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Teaching Cultural Prototypes and Detecting Prototypical Errors of L2 Learners

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TEACHING CULTURAL PROTOTYPES AND DETECTING PROTOTYPICAL ERRORS OF L2 LEARNERS

By

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Introduction

Learning a new language can be both an exciting and challenging experience. Communicating with native speakers of the target language (TL) can be a source of enrichment as one learns, or it can be the cause of much frustration and miscommunication. When the native speaker does not understand the non-native or reacts in a manner that is different from what the learner expected, it may lead the language learner to immediately question his/her use of the language. Often this means that the learner examines their pronunciation, grammar, or choice of vocabulary, but seldom do they question the cultural relevance of the word, term or phrase utilized. If the non-native speaker inquires about what was said incorrectly and the native speaker has the knowledge to inform him/her that the utterance was culturally inappropriate, the two people communicating could continue their conversation with little disruption, aside from a moment of awkwardness or a good laugh. However, if they are not able to negotiate the misunderstanding, the cultural faux pas can lead to uncomfortable feelings of embarrassment for one or both of the interlocutors and may even put an end to the conversation.

Each culture has its own prototypical language schema based on its own cultural history. While the language is a representation of the culture, the culture is also embedded within the language. For example, although numerous

languages may have a word for co-habitation, the meaning connotated by the word may be very different depending on the culture of the area where each language is used. One culture's connotation of this word might be a married couple, while in another culture a domestic partnership outside of marriage is implied. In a third culture the speakers might regularly think of anyone living under the same roof regardless of relationship. Beyond the linguistic meaning, the definition of a word could additionally indicate whether the arrangement was in line with cultural norms or not. Any one of the above definitions could carry with it implications of adhering to or contrasting with cultural norms. In sum, although each culture may have a lexical item with a similar definition, the connotation or prototype for that item may vary in unpredictable ways. When people of diverse backgrounds talk about co-habitation but are not aware of the cultural prototypes, consequential misunderstandings may occur.

A typical American ESL classroom often consists of students from diverse cultures. In such a situation the new language being taught would be American English and the teacher would attempt to ascertain which cultures represented in the classroom have culturally different prototypes, what they are, and how they differ. The teacher would then bring the learners attention to these lexical items in various contexts to investigate appropriate cultural understanding and use. By the time the student is finished with the lesson, he/she would hopefully have

a better understanding of how to appropriately use the connotation with at least some confidence.

Word meaning is the general definition of a word; for example the word "bird" means the entire connection of flying, feathered, egg layers in the world. A *cultural prototype* refers to the specific, local connotation customarily brought about by the local item. The prototypical connotation of "bird" for most North Americans of the Northern plains would be a robin or other common song bird; whereas someone from the rain forest of South America might visualize a parrot or toucan in their mind's eye. The focus of this study then is the problem of first language (L1) transfer of cultural prototypes to specific L2 lexical items.

An example of this occurred to me in the start of my MA program. I took a class with several international students, one of whom asked during class if she could use my *rubber*. As any American might be, I was taken aback. Luckily however she was pointing to the *eraser* on my desk and I was able to understand what she meant with little disturbance in the interaction. I later found out that she had learned British English and in England they call an *eraser* a *rubber*. This incident reminded me of an embarrassing mistake I made while learning my L2, American Sign Language (ASL). While talking with a Deaf man, he told me, "I like you." I politely signed back, "I like you too." Unbeknownst to me, I had just told him in his culture that I was romantically interested in him and had agreed

to a relationship. The connotation of the word *like* in ASL is much more specific than in American English especially if it is being said between and about people who are potentially romantically attracted.

Emotional reactions are elicited when L2 learners experience faux pas, we definitely learn from them; still it may lead to fewer embarrassing predicaments if some of them could be avoided. Thus, the reason I have chosen to research prototypicality is to give the L2 learner the awareness needed to identify and possibly avoid at least some of these misunderstandings. In order to do this, I will be devising tools for use in the classroom. These tools will represent both implicit and explicit instruction designed for classroom use, rather than the embarrassing trial and error strategies that happen outside of the instructional institution. The purpose of this paper is to provide a method for identifying and understanding cultural nuances in the meaning of words during the process of learning. Descriptions and examples will focus on cultural differences in the meaning of specific words that may occur in an American ESL teaching context.

In order to provide further background in this area, Chapter 2 will discuss in-depth the problem of these errors, as well as, how and why they arise. An explanation of the learning process will be presented and the iconic or the prototypical level of cross-cultural communication will be analyzed. Some ways

ESL instructors recognize students' L1 transfer (errors) of cultural prototypes to specific L2 lexical items will be discussed.

Chapter 3 will present a teaching approach on how to ascertain the L1 cultural prototypes being transferred to specific L2 lexical items. How to negotiate the meaning of these cultural prototypes of lexical items will be presented.

In the end the reader will have a sense of how to help L2 learners lessen their experiences of embarrassing situations when they are outside of class. This in turn will aid them in feeling more confident about socializing and conversing with native speakers.

Chapter 2

As students learn a language there are a plethora of things that they struggle to comprehend, such as word formation, grammar, and culture. Research has shown that many things occur during L2 learning, one area of which is the cognitive process a person will go through during second language acquisition. Various errors are made during the learning process, many of which are focused on L1 transfer, where an L2 learner uses a property of his/her native language in the L2. How does an instructor recognize when L1 transfer occurs, particularly errors in meaning or use? These points and questions will be featured within this chapter.

Learner Errors

There are many different kinds of errors that L2 learners can and do make. Scovel (2001) mentions that errors are lapses in competence which native speakers (NS) rarely if ever make, while he states that, "Mistakes are any inaccuracies in linguistic production in either the L1 or L2 that are caused by fatigue, inattention, etc., and that are immediately correctable by the speaker (or writer)" (p. 48). Errors can be categorized into two groups: interlingual and intralingual. Interlingual errors are those errors that occur because of the

differences between the learner's first language and the target language. One sub-classification of interlingual errors is actually not an error, but avoidance. This happens when a form does not become integrated into the learner's repertoire, usually because the learner finds it less problematic to avoid the form than to try to use it. Intralingual errors are similar to the errors L1 learners make in their linguistic development, but unlike L1 learners, L2 learners may fossilize, continuing to create forms inconsistent with the target language due their inadequate knowledge of it. Interlingual or transfer errors happen when a person takes meaning, grammar, sounds, or any other linguistic element from his/her L1 and uses it in the same way in his/her L2. A Deaf person, whose L1 is American Sign Language (ASL), might say, *Ball, big red bounce me,* instead of, *I bounced the big red ball*. Here we can see a number of transfer errors in syntax. Because ASL topicalizes, the direct object in this sentence, *ball,* becomes the first element, followed by the adjectives that describe it. The agent of the sentence, *me*, can be positioned in the beginning, before the verb, or at the end of the sentence.

Avoidance is not exactly an error, but rather an L2 learner's attempt not to make an error. Lightbown and Spada (1999), Mitchell and Myles (2004), and Scovel (2001) all agree that the learner will observe or is taught a part of the L2 language that s/he will think it is too difficult to even want to try or continue using. So, the person will avoid the issue by working around it. One example is

if an L2 learner is having difficulty understanding when it is appropriate to use contractions, s/he might use, *There is not class today*, in every context instead of figuring out when, *There isn't class today, would be appropriate*. Another very common avoidance in L2 American English language is not to use idioms because they can be difficult to understand, remember, and use appropriately.

Intralingual or developmental errors are the types of errors that happen when acquiring any language whether it is the first, second, or even the fifth. Children will make these types of errors while learning to speak their L1. You might hear, *Me go with Mommy*!, instead of *I want to go with Mommy*. Overgeneralization is done when a rule learned in the TL is extended to exceptions in the category, for example a learner might say, *I goed to the store*, instead of, *I went to the stor*e, adding the past tense -ed to an irregular verb. Children learning their L1 and adults acquiring an L2 will tend to make equivalent developmental errors.

Inadequate knowledge of the target language can lead to errors for adult learners that L1 learners would not likely contend with due to their age. This type of error occurs when a person does not possess the knowledge to perform a task in a native-like way. In ASL, the culture of the language is mostly informal/ casual speaking. However, if someone had to give a speech in ASL and was

unable to produce the speech in a formal ASL register, they would not be taken seriously or as an authority on the topic.

L1 transfer of cultural knowledge

When people begin learning another language, they depend on their language background knowledge. For example, when a person is learning the grammar of a new language, they will compare it to their current grammar experience and if a person is unsure of the rules, they may revert back to the familiar rules of their L1 or another L2. These transfer errors do not only occur within grammar, they appear at any linguistic level, including the level of cultural understanding.

The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis of linguistic determinism versus linguistic relativity (as cited in Holmes, 2001 and Kay & Kempton, 1983) states that language is culture and culture is language; that one influences the other. While there is a certain level of agreement about this, the strength of the hypothesis is debated. The stronger theory is called linguistic determinism because adherents believe that "people from different cultures think differently because of differences in their language" (Holmes 2001, p. 324). The weaker theory is called linguistic relativity, which advocates "that language influences perception, thought, and, at least potentially, behaviour" (p. 324). While contemporary

linguists generally reject the stronger version, the weaker tends to be accepted by most. If true, then we can reasonably assume that language learners will transfer these perceptions, thoughts, and behaviors to their L2, just as they might a grammatical form. In order to provide examples of language influencing the perceptions of people from specific cultures in specific ways, various colleagues from a variety of languages and cultures were consulted. An example of this for a Japanese person may be to think of the English word *mom* as equivalent to *okaasan*, the name the Japanese call their mothers (personal communication with native speaker, October 2007).

Not all words have one-to-one equivalents similar to the preceding example. A word in one language may not have an equivalent in a second language, causing an explanation to be given rather than using a specified term. The Japanese word *tatemae* is an example of this. *Tatemae* is a type of communication in which one refrains from showing their true feelings and opinions to the listener. This is done in order to show respect for persons of a different status, such as bosses or strangers, or colleagues who are older than the speaker. One Japanese-English electronic dictionary (Kunihiro, T., Yasui, M., & Horiuchi, K. 1999) suggests that *tatemae* means *façade.* While the speaker does put up a *façade*, this definition is hardly an adequate explanation of the concept (personal communication with native speaker, October 2007).

As culture is connected to language, so the meanings of lexical items are connected to culture, including idioms, proverbs, and metaphors. For example the idiom ''put your John Hancock here" (meaning sign your name) is clearly specific of the United States culture and would have no meaning in any other culture or language. If a person comes across a lexical item in their L2 that is familiar, but not equivalent in their L1, they may likely assume the two are equivalent in meaning and/or use. While it is possible that the two categories are equivalent (as shown above), it may also be likely that the L1 cultural meaning of the familiar lexical item is significantly different from that of the L2 culture. An example of cultural transfer of meaning, according to K. Takemura and Y. Hashiya (native speakers), is the Japanese word *ai*, which in English is translated to *love,* but the cultural meaning and usage of *ai* is considerably different than that of *love*. Japanese people rarely use the word *ai* because it is considered a love beyond compare and reason. NSs would find the term embarrassing to say in all but a few very specific contexts. In the Japanese culture people are able to talk around the subject by stating that the receiver of the affection is beautiful, or that they cannot be lived without, never actually saying the equivalent of *I love you* (personal communication with native speakers, October 2007). Love in the U.S however, is reserved for nothing. People can love life, a dog, food, a joke; one

can love basically anyone or anything including abstract ideas, as in "i*'m lovin' it" (McDonald's Restaurants advertising campaign, 2005 to the present).*

Cross-cultural communication in iconic/ prototypical areas

Different cultural societies may have different connotations on a prototype of a lexical item. A lexical item is:

> The smallest distinctive unit in the lexicon of a language; also called a lexical item [or lexeme]. The term was introduced to avoid the ambiguity in the term 'word', when discussing vocabulary. A lexeme may consist of a single word (e.g. *table*) or more than one word (e.g. phrasal verbs, such as *switch off*). Also, a lexeme is an abstract notion, subsuming a range of variant forms (each of which is a word): *go*, for example, subsumes *gone, went, going*, and *goes.* (Crystal 1992, p. 226)

As stated in the introduction chapter, a *cultural prototype* is a label society customarily assigns to a word/lexical item. For example, the lexical item *bathe* may have a variety of cultural prototypes. For a NS of American English *bathe* means that a person will take a bath and wash, whereas, for a native Norwegian speaker, according to R. Lybeck a near-native speaker of Norwegian, the cognate of *bathe*, *bade,* means to play in the water at a beach (personal communication, 27 November 2007). It would be easy to understand, then, if a Norwegian learner of English were to conjure up the prototype of *bade* when hearing the word *bathe* in

English, how this might lead to a misunderstanding. People occasionally make cultural prototypical errors when employing lexical items.

As has been exemplified, language is intertwined with culture. Every culture has its unique prototypes that encompass meanings and icons, which refer to symbols, words, idioms, and metaphors, as well as other things. According to the Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics (Taylor, 2006), a prototype is what is typically picked as a *good example* of the category being discussed (pp. 238-240). Prototypes are culture-specific, for example, when an American hears the word *food* they might think of pizza or hamburger, while in Taiwan they might think of noodles or rice. The definition of food will encompass all of these foods mentioned but depending on the culture, the *good example or picture that comes to mind for the native speaker* of the category will differ by culture. Thus, the *meaning* is "codetermined by nonlinguistic knowledge, either of a general encyclopedic or of a context-bound, situational nature" (Seuren 2006, p. 575), has the potential to be the same in various cultures but not always. For example, in the realm of hair styling, the cultural prototype of the word *perm*, in the United States, assumes that the end result of the treatment will be that your entire head of hair becomes wavy or curly semi-permanently, whereas, according to C. Chang a native speaker of Taiwanese, in Taiwan *perm* can include other results, such as straightening or application to only part of

your hair, in addition to what is expected in the US context (personal communication, 20 November 2007). So it can be seen that the expectations of the results of a similar process may differ from one culture to another.

