. In the sample above, Paul's teachers talked about the meaning of "lovely" and helped him understand proper comma usage.

As multimodal lessons continued, the students increased their oral and written vocabulary, became more expressive, and shared more about their lives in China. In order to increase communicative competence the students were given multiple opportunities to write. Some of the writing exercises required explanations of hands-on activities or reading responses that were supported by vocabulary used in the lessons or texts. The students were given directions in English to build a boat using only the very limited materials that the teacher had provided and to test how well the boat would float when weight, in this case, pennies, was added (Appendix).

The students, working as a team, paid close attention to detail as they followed written directions. Kidwatching during these lessons provided details of the students' content knowledge, their English proficiency, and their personal interactions with each other. These lessons provided excellent scaffolding for the students' English writing, with progress evident as the students engaged in numerous multimodal learning experiences. Because the students were motivated to share details of their collaborative efforts, they increased their risk-taking and further developed their abilities to write quite extensive explanations (Figure 4). After the engineering lesson on boat building, Paul wrote the following:

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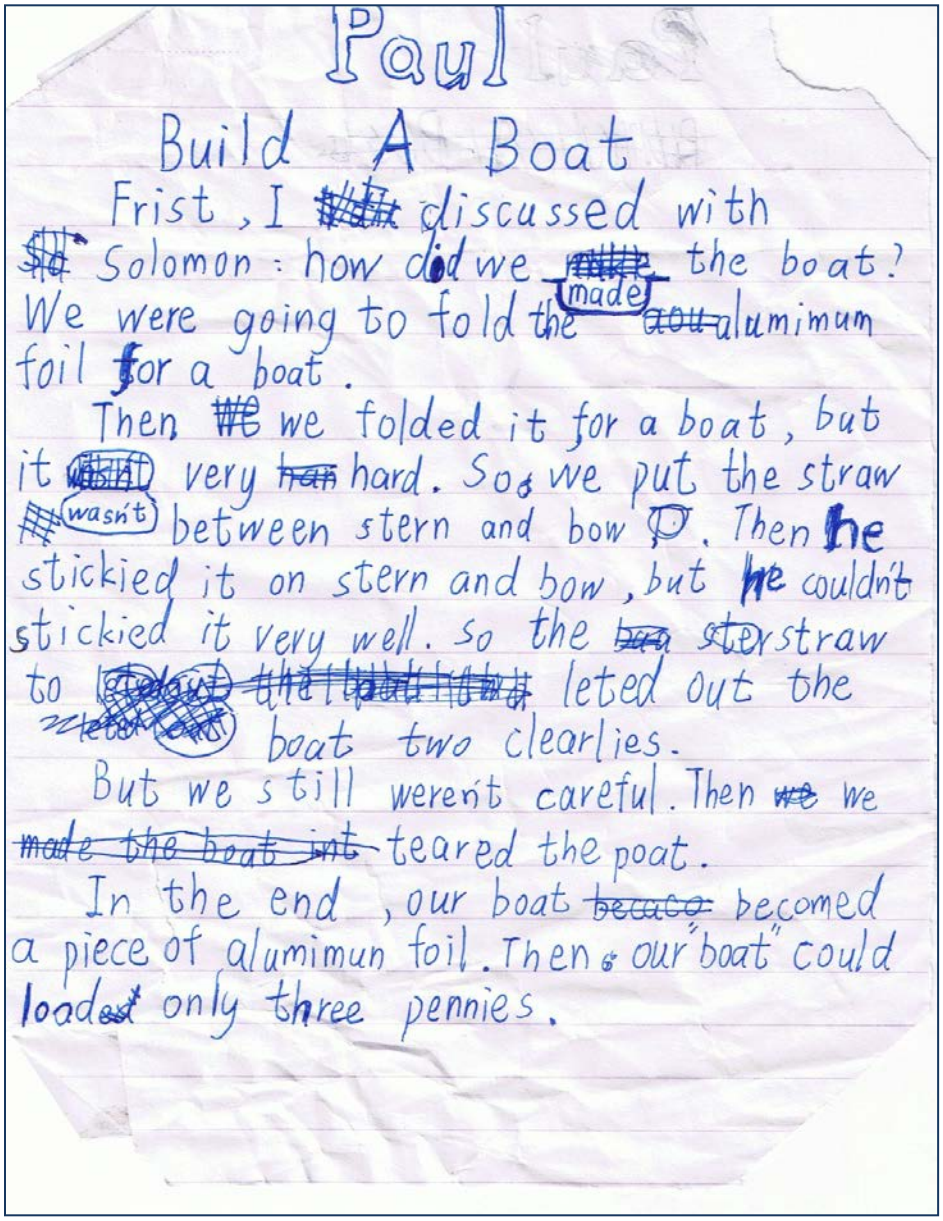

Figure 4: Paul's reflection on the multimodal lesson.