Icons and symbols are intertwined with language and culture. A symbol is a "1) sign that represents or refers to something in an arbitrary, conventional way. 2) Any sign referring to an abstract notion" (Danesi 2000, p. 221). The caduceus, symbolizing a physician is a staff with two entwined snakes topped with two wings, alerts us to something medical. An icon can be "1) sign that is made to resemble its referent through some form of replication, resemblance, or simulation. 2) a visual image of some kind… 4) one who is the object of great attention and devotion (an idol)" (Danesi 2000, p. 115). McDonald's is considered a cultural icon, because people think of McDonald's as the original fast-food restaurant, representative of American lifestyle. The Statue of Liberty, is both a cultural icon and a symbol, both as a symbolic abstract notion of freedom and as a iconic visual image that is recognized as representing freedom in the U.S. Symbols and icons are visual idioms within cultural prototypes.

Metaphors are also based in culture and language. A metaphor is defined as an "application of a word or phrase with one meaning to another that has a different meaning, thus creating a new meaning by association" (Danesi 2000, p. 145). Here in the United States, you might hear someone say, "Put your John

Hancock here." The saying actually means that the speaker wants you to sign your name. The metaphor is based on the person John Hancock, who was one of the people to sign the Declaration of Independence, deliberately writing his name big so the King would be able to see it without his spectacles and to boldly proclaim Hancock's desire for the colonies to become an independent country. So, "John Hancock" not only means a prominent man in American history, but also refers to anyone's signature.

Another part of speech that is strongly connected to the metaphor is the idiom. Ayto's (2006), definition states, "An idiom is prototypically a fixed multiword construction, the meaning of which cannot be deduced from the meaning of its constituent words (e.g., *kick the bucket* 'to die')" (p. 518). Riding a bike is *a piece of cake* is an example of an idiom. It means that riding a bike is very easy. Many people like cake and eating a piece of cake generally is not a hardship, so, sometimes easy things are equated with eating cake.

Some cultures have linguistic categories, where cultural ways of thinking are embedded in the language, categorizing referents grammatically. Holmes (2001) says that, "language provides a means of encoding a community's culture" (p.329). She gives the Navaho, a Native American tribe, and their language as an example: "The form of Navaho verbs, for example, is sometimes determined by the shape of the object: e.g. long or short, thin or thick, round or

not, and so on" (p. 329). Because of this the Navaho language affects the way in which Navaho children categorize items. According to a study discussed in Holmes (2001), not only are Navaho-speaking children faster at categorizing shapes compared to North American English speaking children, but they also preferred to categorize items by shapes rather than colors which the English speaking children preferred (Cited in Holmes, 2001, p. 329).

Silence, though not lexical, also has meaning and is, therefore, a cultural prototype. For example the Apache, a southwestern Native American tribe, considers silence to be a way of getting familiar with someone, whereas, North Americans will use small talk and conversational register to get to know someone (Basso 1990, pp. 82-88). On the other hand, in the Deaf culture of the United States, if someone is *being silent*, not conversing, they are considered antisocial. There are times when silence is used to disagree with someone, for example if a person states their opinion to a group and the group remains silent with no nonverbal feedback, it may be assumed that there is some level of disagreement that the group for some reason is unwilling to articulate.

It is clear that cultures have their own prototypes. Even though several cultures may have the same lexical item in translation, the lexical item in the various cultures may have a different meaning, connotation, or use. The lexical item may be connotatively different for any number of reasons: prototype, icon,

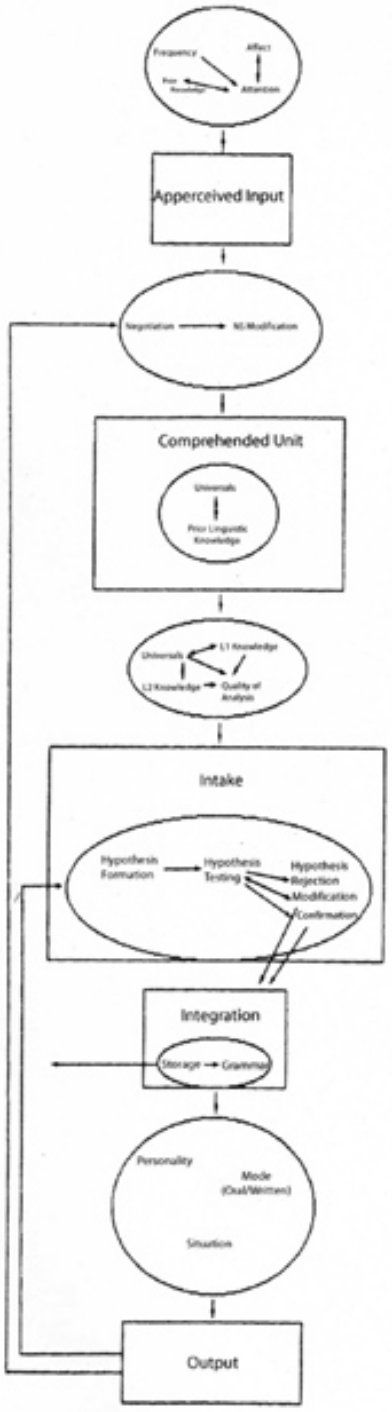
symbol, metaphor, idiom or grammatical category. Language learners form a cognitive or mental meaning of an utterance when determining the meaning of a lexical item. In the next section, the learning strategies that learners use to cognitively process lexical items will be discussed.

Learner Strategies of cognitive language acquisition

Second language learners go through a process in the cognitive acquisition of vocabulary and there are various models that have been created depicting L2 acquisition. One of the most comprehensive models is Gass (1988, 2001). This model is a well accepted explanation of language acquisition methods used for instruction within University course work. Gass' model (see figure 2.1 reprinted from Gass, 2001, p. 401) will be one of two cognitive models discussed in this chapter.

In Gass' model, the square boxes are the focal points, or the main cognitive functions. The first point in the processing in this model, "Apperceived input", refers to the input available to the listener, what they are able to perceive as part of the message while they are listening to the speaker. The listener has to be able to recognize that what they are hearing is an utterance that has meaning and as they draw on prior knowledge of language, their

Figure 2.1



A model of second language acquisition. (*Source:* From "Integrating research areas: A framework for second language studies." by S. Gass, 1988, *Applied Linguistics, 9,* 198–217). Reprinted by permission.

(Gass 2001, p. 401)

affective filter needs to be down and they need to be paying attention if they are to comprehend what they are hearing. Not all of what is available to the listener will be perceived and not all that is perceived will be comprehended.

In Gass' model the listener then will go on to negotiate the meaning of the message with the sender. This negotiation may lead to modification of the input; before the new information can move on to become a "comprehended unit". This unit is what the listener has perceived and understood. The listener will classify that part of the speaker's utterance into units such as words and sentences. While using all the language knowledge the listener has acquired (L1 knowledge, L2 knowledge, universal grammar, etc.) s/he attempts to understand the utterance. Having achieved comprehension of some part of what has been communicated, the cognitive process moves into the "intake" stage where any part of the comprehended input that is new or different than what the learner had understood before undergoes hypothesis formation and subsequently hypothesis testing. The learner will try to reconcile the new information with the old information and draw hypotheses about how this new information works. They will produce output in order to test whether their hypothesis works or not. The brain will choose to reject, modify, or confirm the hypothesis dependant on the feedback received from interlocutors. If the new hypothesis is perceived as

confirmed, whether the new form or meaning is native-like or not, this information has the chance of being integrated into the learner's IL system.

Having achieved comprehension the process moves into the "Integration" stage, where the new understanding becomes stored in the person's long-term memory. The information is categorized according to its relevance (L2 grammar, idioms, humorous, etc.) and over time becomes more easily retrievable for future use.

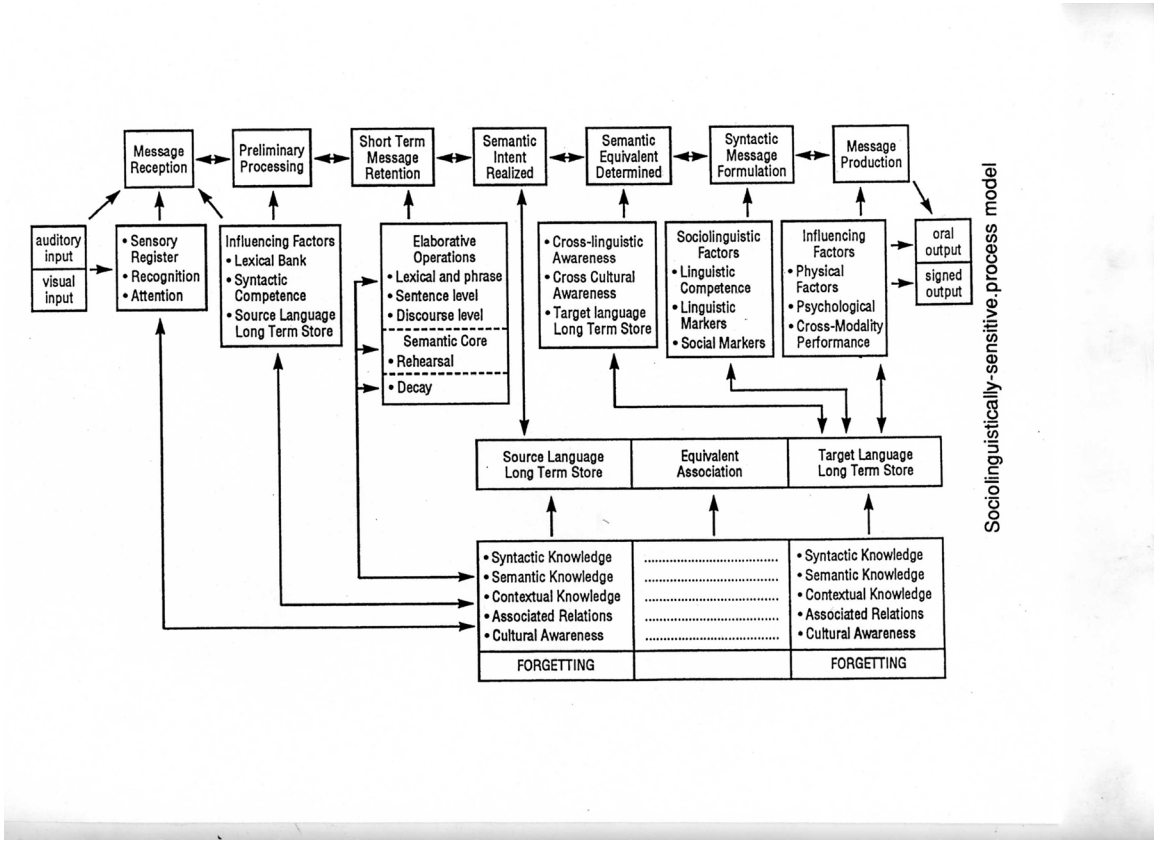
In this cognitive process, the recipient eventually uses the stored information to produce "Output," the attempt to verbally express thoughts, ideas, and responses. The "output" can be affected by the individual and social variables of the situation: the recipient's personality, the mode of expression, the setting, the interlocutor, etc. Issues of appropriate language use, such as register, solidarity, status, social norms, or place of occurrence play a role at the output phase. The learner's output may create the need for further negotiation and the cognitive process repeats itself.

Cokely's (1985, p.169), "Sociolinguistically- sensitive process model" in figure 2.2, is a model developed to describe the cognitive process that an interpreter for the deaf goes through to formulate an interpretation in one language from what was said or signed in the other. American Sign Language (ASL) as a living language has its own linguistic features, not congruent to

spoken Standard American English. In Cokely's model the interpreter experiences the reception process similarly to an L2 learner of English. According to the two models, an interpreter of the deaf and an L2 learner experience the same stages of input reception up until the point of "syntactic message formulation" (Cokely, 1985, p.172) stage, which is where the input is interpreted to become the target language.

According to Cokely's model, "message reception" (p.170) can come in various forms. For the purposes of this paper the reception of auditory messages will be specifically looked at in order to differentiate speaking from other forms of communication such as reading and writing. Using the previous example, *I plan on bathing before the party tonight*; the first stage of reception is that the listener's attention needs to be on the utterance produced. This stage is parallel to "Apperceived Input", in Gass' model, figure 2.1, in that what is said by the speaker is not automatically attended to by the listener. When message reception is recognized, the process moves to the next stage, "Preliminary processing" (Cokely, 1985, p. 170).

Figure 2.2



(Cokely 1985, p.169)

"Preliminary processing" is the means by which sounds are processed according to the person's knowledge of *lexical units*, *syntactic context* and *semantic context*. The listener will also delve into his/her long-term storage of language to assist in the processing of the message. As the listener hears the combination of sounds /p/, /l/, /æ/, /n/, s/he will recognize this sound combination, *plan*. The brain will then sort through its existing lexicon and decide if the sounds /plæn/ is a known word, resulting in word recognition. This stage can be equated with the "comprehended unit" of Gass' model in Figure 2.1, where the learner hears and searches for the meaning and if needed negotiates with the speaker for modified input. Once the message is comprehended, as the sounds are registered in the brain as words, the process moves on to "short term message retention" (Cokely, 1985, pp. 170- 171).

In short-term memory retention, the listener will retain these incoming words until they work up to a full thought, "I plan on bathing before the party tonight." As the concepts are understood, *1) bath, 2) party*, the brain starts processing how they relate to one another and to background information and the current context, perhaps concluding that the speaker *wants to clean up for the party*, while still retaining and taking in more linguistic information. This

process continues until the person has processed, understood, and comprehended what they believe to be the full meaning of the message. s/he

As the comprehension of the message occurs, the listener moves into a new phase during which the "semantic intent [is] realized" (Cokely, 1985, p. 171). This part of the process in the Gass model is similar to "intake", though the point of view remains different in that in the Cokely model acquisition has already taken place, while in Gass the focus is on the learning rather than the interpreting. It is at this point in both models when long-term storage becomes engaged. When processing the message Cokely focuses on retrieving information on the "source language" in his chart, while Gass is focused on the hypothesis testing of newly understood forms in the target language. This is the perspective of interest in the paper as well, because, as will be demonstrated, the metaphor of interpretation is useful in discussing the cognition and transfer of prototypes in both languages. For a non-native speaker (NNS), the cognitive process begins to break down starting at "semantic intent realized" (Cokely, 1985, p. 171) due to L1 cultural prototypes transferring to specific L2 lexical items. The non-native listener at this point is not aware of the different cultural association and connotations of certain lexical items, assuming that the L1 connotations are the same due to a lack of target-culture awareness.

The next part of the process in Cokely (1985) is "semantic equivalent determined" (p. 172). The learner or interpreter tries to think of corresponding meanings in both languages; which is like "integration" in Gass' model. Contextualized meaning and appropriate usage are the focus of this part of the process for interpreters, while ELLs may still be focusing on the form of the lexical item, attaching it to prior knowledge, in this case, knowledge of their first language and culture. An examination of the example (*I plan on bathing before the party tonight.*) might find the listener creating the following meaning: *there is a celebration tonight and she wants to be clean and look good when she attends*. The listener is formulating what s/he thinks is the equivalent in L1 (this is where the transfer error takes place) of what the speaker really meant by utilizing the same factors as when semantic intent is realized, as well as "cross- cultural awareness [and L1] long term storage" (Cokely, 1985, p. 168). If the listener were a Norwegian of lower proficiency and experience with English, she may in fact interpret the example message as: *the speaker plans on going to the beach before the party.* The reason being that the cognate å *bade* (*to bathe*) means to play in the water at a beach or pool, rather than to take a bath (R. Lybeck, personal communication with a near-native speaker, 27 November, 2007). For interpreters at this stage in the process, they are trained to let go of grammar, words, and language, and begin to formulate a picture of the meaning in the mind (Winston,

1993, Winston & Monikowski, 2000, and Bowen-Bailey, 2006). An example of this part of the process is if someone is talking about a party and bathing, the interpreter will most likely make two mental pictures, one of bathing (which occurs first) and one of a party (which occurs later). If this is similar to what the language learner is doing, then they create a different picture in their mind than that of a native-speaker of the target language. Though the utterance may be perfectly acceptable in the context for the native-speaking interlocutor, the misunderstanding occurs at the level of the prototype, or the mismatch between the pictures each has in their mind.

The rest of Cokely's cognitive model shows the process an interpreter goes through, while the SLA model (Gass, 2001) continues with the learning process, yet there are still parallels. The interpreter cognitively progresses to the "syntactic message formulation" (Cokely, 1985, p. 172) stage. In figure 2.1 the process of learning shows integration with existing linguistic schemata. Prior to "output"/"message production" (Cokely, 1985, p. 172), the learner and the interpreter consider individual and sociolinguistic factors that affect their language choice. Both will continue to draw on their knowledge of TL syntax, semantics, context, and culture to formulate a message in the target language whose meaning is equivalent to that of the source language.

Although the two different charts of the cognitive process look at the process from two different perspectives, in essence the same process occurs in the same order. What the interpretation model brings to the SLA model is the clarity of at what point in the process the transfer of cultural prototypes occurs. This understanding allows for more effective treatment of this transfer in the classroom setting.

Transfer of L1 cultural prototypes and Instruction

As people transfer their L1 prototypes into the new language they are learning, they may find themselves misunderstood. Instructors of the L2 need to help students realize when the connotations are transferred incorrectly. NSs will recognize these transfers as errors, because "an error will always constitute a novel combination at some level in the activation flow…" (Postma 2000, p. 118). For example, according to K. Hluhovska, a woman from Ukraine telling her friend about a pedicure may say, "I had my fingers painted a pretty dark green." because the appendages on both the hands and feet in Ukraine are all called, *пальці,* fingers (personal communication with a native speaker, 13 April, 2008). As the teacher is having a dialogue with his/her students, the instructor will encounter times when it seems something isn't right, such as a response that does not seem precisely connected to the topic, or the student may appear to

understand but the student's reaction is not what is expected, or s/he may have a questioning facial expression.

The instructor's perception of the student's responses is referred to as *monitoring* or *perception monitoring* (Postma, 2000, p.118). When the teacher attends to these responses by the student, the instructor is *monitoring* the student's understanding. The instructor will get a feeling that the student does not fully understand the utterance or something doesn't make sense in that given environment. The instructor will inquire appropriately with what, where, who or when questions to get a clearer concept of the student's connotations. This interaction between student and teacher is known as a "conceptual loop" (Postma, 2000, p. 106).

When an ESL student produces English, what they are trying to say is not always understandable. The instructor would then produce a *clarification request* by either asking the student to or the instructor will attempt to repeat or reformulate the utterance (Ligntbown & Spada, 1999, p. 104). In an attempt to clarify, the instructor may say what s/he thinks the student means. During this process of *clarification request*, errors can be detected. One example is when a woman from India says, "Our spices not available then we go to Minneapolis. Have over there Indian store we bought it over there but, now is all spices everywhere." The instructor could negotiate meaning by saying, "So, at first

when you came to Mankato is was difficult for you to find Indian spices and you had to go an Indian store in Minneapolis to get them, but now stores in Mankato sell Indian spices?" (From personal data collection, Fall 2007). The student would then confirm yes or no if the instructor said what the student meant.

Instructors are constantly providing feedback on student errors, in cross-cultural communication this feedback is called *editing*. According to Postma (2000), "Editing occurs on the basis of sensing mismatch between an encoded element and the primed pool of relevant items" (p.119). To find errors of a certain type the instructor needs to be monitoring for the error, i.e., prototypes. When a person from India talks about visiting a museum of an ancient king's house in India and lists various things she saw and says, "Some clothes, old people clothes" (from personal data collection, fall 2007), a North American instructor may sense a mismatch. Most North Americans, when hearing "old people's clothes," will think about the clothes old people they know where, when in actuality the Indian means ancient clothes.

As the term *perception* infers discernment, with *perception monitoring* it is not always immediately obvious that an error has occurred. Often it is necessary to facilitate repetition of the utterance or perception of the utterance or simply inquire what, where, who or when to determine the prototypical error. When the error has been discovered, the process of negotiation of lexical item

usage is able to occur. According to Qi (2001), during this process of negotiation, the NS and the NNS will negotiate the specific characteristics of the lexical item, such as connotations, synonyms, parts of speech, etc., including what the NNS understands the lexical item to be in their L1. Negotiation will take place between the NNS and NS until they both agree that the concept is understood within the target culture context. According to Qi (2001), this negotiation is beneficial to L2 connotative learning. Qi's (2001) study of NNS of English in Canada researched, "Identifying and bridging cross-cultural prototypes: Exploring the role of collaborative dialogue in second language lexical meaning acquisition" (p. 246). The NNSs were paired with NSs of English and both the NS and NNS were pretested and post-tested on the prototypical connotations of specific lexical items. In the pretest each was presented a word and asked to pick the best usage of the word from a multiple-choice assessment. Following the pretest, the NS and NNS were assigned the task of discussing the word and their individual perceptions. The post-test assessed whether negotiations changed the NNS' perception of the word. Qi's (2001) findings indicated that negotiations were beneficial to the NNSs' acquisition of L2 prototypes. Since prototypes are very much a part of language and culture, it is not easy to teach them, not only because there are no rules, but also because differences in prototypes across cultures may not be understood by the teacher. It is difficult to

detect if someone is connotatively correct or is in error if they are using appropriate lexical items. Therefore, it is a complicated process to assess someone's knowledge of L2 prototypes. However, prototypes need to be discussed and learned for clear communication and for understanding to occur when communication occurs between NS and NNS.

ELLs become more confident when they understand their L2 well and are able to communicate with NSs with minimal miscommunication. There needs to be a way to teach cultural prototypes aside from having to resort to straight vocabulary memorization. The following chapter will suggest a way to teach cultural prototypes that is hopefully effective, interesting, and non-threatening for both the student and instructor.

Everyone has a preferred style of learning a new language, but overall learners follow a similar mental process. In the course of language acquisition learners will inevitably experience assorted types of errors. One specific type of error is L1 transfer, which may be implemented at specific stages of the cognitive process. In this chapter we have investigated the transfer of L1 cultural prototypes and how they may be detected. In the following chapter a treatment for these types of errors will be suggested and tested.

Chapter 3: Teaching methods

Background Support

As I have stated earlier in the introduction, the topic of prototypical errors is of special concern to me. In my professional career as an interpreter I am constantly seeking for the appropriate interpretation of a person's words or signs. In the interpreting field we are trained to listen to the source language, let go of the language altogether, consider the meaning behind the language, and then take that meaning and encode it into the target language, the cognitive process outlined by Cokely (1985). To become proficient with this process an interpreter needs to train and practice for years. Likewise, a language learner may need to practice letting go of thinking in their native language and cognitively encoding in the learned language.

One exercise for practicing this technique is listening to the thought or words spoken and then drawing pictures that represent that thought. For example the instructor would say, "In the spring we will plant a garden." In that case a person might draw something that represents spring like tulips, a budding tree, or melting snow. The person might also draw something that represented *we*, such as a couple, a family, or a neighborhood. The person might then draw

someone putting a seed in the dirt, followed by a plot of land drawn to represent the lay-out of a garden with examples of garden produce. According to the pictures drawn, the interpreting students restate the ideas in the target language.

Pictures can be interpreted in multiple ways because they have no language; consequently there is no language barrier. Anyone looking at a picture will get the gist of what is happening in the picture and for this reason pictures are used to represent the general meaning of a thought. There can be, however, cultural barriers within a picture. If a person in India was wearing white in a picture, it would imply that the person were grieving, possibly someone's death. Likewise, grief would be implied if a person in a western culture was seen in a picture wearing all black. Therefore, culture of origin is significant in realizing the full meaning of a picture.

As noted earlier, not many studies have been carried out on how to teach learners to detect prototypical errors. What I am about to propose is to borrow a well tested interpreter training exercise and change it into foreign and second language teaching pedagogy. The teaching activity that I propose to teach recognition of cultural prototypes to NNSs is based on the exercise employing pictures, I will not be using the full approach or method from interpreting but rather that part of the process that may be helpful in L2 learning.

Interpreting lesson adapted for ESL

For an interpreter in training, by the time they start the picture exercise they already should know most of the cultural prototypes in both languages. The exercise is designed to help them let go of a language and only think in connotations, prototypes and ideas. The ESL picture lesson is also designed for the NNS to show their understanding of connotations, prototypes and ideas for which they may only have an L1 picture. It is a tendency of NNSs to transfer these L1 connotations to the L2, without even considering that there may be another connotation of the expressed idea in the TC.

In general, people can not know exactly what other people are thinking. Brown (2004) states that people cannot see someone listening or reading. People can only observe the results of the listening (pp. 117-118). Even if someone responds correctly to what is said, it does not mean the listener fully understood the connotation of what was said. Drawing a picture can show the person's ideas and connotations from which an instructor can see more of what the learner is visualizing.

The focus of the lesson is to promote the iconic/prototypical thinking of non-native English speakers in order to detect prototype understanding in the L2, as well as transfer from the L1, so they may discover their errors in a learning

environment, using negotiation. This type of lesson can be done with ages five through adults who have English-language proficiency anywhere from novice high to advanced. The lesson tends to work best if the class is all close to the same level, each being paired with a native speaker. If those more experienced with the L2 culture are paired with the less experienced, however, they may still see variation in their pictures and negotiate the differences.

The instructor needs to create sentences/ full thoughts that will be said to the students for them to draw. After the students have drawn their pictures, they should explain their picture and discuss them with their partner. The partner will ask questions about the picture to make sure the NNS had the correct prototype. If the prototype is in error then the pair will go into negotiations.

Negotiation is when a NNS discusses part of the language with a NS or a more advanced NNS. The language in focus could be any lexical item; a word, idiom, synonyms, subtleties in meaning between various words, etc. The ESL students will be taught to negotiate by the instructor explaining and demonstrating how it is done. The two participants will talk about a word, thought, idiom, or synonyms, etc. First, correct pronunciation of the lexical items in focus will be clarified. Then the meaning of the word will be negotiated with the native giving his/her best description, in which, the non-native will be able to ask questions and also will give his/her thoughts on the meaning. They will

discuss when the word is used and not used, with demonstrations from the native speaker. The non-native will try to use the word in a sentence to get a feel for its use with the native there to guide them. In the end the non-native should have an approximate L2 understanding of the lexical item. This process generally, on an average, takes about 15 minutes.

One suggested evaluation of this lesson is to have the students use the words or phrases that were incongruent in journal-writing assignments. Journals are non-threatening and will give the student an opportunity to try the new words or phrases without being penalized if they still use it inappropriately.

The lesson plan is designed to be added as part of the curriculum in an ESL class and can be repeated as new topics arise. (See appendix A.)

Teaching Experience

I was able to teach the lesson plan to see firsthand if my theory would be successful. The class was a post secondary ESL class that had about 20 students from a variety of countries. I was able to video tape myself teaching the lesson, record some of the students talking about their drawings and negotiations, and collect most of the students' drawings.

To prepare for the lesson I created sentences for the students to draw. I brainstormed with two teachers of ESL to help me know what ideas students

have had some difficulty understanding in the past. Various things that might be difficult for ESL learners to understand were brainstormed: Idioms, temperature, and, a few other topics were brought up. When an idiom is used, most of the time an ELL can understand what the individual words mean but the person does not know or understand the prototypical meaning. The sentence *ESL homework is a piece of cake* was created to see if the students knew that the idiom a *piece of cake* meant *easy* and not *one part of a whole cake*. One of the two ESL teachers informed me that her students had a difficult time understanding temperature when someone said six below and negative ten wind-chill. Her students asked, "Below what?" and "Why are two temperatures given with one of them being wind chill?" Thus, the sentences were created and ready for the lesson (see Appendix B.).

I started out by explaining to the class that even though two different languages may have corresponding lexical items with the same general meaning, that the word may have a different connotation in each language. I gave an example to the class of my experience learning the cultural prototype of the Deaf lexical item *like*, which was conveyed in the introduction. Then the lesson was explained. They were told that they would be given a thought or sentence and they were to make pictures that represented the thought. After the general directions were given, the two native-speaking instructors demonstrated using

the two sample sentences. The first sentence demonstrated was fully understood by both listeners, who drew similar pictures and created similar sentences derived from the pictures they drew. The pictures were shared and explained to the class. The second sentence was purposely created so only one of the instructors would know the full meaning of the sentence. Again both participants created pictures and sentences according to what each thought. This time the pictures were different. The pictures were explained each in turn and then negotiation was demonstrated on how to talk about the differences.