Paul's risk-taking and his comfort in using English continually increased. He was able to communicate the multistep process that he and his partners had taken to build a boat that included what they learned in the process of building as well as their results. Paul's comma-use improved, and his expression is much more coherent than in his paragraph about his friend. In fact, Paul continually improved. In the sample below, Paul shared details of another one of his science lessons where his rather concise report shows consistent use of past tense in his verbs. Past tense is particularly difficult

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for Chinese learners of English because Mandarin Chinese does not use tenses to indicate time the way that Western languages do (Figure 5).

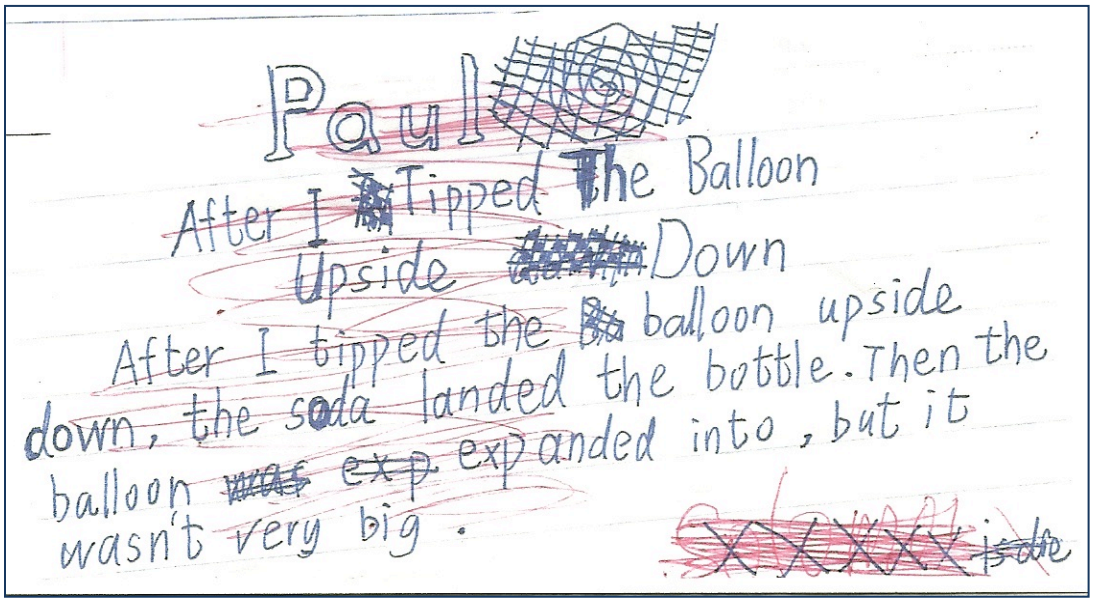

Figure 5: Paul's explanation of a science lesson.

Beyond Paul's rapid language development, this writing shows Paul's patience and motivation to learn. As can be seen in the writing sample, there is scribbling over and below the writing. Paul's teammate, Solomon, was not as attentive or as compliant as Paul, and Solomon often scribbled on Paul's work. In fact, Solomon had drawn and scribbled out a picture of himself in Paul's work in Figure 2. Though Paul's playfulness increased as he became more comfortable, he was always able to stop playing and listen to his teachers. The value of kidwatching increased exponentially with the teachers' inability to understand Chinese during the inevitable distractors that are present in all teaching events. By reading faces and bodies and continuously assessing language progress, we were able to determine if students should be left to interact with each other or to be redirected.

Teachers as Researchers

During this teaching experience, we acted as researchers and teachers. We observed instruction and constructed qualitative field notes (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995). Student work samples were collected throughout the two weeks. Further, we asked our teachers to submit their final unit plans and the modifications they had made in response to the Chinese students' needs. The field notes of teaching observations and the student work samples served as the main data sources for this case study.