The sentence used for this negotiation is from appendix B sample sentence 2: "The river guide instructed us to ferry our kayak across the river and then eddy-out downstream." The other native speaker did not know what *ferry across* and *eddy-out* meant. The terms were familiar to me because I had been a whitewater rafting and kayak instructor and guide. It was explained that *ferry across* means to take your boat, have the front of the boat face up stream at a slight angle to the side of the stream you want to go to and just paddle as if you want to go up-stream a little. If this maneuver is done correctly, it will take the boat directly across to the opposite side of the river. Thus, as a ferry takes passengers straight across, so will this maneuver. The term *eddy-out* means to find an *eddy* which is a pocket along the bank of a river that has little to no current to pull you downstream. Thus, an eddy is the perfect place to pull over

and wait while still being in the water. The other instructor asked a few questions like can these be done in an ocean or said about swimming. In which the answers were *no* to the ocean and *not really* to swimming. The two new vocabulary words were then tested in sentences to see if the learner caught the correct meaning. With minor adjustments the sentences and meanings were on target.

The students were then asked to try drawing their own pictures using other sentences. The first sentence, "You go into a fast food restaurant and place an order. The clerk then asks you, "To go?" (Appendix B, sentence 1) was chosen because it was used in the class as an illustration the previous week. In the original story the ESL student thought that the clerk meant for him/her to leave.

After the students were done drawing their pictures, writing the sentences and discussing them, the instructor were told them what it means when a cashier/clerk asks, "To go?" They were informed that when you are in a fast food restaurant and the clerk asks, "To go?" it means do you plan to eat here at the restaurant or do you plan to take the food someplace else to eat it?

The class moved on to the next sentence, "The 2 boys were playing rock, paper, scissors to decide who was going to use the riding lawn mower and who was going to use the push lawn mower" (Appendix B, sentence 2). Like an idiom rock, pager, scissors has an alternative meaning; it is the name of a game

that most North Americans from school age children to adults know how to play. This sentence was read out loud 2-3 times to make sure that the students heard the words clearly.

After the students were done talking about their pictures of rock, paper, scissors and lawn mowers. I asked if there was anyone who did not know what a lawn mower was. There were a few brave souls who admitted they did not know. The purpose of a lawn mower was explained and a description given. Then an explanation of the game *rock, paper, scissors* was given. Asking the other instructor to help demonstrate, the class was shown how to play the game.

Due to time constraints, the rest of the lesson was taught the following class. After the instructions were briefly re-iterated and the class seemed to fully understand what they were to do, sentence #3 was used; "My son wants to buy a motorcycle" (Appendix B). Once the students were done with their drawings and discussions it was told to them why this sentence had been chosen. They were informed that a friend told me that in her home country, a motorcycle is anything on two wheels with a motor. What Americans call a *Moped* (a motorized type of bike that a person sits on, not straddles, which only can reach speeds up to 35 mph) is also called a motorcycle in her home land. Americans think of motorcycles as big 2 wheel vehicles that can go at high speeds of over

60mph. An inquiry to see if there was anyone who perceived motorcycle like my friend was made, but no one said they did.

The next sentence was, "It is going to be 6 below today with a wind-chill of -20" (Appendix B, sentence 4). After the drawing and talking about very cold temperatures among the students, I proceeded to talk or negotiate with them. It was asked if there were any students who were confused about the sentence. Several hands were raised to indicate they were confused. It was explained that 6 below means 6° below 0 Fahrenheit. When talking about the winter weather in the Northern part of the U.S people will mention *wind chill*, which means what the weather feels like outside because the wind is blowing. An inquiry was made to see if the explanation was clear and a student responded that is was both clear and unclear. A further explanation was given about wind chill by pretending it was a hot summer's day of 90° F and having them think how the wind makes them feel, it is cooling on a person.

Because of time constants, I only had time for two more connotations. Number seven was the next sentence chosen: "ESL homework is *a piece of cake*" (Appendix B, sentence 7). Again, after the sentence was read out loud, the students drew pictures of their thoughts on the sentence and wrote their own sentences to go along with their pictures. After the students were finished with their negotiation it was confirmed with the class that a *piece of cake* really means

easy. I explained to the class that the North American English language is full of idioms and, in general, that these are used frequently in speech. It was explained that idioms are a word or phrase that have a different connotation than the actual word or phrased used. Idioms are one of the things that make learning English difficult to master.

The last sentence was, "The boy ran around the room like a chicken with his head cut off" (Appendix B, sentence 8). After the students drew their pictures and talked about them, it was asked if someone would share what they thought this sentence meant. A person mentioned running around crazy like. Indeed, the idiom "running around like a chicken with its head cut off" means a person is running around like crazy or in a frenzy. The idiom was explained that when a farmer planned to eat a chicken, some farmers would cut off its head and watch it run around as a form of entertainment. When the picture/negotiation tasks were completed, the students were congratulated on that they were now on their way to learning idioms and had been introduced to two common ones.

I have one example of a negotiation done between a native speaker and a non-native speaker (See Appendix G). During another data collection (conducted for a previous project), I recorded a five to ten minute conversation about a single word/thought. The word that was being discussed was *affection*. The NNS was from Japan and both negotiators were female. The meaning of the

word was described by the NS, "I think of it as more of a sign of something, an action more than just giving something to someone. Like hugging, kissing, patting, petting, cuddling. Let's see what else, saying sweet things to somebody. Like that could be affection." The function was also discussed by the NS, "an act of something, as a verb" and "You could say *to show affection* or *I will show affection* and it would be a noun." Other things about the word were discussed such as if Japan had an equivalent word. "NS: Do you have this word in your culture? NNS: Umm. Yeah. I think so. But, it's not always positive I think. Cause in my culture holding hand or hugs or kisses are more intimate. Some people don't think it's not the thing to do in public, you know. So, I don't know, I don't think it's always a positive word in my culture."

Discussion of Outcomes

Looking over the students' drawings and negotiations, connotative differences can be found. The connotative differences may have happened for several various reasons, the student misunderstood, L1 transfer, the student didn't understand the sentence and guessed the meaning, and the list could go on. One student's picture (See Appendix C, picture 34.) is a good example of a connotative difference between it and the sentence read (Appendix B, sentence 4). It is not obvious why the difference occurred. In drawing the temperature

and the wind chill, the student depicted someone being blown into outer space. This may have been drawn because the student knew that to have the temperature drop from -6° to -20° wind-chill there had to be strong winds but the connotation is not the same as a Minnesotan would anticipate. The Minnesota connotation might rather be very cold weather with strong winds making it colder. The point is that there is something about the picture that makes a NSthink that the NNS's understanding is not quite right. If an instructor were to see it, they could then ask questions about the student's thoughts and possibly start negotiations.

There are other instances that might lead a NS or instructor to think that there might be some connotative differences. Some students drew cakes for the sentence "ESL homework is a piece of cake" (Appendix B, sentence 7). Although the drawing number 26 in appendix C says, "ESL 202 assignment is very easy," the student drew a cake, indicating that the student might have thought there needed to be a cake somewhere. Another student wrote, "Home work one piece of cake!" (Picture 39) with the picture of the teacher with the homework assignment written on the board. Here, though unclear, it seems like the student misinterpreted the task, thinking they were to use the idiom, rather than the meaning of the idiom in the sentence written to describe the drawing.

Some student pictures may indicate L1 transfer. There are a few pictures of motorcycles that could possibly be a prototype of more like a bicycle or it could be the student is not good at drawing: appendix C picture 7 and 27. Picture number 24 looks a lot like a Moped but, it could also be the way the student draws.

The pictures/drawings help to show a connotative difference, while negotiations help a student explain, decipher and learn the common TL connotation of a word, phrase and/or thought. Appendix E, lines 35 -48, shows a negotiation where a student may have learned a new prototype. Student E states that s/he drew a cake as the original sentence mentions the word cake. Student F informs him/her that saying *a piece of cake* really means easy and goes on to explain that it is slang. The negotiation between student G and H is similar. Student G says that s/he thought it meant a real cake and student H tells him/her that it means easy.

As it turns out at least two students have practiced the idiom *piece of cake* since the lesson. The classroom teacher provided a journal entry and an essay in which the students tried using the idiom *a piece of cake*. One student wrote, "I hope I will become more and more better and in future's on day, I said, 'Speaking English is a piece of cake!'" (Appendix F.2, line 3) The other student wrote, "If a person learn some simple functions of a cell-phone, sending text

messages would be a piece of cake" (Appendix F.1, line 7 & 8). Although, the sentences are not perfect English they use the idiom in the correct manor. This may show that at least some of the students learned American idioms from the lesson.

Implications of future teaching

The lesson that I conducted and the observations were mostly between non-natives doing the negotiations. There were teacher negotiations with the whole class but there was not much student participation during the teacher-lead negotiation. In this study the negotiations worked among the non-native students because there was usually at least one student in the pair who knew the correct connotation.

As a NS is most familiar with his/her language, non-natives speakers would benefit most negotiating with native speakers. In my lesson plan, it is designed for non-natives to negotiate with natives. However, in my previous study, I was not able to observe the non-native student negotiating with the native speaker because they were to meet on their own time.

There are other issues that can be discussed in the negotiations as well. Sometimes a word is so new that the non-native speaker may need a little coaching on how to pronounce the word correctly. It is helpful if the non-native

speaker tries to use the word a few times with the native speaker to get a good feel on how to appropriately use the word or concept. The word could be compared with antonyms or other synonyms: the opposite of *small* is *big* and a synonym of *small* is *tiny*. The various subtleties of the word or various meanings of synonyms could be discussed: both small and tiny refer to size but the word *tiny*'s connotation is littler than the word "small". So, there are many things that can be negotiated about words and their corresponding ideas.

It is obvious that if all the non-natives were of the same culture that it would be a lot easier to teach the differences between the cultural prototypes but as most ESL classes in America are made up of diverse cultures, it is a guessing game to understand the variances and nuances of the learners' L1s and L1 transfer. Pictures are one way to bring out the variances in prototype between the languages. Even though having the students drawing pictures might seem juvenile or of little importance, it is a vital part of the process. The student who drew the picture has a reference to go by when describing their understanding of the utterance. The teacher and/or native negotiator can look at the picture, notice variation, and ask questions about the picture, such as when the students drew a picture of a bicycle instead of a motorcycle. The student may think they understand what was said but when they try to draw it realizes that they really do not understand. For example, the idiom *a piece of cake* in which the words

were literally understandable to the students was shown, after drawing the picture, to have not been correctly understood. It also occurs that the student truly does not understand the idiom, but after attempting to draw the picture, they may suddenly understand the concept, such as the example of when the students tried to draw a child "running around like a chicken with its head cut off." They were not sure if they were correct but the concept seemed sound.

One thing about the sentences that I chose for the lesson I conducted was that some of them were not at an appropriate level for the class. When I created the sentences my co-teacher for the ESL class helped me brainstorm. When I was done I even asked a different ESL teacher to look them over. If it was mentioned that a sentence was too difficult then I thought of a new one that was more appropriate. As it turned out not all the sentences seem to be at an appropriate level. So, it is encouraged that the sentences that are created by the teacher be of an appropriate level for the students keeping in mind that not all the sentences maybe as productive of a teaching tool as expected. Even so the students can still learn from these activities.

The ideal situation for this lesson would be to have the non-native speakers be paired up with a native speaker. Having this kind of situation in a classroom is rare but if it can be done it is highly recommended. An alternative for the classroom is to have the ESL student paired up with a native speaker who

they meet on their own time or in a study hall and are assigned to discuss certain words or phrases. They or the non-native can then journal what was said and learned about these words.

Conclusion

Learning is a never ending process; even NSs can learn more about their language. This lesson on drawing pictures of an utterance is something that can be done any place, not only in class. The student can keep a picture journal and discuss the contents with a NS. Hopefully, eventually, the NNS will become proficient with mentally drawing pictures and talking about them that an actual visual may not be needed. The NNS might be able to talk about his/her thoughts clearly enough to portray the mental picture to a NS and start negotiations that way.

Once the NNS is used to negotiations and has a good idea on what to expect, s/he can guide most NSs through negotiations in order to obtain the information needed. Not every NS will have the skills or know how to negotiate a lexical item. The NS may not know what he NNS speaker is looking for if a general question is asked like, "What does that mean?" With the knowledge of what specific questions to ask, the NNS can obtain the information needed in order to acquire a full knowledge of the lexical item.

Chapter 4: Conclusion

For most people, some of the first errors that are corrected tend to be grammar, spelling, and structure; however, learners continue to also produce errors of a more semantic or pragmatic nature. I hope that after reading through this paper that a sense of the importance of connotations, icons, and prototypes when learning a second language has been created, as errors of these kinds can lead to embarrassing faux pas.

The goal of writing this paper is to give instructors a tool to bring out the L1 transfer of cultural prototypes in the class room in order to help the non-native speaker avoid these embarrassing situations. Throughout this paper there have been numerous examples of cultural prototypes illustrating how diverse the cultures around the world are. To add one more to the list, a fellow MA student from Ethiopia, told me of a common error of cultural prototype between his country and native English speakers. He said that the word *good* (which looks like and is pronounced as the English *good*) means *surprised* in the negative sense. So, when a native English speaker goes into his country and hears, "He killed his wife? Good!" the listener thinks that the speaker is talking about a man who had an awful wife and is now better off without her, which is a cultural

prototypical error of L1 transfer. The person is actually talking about how shocking it is to hear that the man actually killed his wife.

As it turns out, even though the lesson plan came from an interpreting exercise, it proved to be an appropriate tool for teaching cultural prototypes to language learners. I am unsure as to how much crossover or borrowing from other professions is common in teaching professions, but because interpreting is working with and between at least two languages, it involves a similar cognitive process to that of learning a second language. Therefore, it makes sense that an interpreting exercise could be helpful for the learning process of a second language.

While this style of teaching may not fit everyone's preference of learning, there really is not much available in terms of teaching cultural connotations. There are several ways to teach culture and experiencing it is one of the best ways. However, since cultural connotations and prototypes are not seen but rather perceived, they are not as easy to navigate as grammar or spelling.

It is my hope that this paper will encourage instructors to utilize the discussed teaching method with the goal of helping ESL students encounter fewer embarrassing situations and understand one more potential area of analysis for misunderstanding. After all, most people in the world do not like to

be in embarrassing situations, even though the language learning experience is rife with the possibility.

While administering the project I discovered that ESL students benefited at times from negotiating with non-native speakers. Most likely a non-native speaker will benefit more from negotiating with a native speaker but when there is not one available, it seems that a non-native speaker will be of some benefit too.

There are a few things that I would do differently with the project. I wish that I could have audio recorded all of the students talking about their pictures to each other in order to have a better case and proof of how constructive negotiations can be. It would have been nice if the ESL students could have been paired with native speaking students so that the ESL students would have experienced a more beneficial negotiation and there would have been more support for my theory. More opportunities to teach the lesson to different classes would give more proof to support this technique better.

In conclusion, here is another way to teach vocabulary that would add the cultural connotative meaning to the learning. Drawing pictures, describing them

and then negotiating is one way to teach cultural prototypes. The problem of first language (L1) transfer of cultural prototypes to specific L2 lexical items would be decreased if taught in the classroom instead of using trial and error outside the classroom.

Appendix A

Lesson Plan

Grade level- age 5 though adults

English proficiency level - upper beginner through advanced (the class should be all close to the same level)

Language of instruction- English

Focus of instruction- to promote iconic/prototypical thinking of non-native English speakers and to detect culture prototypical errors so they can be corrected in a learning environment, using negotiation.

Negotiation is when a native and non-native discuss part of a language: a word, idiom, synonyms, subtleties in meaning between various words, etc. Students (ESL) will be taught to negotiate. They will be paired up with a native speaker. The two of them will talk about a word or thought or idiom or synonyms, etc. First, correct pronunciation will be touched on. Then the meaning of the word will be hashed out with the native giving his/her best description, in which, the non-native will be able to ask questions and also will give his/her thoughts on the meaning. They will talk about when the word is used and not used, with demonstrations from the native speaker. The non-native will try and use the word in a sentence to get a feel for its use with the native there to guide them through. In the end the non-native should have an

understanding of the word. This process generally, on an average, takes about 15 minutes.

Location- any place that ESL is being taught

Setting- ESL/EFL instructional place

Time frame- 10- 20 minutes

Materials for lesson- pen or pencil, paper, prepared sentences or paragraphs

Vocabulary for the week- pick a general category and create sentences/full thoughts that will guide the student to think/picture (icons/prototypes) specifics of that category

Objectives: in this lesson, students will be able to express in picture form, the meaning of a sentence that is read to them. The goal is for students to express the meaning of the sentence in their own words, culturally equivalent to American spoken English.

Procedures/ Activities:

Pre-activity: explain to students that there are cultural differences in words, give examples of words, sentences. Explain to students the objective/goal of the lesson and what the activity will involve.

Lesson activity:

*Teacher will give a prompt that is a complete thought…ex. "This past weekend, my family had a "grand old time" at the family reunion."

*Students will think about the statement, and draw pictures representing the complete thought.

*Students will work in pairs, explaining their pictures, discussing any differences in interpretation. At this point the students will also be encouraged to use their dictionaries to look up the meaning of any words that they did not interpret similarly.

*Students will write the thought in their own words and read their sentence to the teacher. Teacher will make any necessary corrections through negotiation.

Follow up:

*Using the words that are incongruent, student will negotiate with a native speaker (outside of class).

Assessment/Evaluation:

*In a journal, students will write about their negotiations. They will write the word, their meaning of the word, and two sentences using the word in context.

Appendix B

Actual lesson taught

Prototypes
Thoughts for drawing pictures

Samples

1. Every Saturday Dad drives his truck to his fish house and ice-fishes all day.

2. The river guide instructed us to ferry our kayak across the river and then eddy-out downstream.

Class

1. You go into a fast food restaurant and place an order. The clerk then asks you, "To go?"

2. The 2 boys were playing rock, paper, scissors to decide who was going to use the riding lawn mower and who was going to use the push lawn mower.

3. My son wants to buy a motorcycle.

4. It is going to be 6 below today with a wind-chill of -20.

5. Did the bride wear white?

6. I just love homemade ice-cream. It's fun turning the crank of the churn.

7. ESL homework is a "piece of cake."

8. The boy ran around the room like a chicken with his head cut off.

Appendix C

Student's Pictures

#7

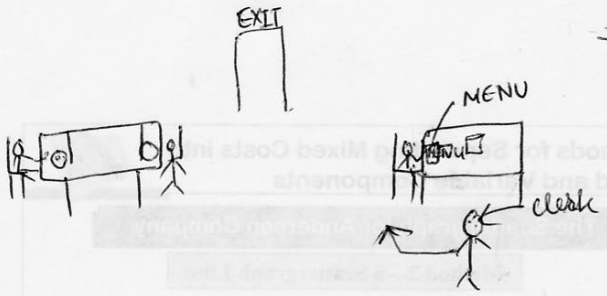
I come to the fastfood restaurant and cashier ask me ~~if yes want to have~~ where I am going to eat my food?

#2

I will start the game

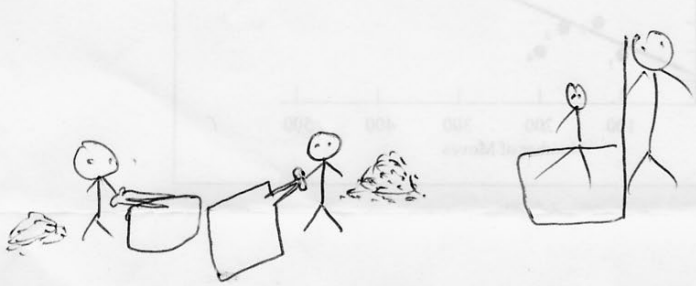
Two people are trying to decide who will start the game.

#3

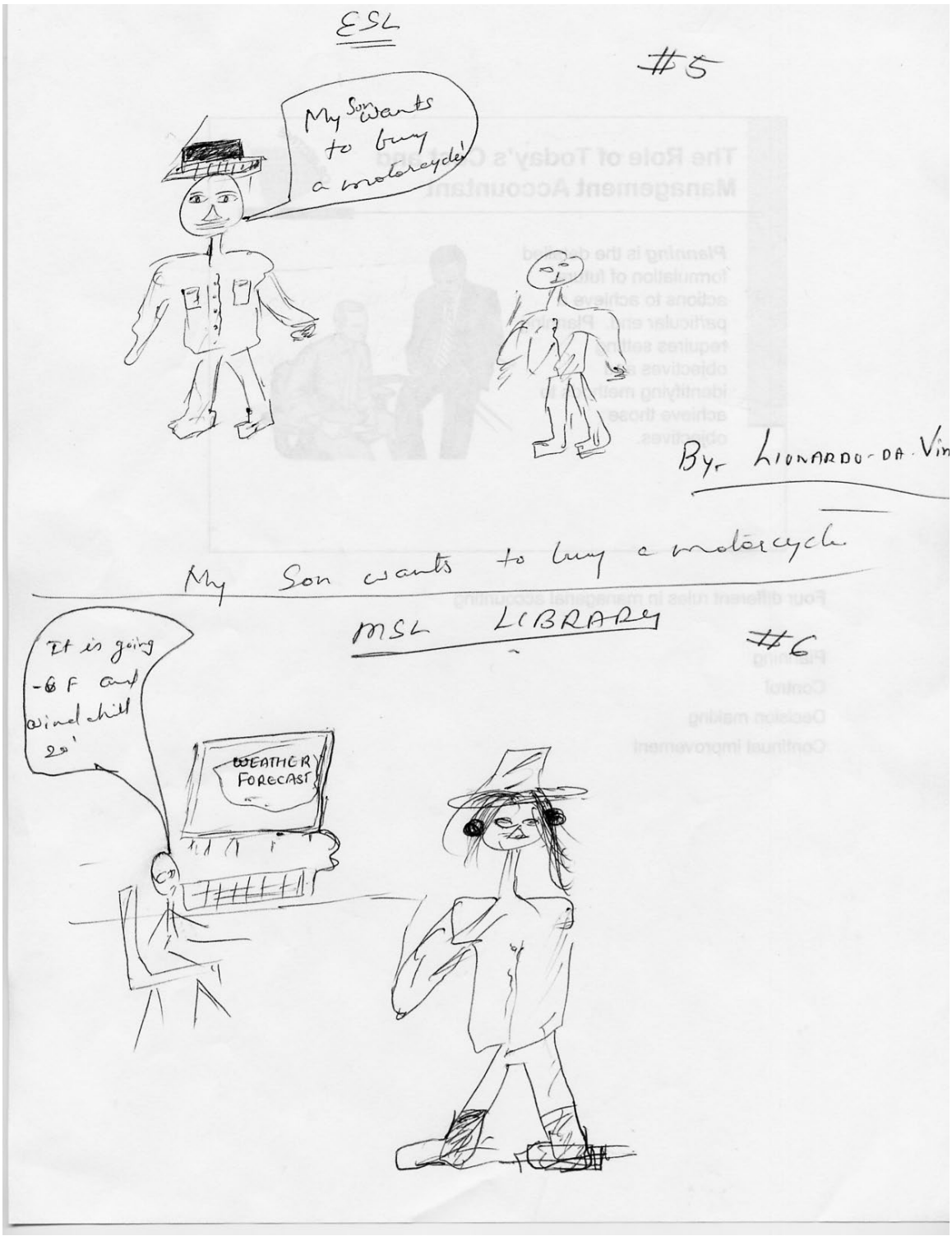


I went to restaurant and place the order but the clerk told to exit. "to go" → ~~file~~ to eat outside or in restaurant.

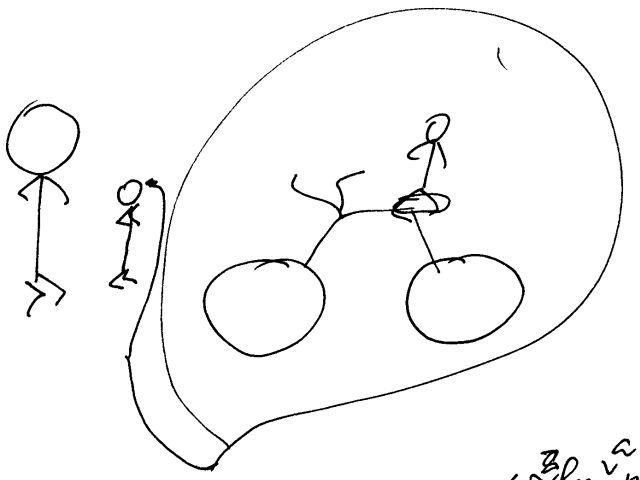
#4



The boys were deciding that who will ride and push the lawn. ~~by playing to~~ betting.


ESL
#5
My Son wants to buy a motorcycle!
By. Lionardo-da-Vin
My Son wants to buy a motorcycle.
MSL LIBRARY
#6
It is going -6 F and wind chill 2°
WEATHER FORECAST

#7

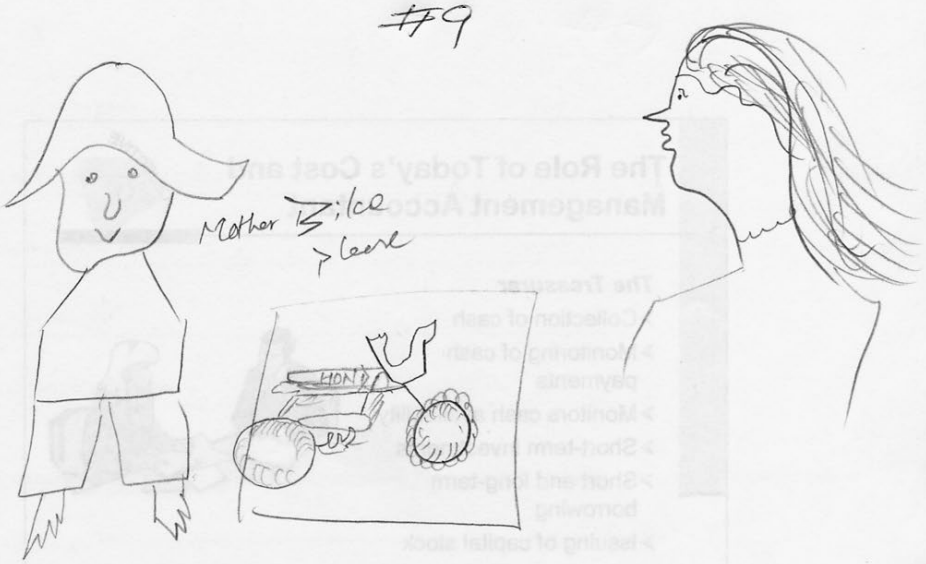


The son asked his mom to buy a motorcycle he dreams about.