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As we observed, we continually assessed the Chinese students' writing development and sought to determine if the improvement in their writing ability was reflected in their oral language use. We acted as participant observers with roles as teachers, teaching supervisors, and researchers. We offered advice on the teaching of writing, facilitated discussion of cross-cultural teaching, modeled literature discussions with groups of Chinese students, collected data, and taught our own groups of Chinese students.

We reviewed our field notes daily, expanding and clarifying as needed. We identified areas of struggle that our teachers experienced so we could address them immediately. Each day the teachers, both U.S. and Chinese, shared a full two-hour lunch, discussing successes and frustrations. We used these lunch hours to discuss writing pedagogy, intercultural teaching techniques, and achievements as they developed. While we were active participants and teachers, we also took field notes during these lunches.

We analyzed the data using thematic analysis (Spradley, 1980) on two separate axes. First we scrutinized the text artifacts to identify writing strategies the students used and plotted this on one axis. We compared writing development over time to trace the strategies emerging in the students' compositions. The second axis of analysis was to identify the techniques the teachers used. We scrutinized field notes to identify teaching and interactions with students and traced connections between the teaching techniques and the writing strategies the students developed over time. Below we discuss what we learned.

What We Discovered About This Teaching Experience

No single factor can dominate in such a complex act as learning language; however, a set of conditions can be identified as positively influencing student learning. In this short teaching experience, we witnessed extraordinary progress in our students' communication abilities. We posit that our instructional focus on rich content area knowledge coupled with multimodal learning experiences, the prominent role of writing to communicate, and what we learned and applied from keen observation (kidwatching) enabled our students to take risks and increase their oral and written language proficiencies. We contend that students need literacy environments that are not focused on correctness in grammar and structure, but instead literacy environments that keep communicative competence as the upmost concern. Language development thrives in risk-free, highly motivating environments.

Our students were motivated not only to learn about language, but about science, engineering, social studies, literature, and math. It was important for us to keep a balance of interaction with a language that we could not understand and our students' process of learning English. Cross-curricular, multimodal lessons that consistently focused on the role of written English aligned with performing arts as well

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as language arts and provided a strong foundation upon which to build communicative competence. Our students' grammar continually improved as they eagerly sought to accurately communicate their ideas and what they had learned.

In addition, the very nature of interacting with Chinese students as they attempted to develop communicative identities helped U.S. educators develop an understanding of composition as communication from a deep, intercultural perspective. The teachers came to recognize that

- intercultural communicative competence, like purposeful writing instruction, must include a genuine interest in hearing what the other is attempting to express;
- kidwatching offers valuable information in terms of language proficiency that is not available in written forms of assessment;
- students who are engaged in cognitive work in content areas (e.g., science, social studies, engineering) have motivation to learn language that supports their learning; and
- using multimodal means to support communication also results in increased writing and vocabulary development.

In the course of helping Chinese students grow as writers, we used the power of observation to inform our teaching as we lived the reality of complex, multiple, evolving, situated identities that characterize students in any educational setting.

As a result of this experience, the teachers truly experienced and understood how *writing is thinking*. Additionally, they learned to use writing as a tool for thinking while honoring students' first language. Integrating authentic writing experiences within content lessons provided our teachers the opportunity to see how much language development occurred with the Chinese students while they studied engineering, science, literature, and social studies.

Conclusion

China has placed English language learning as a priority, but, unfortunately, English proficiency remains low (Education First, 2012). Our teachers, focusing on language as communication instead of correctness, allowed students to use English as a tool for learning both content and language. Mills (2010) contends that "reducing the English curriculum to a narrow repertoire of conventional genres and writing skills discounts the reality of literacy practices in society today" (p. 250). Furthermore, reducing language learning to a skill-based approach truly discounts the nature of language as a vehicle for learning, thinking, and communicating. This experience provided evidence of how rich literacy practices that allow students to take risks enables them to develop both language and content knowledge.

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While some might argue that the flexibility evident in our teaching was possible because we were conducting a summer program, we assert that all educational contexts should provide authentic, multimodal, relevant learning experiences for students. Whether in China, the United States, or any other country, students will learn when appropriate conditions are set for them. Students learn when they are engaged and when qualified teachers are given the freedom to teach students according to their needs and interests.

As a result of having actively been involved in crafting lessons designed to enhance intercultural communicative skills while developing a second language, our teachers are better equipped to create space in their own U.S. classrooms for all students to develop the complex identities they need to function in a global society.

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Appendix

Day 2

These lessons were developed and taught by Michel Guarraria and Kelly Pendergast.

Overall Unit Theme: Literacy through Engineering

Daily Focus: Chinese Junk

Objective: Students will be able to:

- Compare and contrast the Baltimore Clipper with the Chinese Junk
- Construct a boat that can hold the greatest number of pennies
- Learn about the penny as part of United States currency
- Learn about Abraham Lincoln

Instructional Materials:

- LCD Projector
- Water
- Scrap Paper
- Nickel (1 per student)
- Quarter (1 per student)
- Aluminum Foil
- *Abraham Lincoln* by Wil Mara
- Large Tub
- Masking Tape
- Pennies (1 per student)
- Dime (1 per student)
- Pipettes (1 per group)
- Popsicle Sticks
- Boat Building Vocabulary Cards

Procedures:

1. Homework Review (15-30 min): Students will read their stories of Chinese structures out loud to the class

2. Penny Water Tension (10-20 min): Introduce the boat building activity, and the purpose of the pennies – students will test how many water droplets can fit on each coin
    a. Give each student a penny
    b. Discuss the value of the penny
    c. Discuss symbols on the penny
    d. Discuss the man on the penny
    e. Discuss the Lincoln Memorial
    f. Predict how many water droplets will fit on a penny
    g. Predict how many water droplets will fit on the other coins

3. Read Aloud (15-30 min): *Abraham Lincoln* by Wil Mara

4. Scientific Diagram (15-30 min): Chinese Junk, with labeled parts

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a. Students will analyze a labeled diagram of a Baltimore Clipper (whole class)
b. Students will be asked to illustrate a diagram of a Chinese Junk (whole class)

5. Boat Building (30-45 min): Students will construct a boat out of available materials that can safely carry the most amount of pennies
    a. Students must create a symbolic or meaningful slogan for their boat (small group)
        i. Provide examples of American slogans (handouts for each group – try to match slogan to company / symbol)
            1. Volkswagen: Drivers wanted
            2. Nike: Just do it
            3. Cingular: Raising the bar
            4. Kix: Kid tested, mother approved
            5. Apple Computer: Think different
        ii. Share and translate Chinese slogans
        iii. Come up with a slogan for their boat (and the artistic impression)
    b. Students must construct their boat (small group)
        i. One square of aluminum foil
        ii. One sheet of paper
        iii. Two popsicle sticks
        iv. Two straws
    c. Students must comment on all boats (small group)
        i. Place each boat around the perimeter with chart paper next to it
        ii. Have each group make predictions and two comments on each boat

6. Vocabulary Card Game (10-20 min): Students will play Go-Fish with vocabulary cards (eight pairs: one card with definition, one with word)
    a. Boat: A vessel that floats
    b. Float: To rest on top of the water
    c. Sail: A cloth that catches the wind to propel the boat forward
    d. Penny: The smallest unit of US currency
    e. Slogan: A phrase used to advertise something
    f. Clipper: A traditional, fast, three-masted boat
    g. Junk: A traditional Chinese boat
    h. Diagram: A picture that explains the parts of something

Homework: Writing prompt

1. Compare the penny (that you will take home) with the smallest unit of Chinese currency.

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Supplemental Activities:

- "There's a Ship" Sing-a-long
- "Row, Row, Row Your Boat" Sing-a-long

About the Authors

Cheryl North, PhD, earned a PhD in Curriculum and Instruction, specializing in Language Literacy and Learning, at the University of Delaware. She is currently an Assistant Professor in the Department of Education at University of Maryland Baltimore County. She teaches courses focusing on literacy in different disciplines, as well as in the English language arts classroom at the secondary level. Dr. North is deeply concerned about the teaching of literacy in our schools. She is a firm believer that literacy is social and cultural, and that effective literacy instruction teaches students to use literacy as a tool for communication, learning, and thinking. Email: cnorth@umbc.edu

Nancy Rankie Shelton, PhD, earned a PhD in Curriculum and Instruction, specializing in Language, Literacy and Culture, at the University of Florida. She is currently an Associate Professor at University of Maryland Baltimore County where she teaches graduate and undergraduate literacy courses. She conducts research in urban elementary school settings, focusing her work on the ways in which schools prepare literate, participatory citizens. She is particularly interested in writing pedagogy and research and is currently investigating how Common Core State Standards is impacting the composing process in elementary classrooms. Email: nshelton@umbc.edu