#8

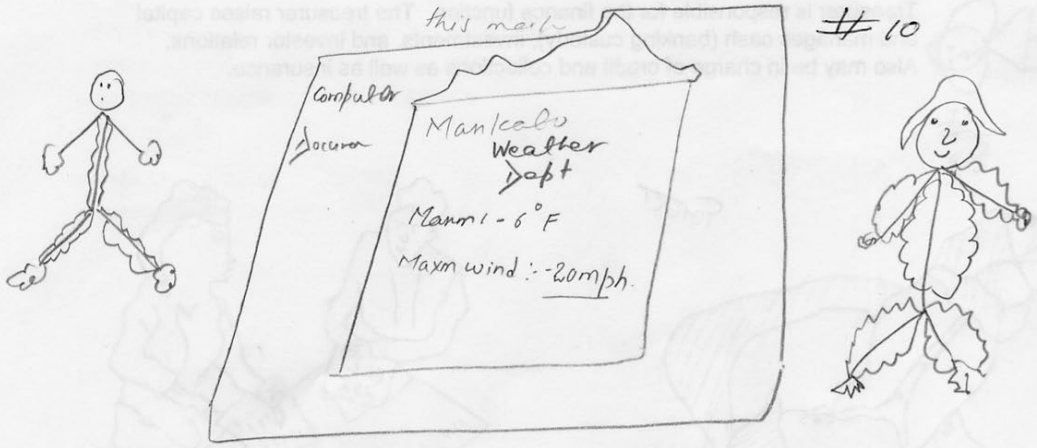
The temperature today is -6 but with the wind it will feels like -20

#9

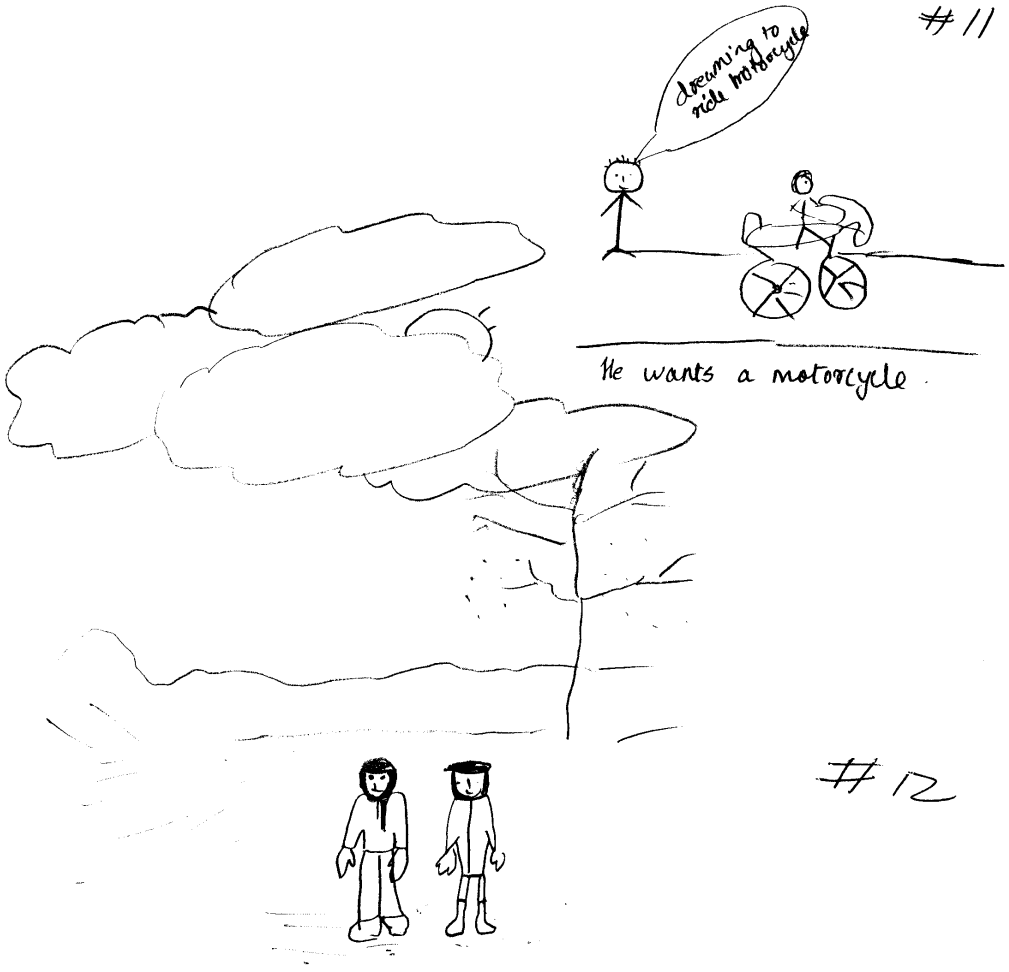


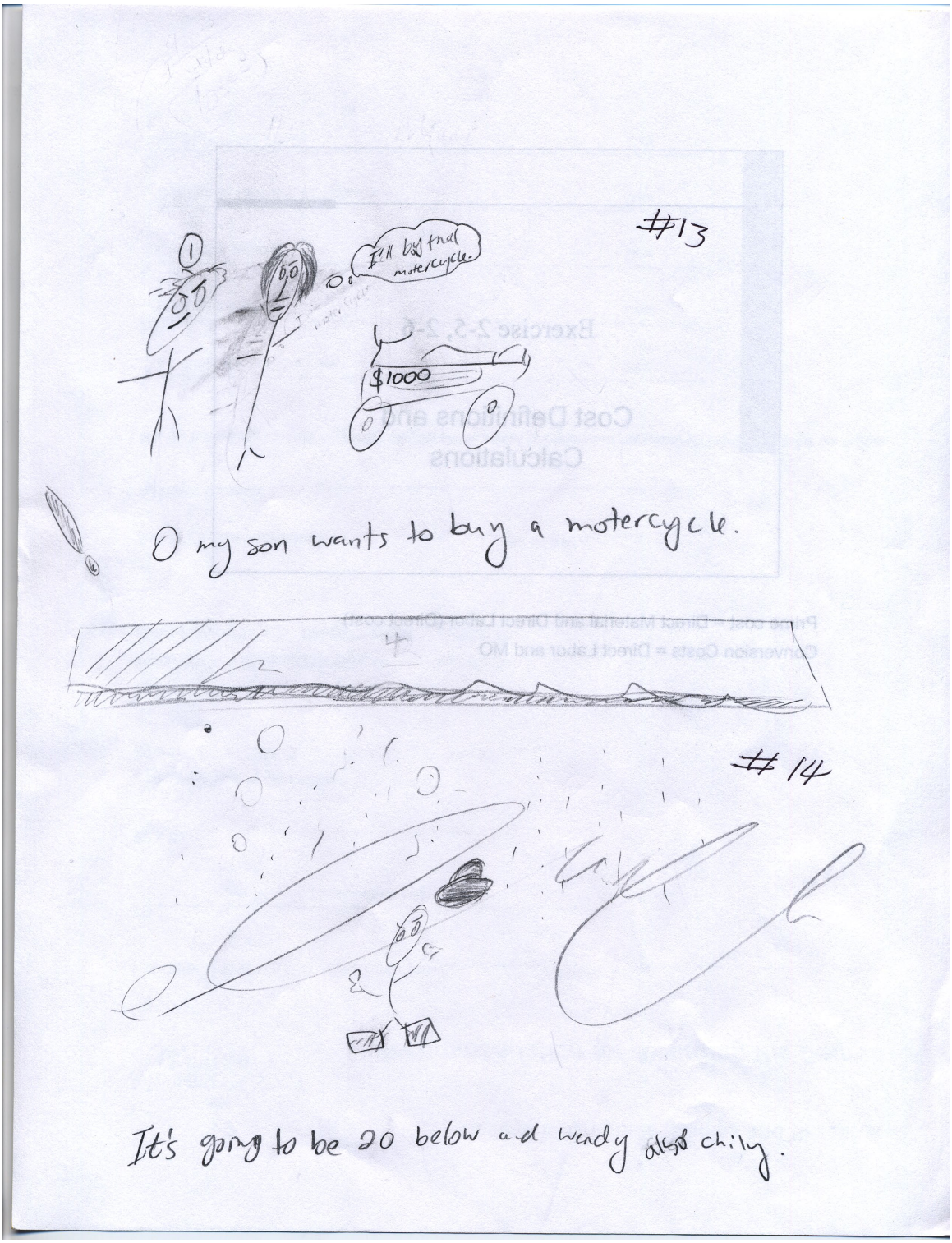
Mother, I wonder if you will buy me a bike from this mall.

#10

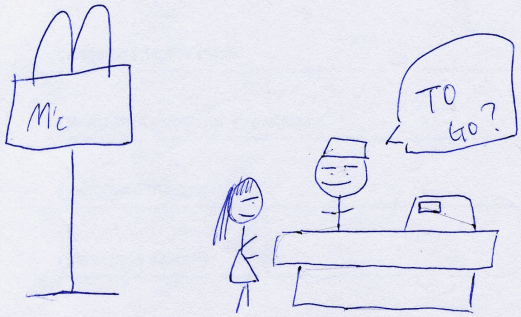


The mann temperate tends to reach -20°F if the wind starts blowing at its mann height.


#11
dreaming to ride motorcycle
He wants a motorcycle.
#12
The day is very good.


#13
I'll buy that motercycle.
$1000
O my son wants to buy a motercycle.
#14
It's going to be 20 below and windy also chilly.

#15

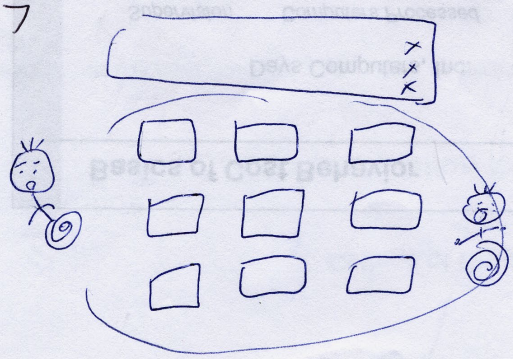


I went to a fast-food restaurant and the clerk asked me to go?

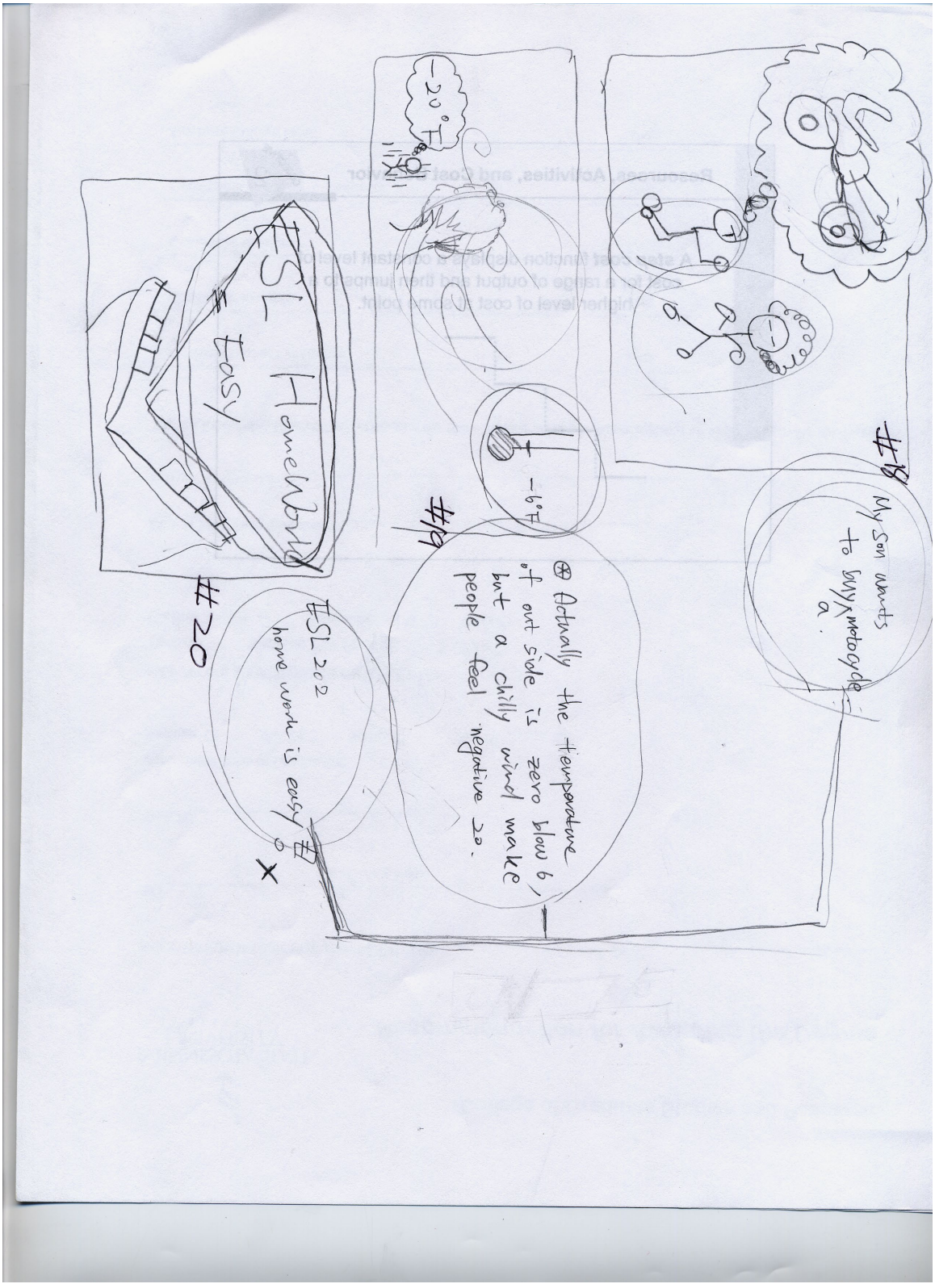
#16

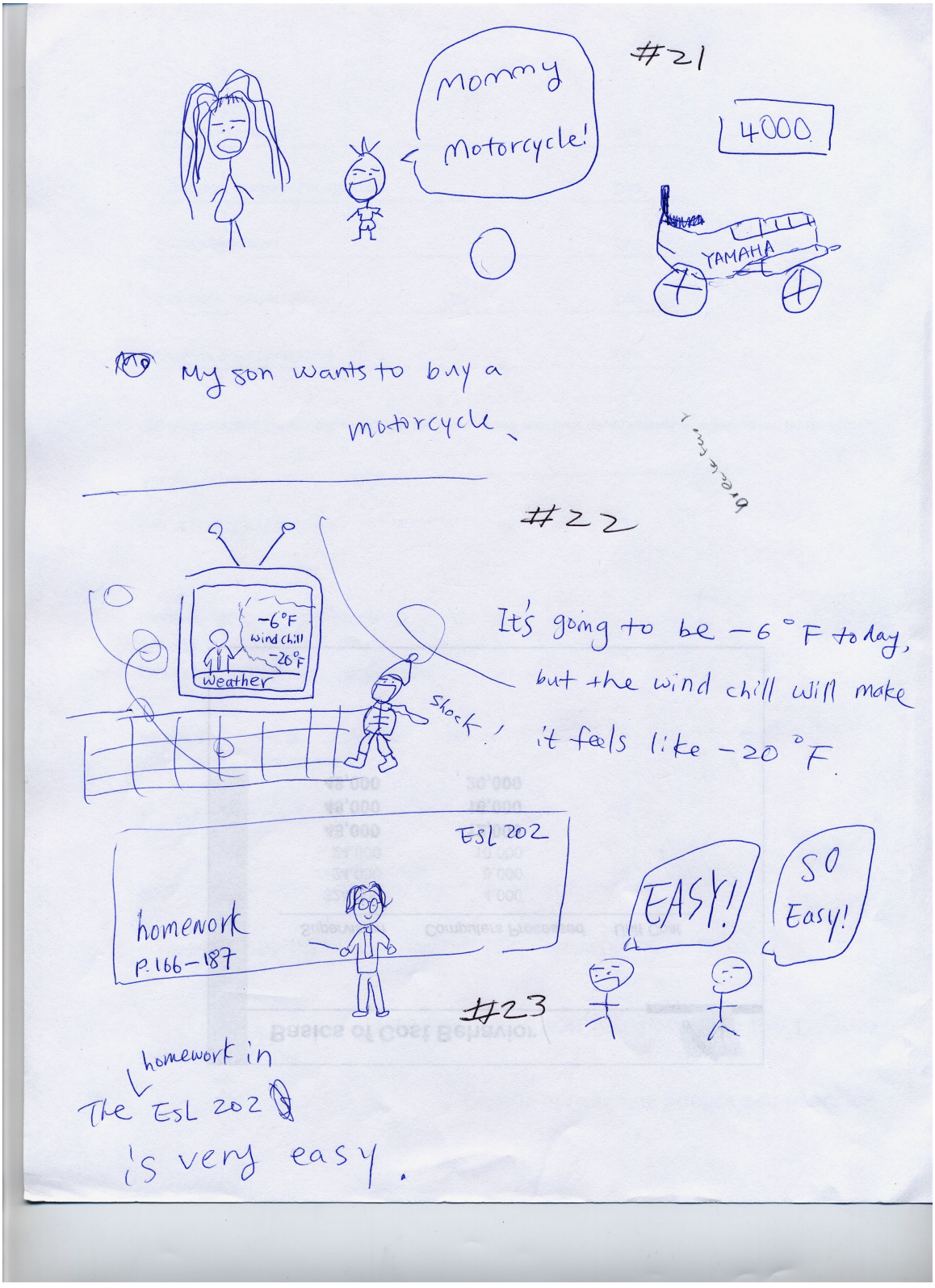
Two boys are playing rock, paper, scissors to decide who is gonna to use the ~~lawn~~ lawnmower

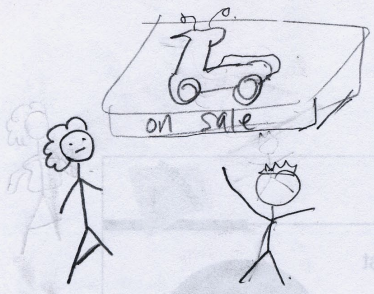
#17



The boy is running crazy in the classroom.


#18
My son wants to buy a motorcycle.
#19
-6°F
-20°F
Actually the temperature of out side is zero blow 6, but a chilly wind make people feel negative 20.
#20
ESL Homework
Easy
ESL 202
home work is easy ☺


#21
Mommy Motorcycle!
4000
YAMAHA
My son wants to buy a motorcycle.
#22
-6°F
wind chill
-20°F
weather
Shock!
It's going to be -6°F today, but the wind chill will make it feels like -20°F.
ESL 202
homework
P.166-187
#23
EASY!
SO Easy!
homework in
The ESL 202
is very easy.



#24

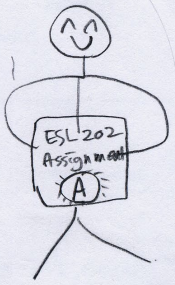
My son want me to buy a motorcycle for him.

It's going to be 6 below today with a 60. wind-chill.

#25

~~6 below~~

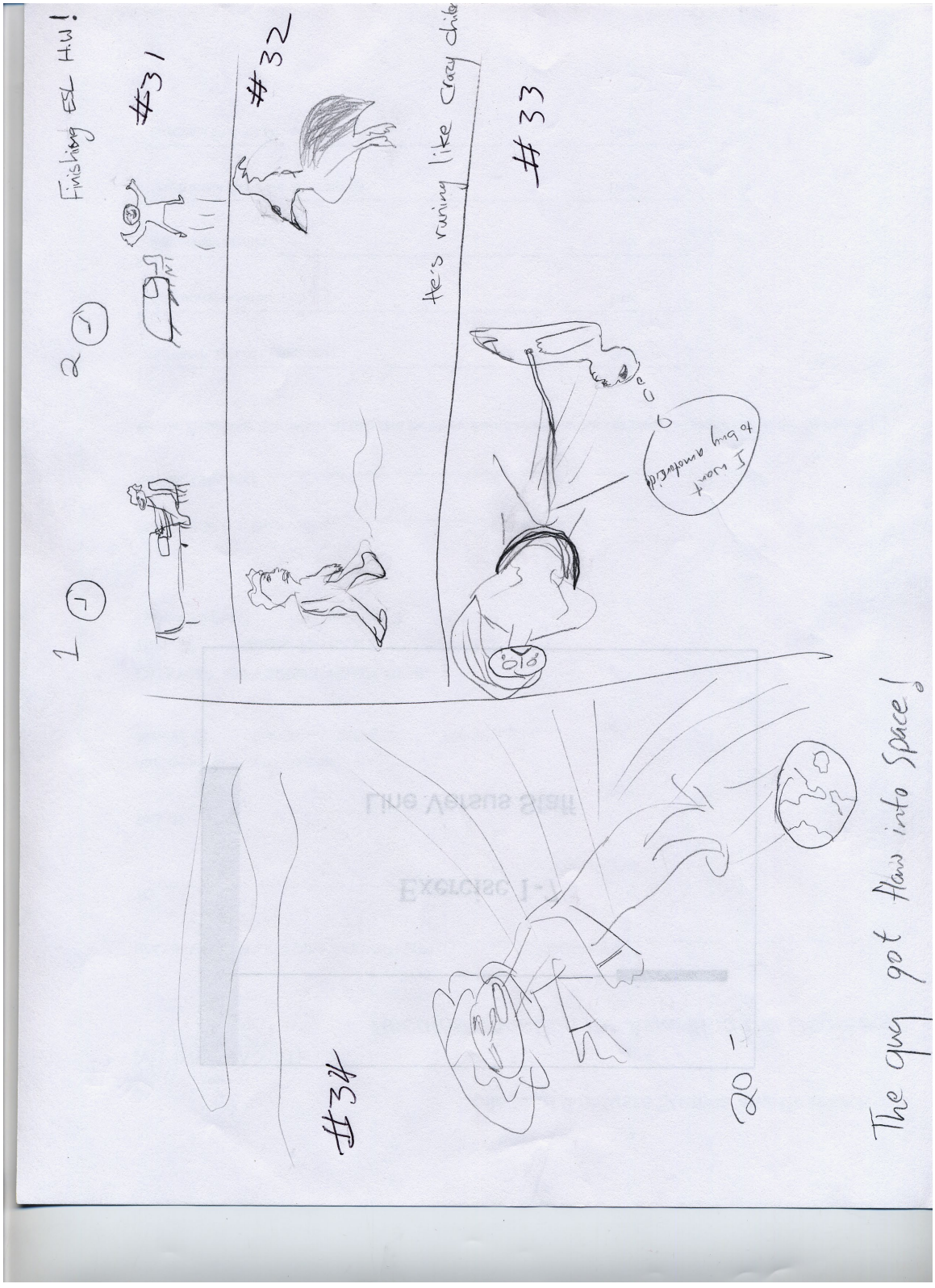
Today's weather is 6 below with a 60 wind-chill.



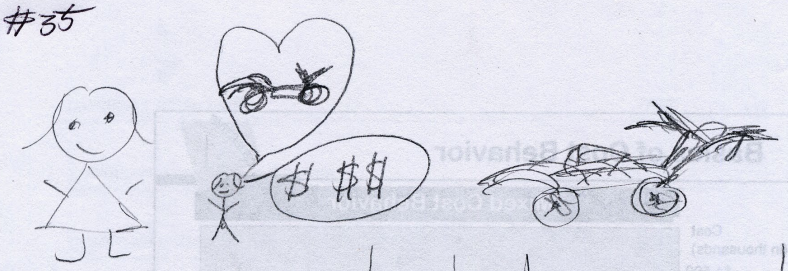
ESL 202 assignment is very easy.

#26


#27
can you buy motorcycle?
snow
Because Today is very cold #28
we should wear warm cloths
ESL Homework is very easy
after I will finish during 10 min
I will go
Just 10 min.
I need to just can be for done my homework
#29
my sun is constantly jumping
I like jump
Mom
Stop do it!!!
#30
Jan 22

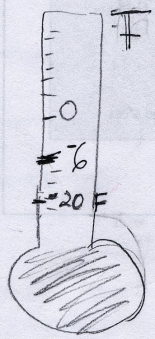

Finishing ESL H.W!
#31
#32
#33
#34
I have to buy sunscreen
The guy got flown into Space!

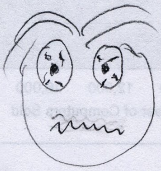
1 #35



My son wants to buy a motorcycle.

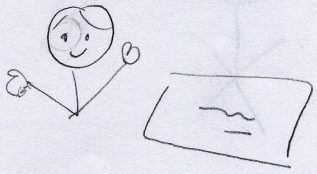
2 #36



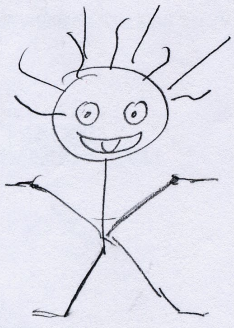


I am gointo to stay at home drinking some coffe

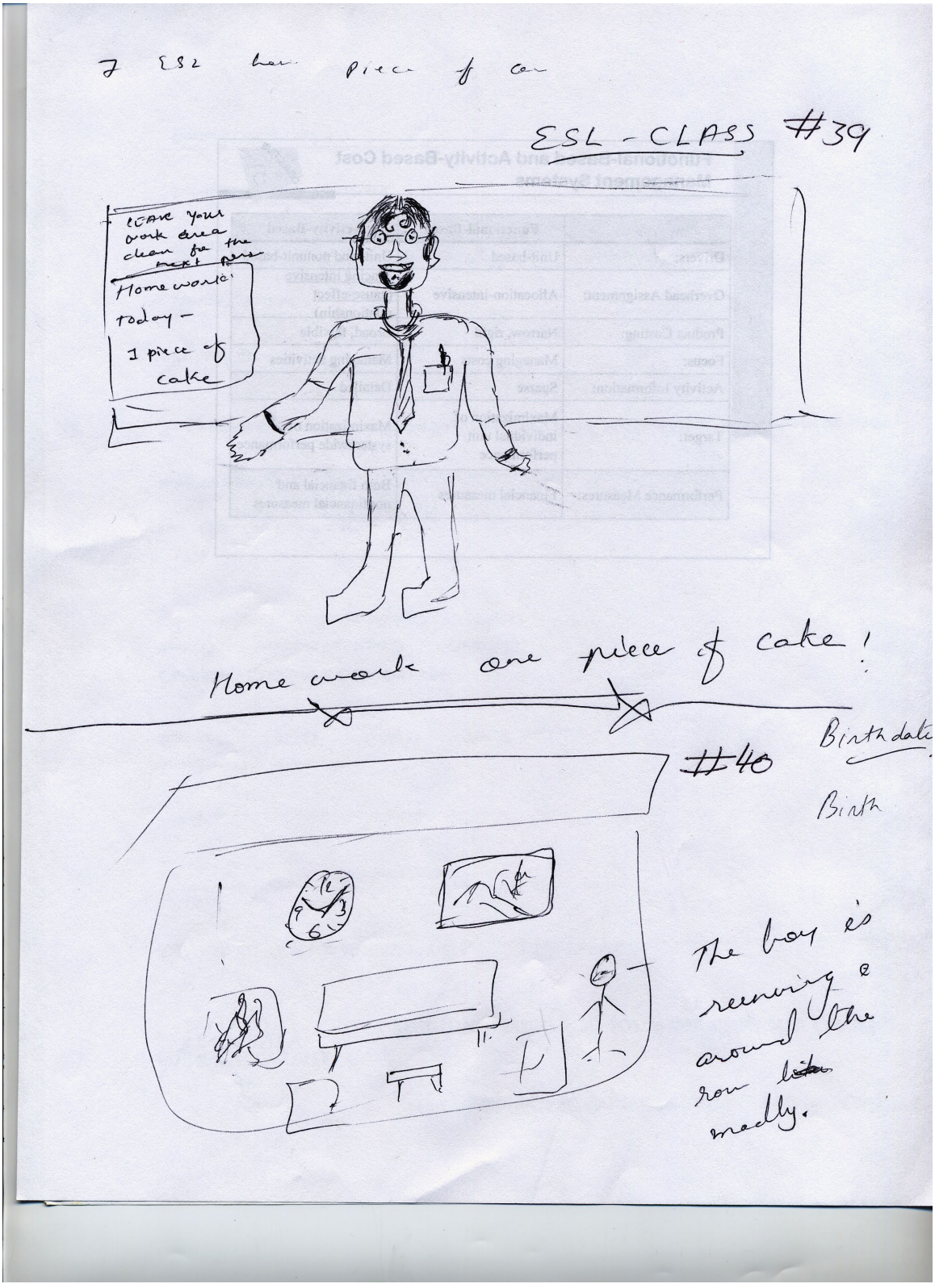
3 #37



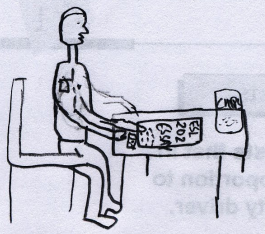
4 #38



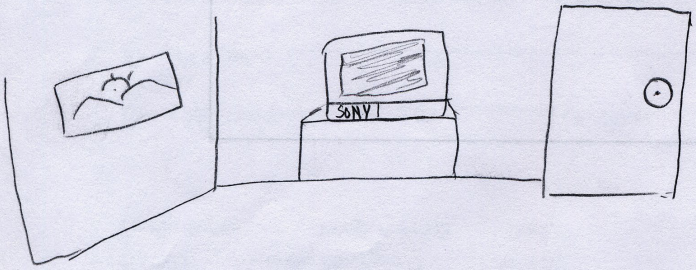
"easy"
chicken headcut off


7 ESL has piece of cake
ESL - CLASS #39
LEAVE your work area clean for the next class
Home work:
today -
1 piece of cake
Home work one piece of cake!
#40
Birth date
Birth
The boy is running around the room madly.

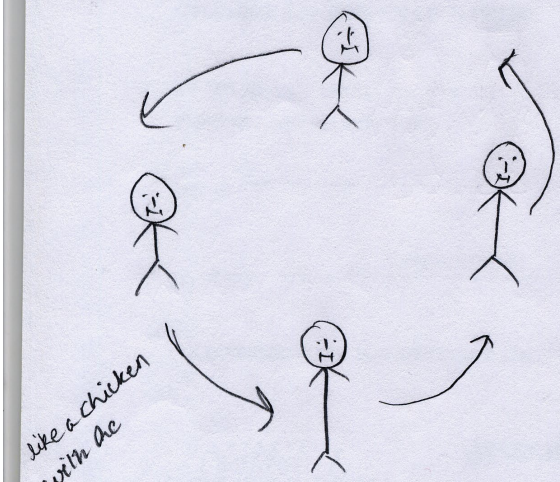
#41



ESL 202 Homework are easier to do.



#42

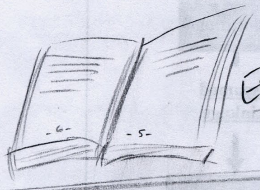


like a chicken with Ae

The boy was going round and round

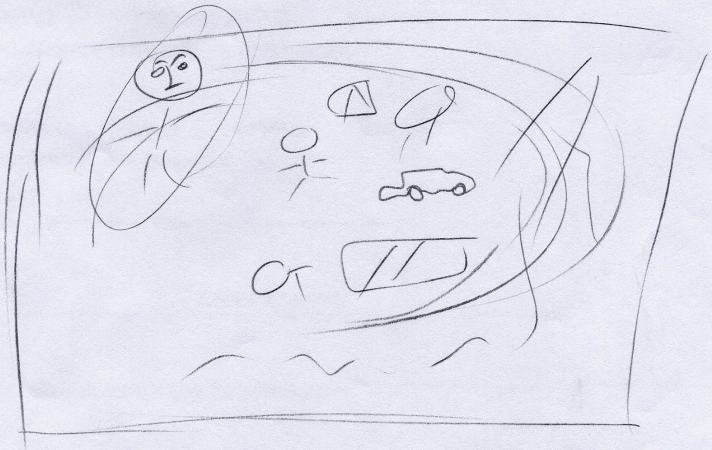
#43

ESL 202 home work is a picace of kack



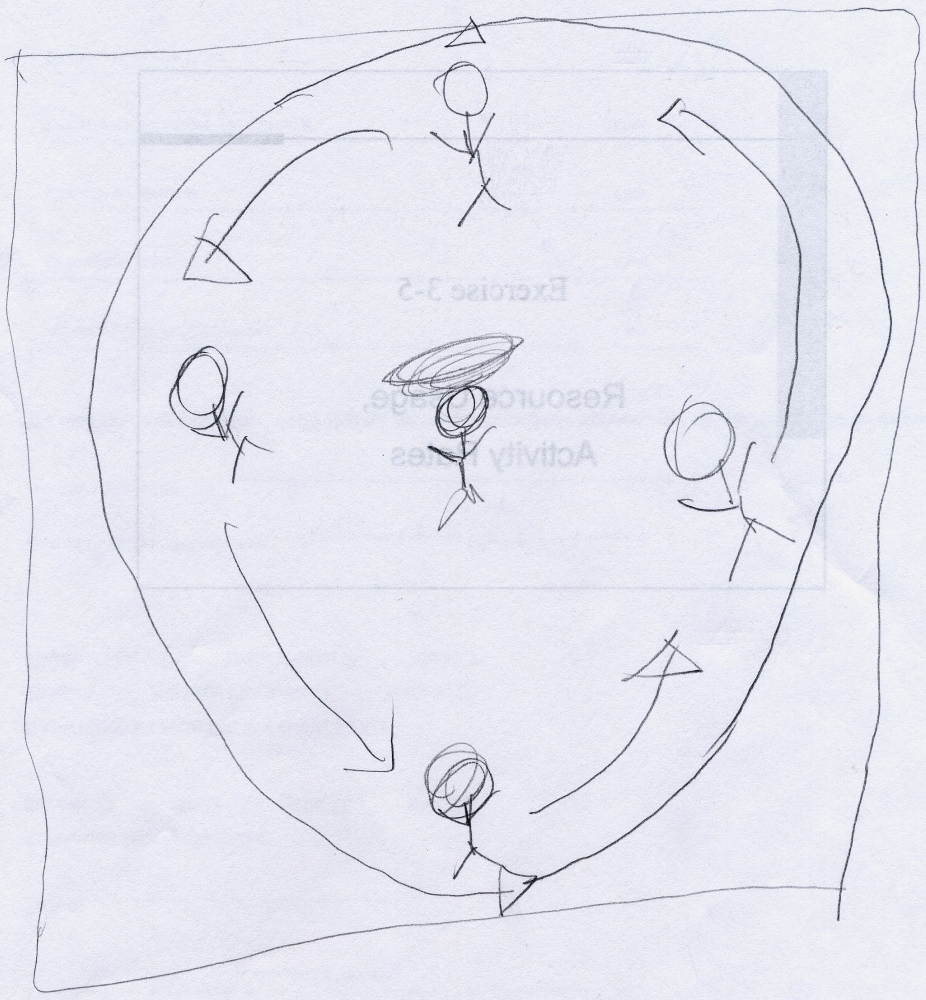
Not much of home work

#44



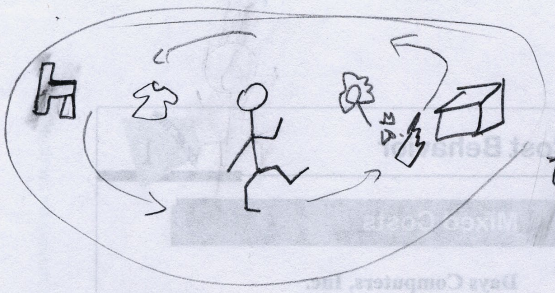
the boy running the room like chicken

#45



A boy is running around quickly.

#46



The Son was running messing the room.

Appendix D

Teaching lesson in an ESL class.

Tina: These instructions are basically reminders. We didn't get a change to.finish up the activity and I kind of like to finish it. I noticed that the first 2 sentences I gave you sort of tough. And this activity wasn't meant to make you feel dumb and feel like you don't' know English. It was to make you realize the cultural differences in words. So, the first 2 sentences obviously weren't the best for you to try. I have other ones for you to try that maybe are a little easier, simpler, something to get you thinking. So, I kind of would like to finish the lesson. So, incase you have a short memory which I sometimes do. What we're doing is, I'm going to give you a sentence… You remember the sentence that I practiced on what the sentence about a river guide. You remember the sentence I gave that confused Alan. He didn't know some of these things were, "The river guide instructed us to ferry our kayak across the river and hen eddy-out downstream." Remember the pictures, he drew something about a fairy, and drew someone going across the river. So, what's going on, is I'm going to give you a sentence. And I'll read it to you 2 or 3 times to make sure you hear what I'm really saying. Then I'm going to take away the sentence. And I want you to picture in you mind what you are thinking. You are not thinking in words, you're thinking pictures. You're not thinking language, you're thinking pictures. When I say

window you have your own idea of what a window should look like. So, after you get your picture done… Your going to be paired ups with somebody. And you discuss your own pictures. You explain them to each other. And then after you are done drawing your picture, before you explain them, you need to write in your own words a sentence about pictures that you did. Then I'll just ask for a few volunteer to share what they wrote for their sentences.

Any questions? No?

I'm going to give you scrap paper so you don't have to use your own paper. If you need more scrap paper, I'll be happy to give you more.

I should probably pair you up before we get going.

Alright, I think we are ready for the first sentence. "My son wants to buy a motorcycle." "My son wants to buy a motorcycle."

Once you are done with your drawings go ahead and explain your drawings with your partner. Don't forget to the sentence underneath your drawing.

Ok, 2 volunteer to read their sentences? Any volunteers to read their sentence? I may start picking on people.

Student A: My son wants to buy a motorcycle.

Tina: Very good, almost verbatim. Anybody else? Yes go ahead.

Student B: My son is trying to encourage his father to help him buy a motorcycle.

Tina: Oh! He's trying to encourage his father to help him buy a motorcycle. That was good too.

The reason why I put the word motorcycle in this is be I have a friend who tell me that were she came from anything, on 2 wheels, with a motor is called a motorcycle. Which I thought was very interesting because here in America a motorcycle is not just anything on 2 wheels, with a motor; it is a big thing on 2 wheels with a 2 cylinder motor (sometimes bigger). It makes a lot of noise. And it goes very fast. In her country she said if it goes a maximum of 30 mph it is still called a motorcycle. Here it is called a moped. There it's still called a motorcycle. So, I thought it was interesting. Did anybody put down something like a moped on theirs? You pretty much thought of these big motorcycles?

Alright the next one is, "It's going to be 6 below today with a wind chill of -20." "It's going to be 6 below today with a wind chill of -20."

After you're done drawing your picture, make sure you have a sentence that describes your picture.

Ok, any volunteers to tell me your sentences or describe your picture? Yes, go ahead.

Student C: (talked too softly to hear on the recording. The person described his picture)

Tina: Very good. So how many people understand what wind chill means? Does anybody not understand? It's ok to not understand "wind chill". You understand but not really. Ok. If you were standing outside, let's say it's a nice summer day, and it's very warm, it's almost 90*, it's very very warm. Then a wind comes by and cools you down, right? Wind feels very nice on a hot day because it cools you down, right? Do we all agree on this? Well, it does the same in the winter time. If it's 6* out side, and wind comes along, it cools you down even more. So, if it's really really windy our and it maybe -6* out but it'll feel like -20 if it's wind. So, wind make you feel colder. Yes, it will feel like it is cooler. It maybe still -6* but with the wind coming in it will feel like -20*. Kind of understand this one? Yeah? You kind of don't think of wind cooling you down during the winter.

Ok, another one, I'll give 2 more. The sentence is, "ESL 202 homework is a "piece of cake." Do not write this down verbatim. "ESL 202 homework is "a piece of cake."

Ok! Who can tell me what the idiom "piece of cake" means? Does anybody know what the idiom "piece of cake" means?

Student D: "piece of cake" mean very easy.

Tina: Very easy! The American language is full of idioms. I'm sorry for any one who has to learn them when they learn English because a lot of time they don't make sense. "Piece of cake" comes from, everybody loves cake, eating a piece of cake is very easy. If Alan said here's your assignment, eat a piece of cake. You'd say, "Oh good! I love this assignment!" It would be easy 100 or easy "A". So, it's a piece of cake. There are a lot of other American idioms, I'm sorry but, we discovered in a class that Americans can not go through a day without saying idioms. An idiom is where you say a word or a phrase that means something else than what the actual word means. It may seem like it has this dorky meaning. Sometimes Americans know where the idiom came from, sometimes they don't. So, I thought I'd let you guys experience some idioms.

Last sentence. "The boy ran around the room like a chicken with its head cut off." My sons do this daily. "The boy ran around the room like a chicken with its head cut off."

This is another idiom. Does anyone know what the idiom "running around like a chicken with its head cut off" means? Do you want to tell me what it means? Go ahead and try.

Student E: running around

Tina: Running around. Yeah. Running how?

Student E: I think it crazy like.

Tina: Crazy! How many people here have actually seen a chicken with its head cut off? How many? (asking them to raise their hands) A few. My relatives own a farm and for entertainment, when they plan to eat a chicken, is to cut off the chickens head and watch the chicken run around. I know it's gruesome but, it's also funny. "Running around like a chicken with its head cut off" is an idiom Americans use, basically they are running around like crazy. They are running around here, there, everywhere. Sometimes there is no reason, sometimes there is but they are still running around here, there, and everywhere. You just can't believe they are going so fast here, there, and everywhere. So, that's where it comes from. My best friend, who had been in America for at least 5 years, asked me where the idiom came from. I told her. She told me their chickens don't run around when they kill them. In her country, they hold the chicken down so they bleed out. The thought of chickens running around with their heads cut off, she thought, "That's ridiculous! "

So, now you have learned 2 American idioms. And you are will on your way to learning more.

Any questions about this activity? Any questions about the different words you learned to day?

Appendix E

Students Negotiations

1. My son wants to buy a motorcycle.

Student A: First of all my sentence is, "My son wants to buy a motorcycle."

Student B: Yeah.

Student A: In case of Korea, many son's want to buy many gorgeous motorcycles. As of kind of their pride to get a really gorgeous motorcycle. And usually they beg to their mother or their parents. So, I just express like he wants something, like really gorgeous motorcycle. AS you know it's really dangerous and although it is expensive so he is just begging to his mother. How about you?

Student B: The sentence is, "His son wants a motorcycle." So, I thought that once while he was traveling he saw a person who was riding on a motorcycle. So he also wants to do the same thing because it looks quite nice while riding the motorcycle down the road like that. So, one time he saw that riding someone in the motorcycle, he's longing to have that motorcycle so he can enjoy that. So, I drew that he is dreaming that one day he will also be like that. And after that because he is longing something that he will request to the parents like that.

2. It is going to be 6 below today with a wind chill of -20.

Student C: So, I drew a picture of a lady who is dress up in a long fur coat. And a guy who is dressed up in regular clothes in jeans and jacket. And she is trying to say that you need to be dressed up warmer because the temperature is minus six below Fahrenheit but the wind chill feels like minus 20 so you better dress up like I do.

Student D: Oh, ummm, chill this is the desk of computer and climate condition with the Mankato weather department, and the minimum is minus 60 Fahrenheit and the maximum is minus 20 degree Fahrenheit, and actually he was wearing less clothes even thought it was minus 60 Fahrenheit and while the wind starts blowing he starts wearing lots of woolen clothings, and the sentence is like, "The maximum temperature tends to reach like minus 20 degree Fahrenheit even when the wind starts blowing at its maximum height."

3. ESL 202 homework is a piece of cake.

Student E: I draw ESL teacher with cake.

Student F: Yeah looks like cutten cake. Cake look delicious

Student E: He cut out piece of cake.

Student F: I think so they call "piece of cake" looks easy.

Student E: Easy?

Student F: yes. Easy. It slang it means easy.

Student E: I missed that.

Student G: I miss understand, I make a cake to cut down and make a piece of cake. So, homework is a piece of cake.

Student H: I just mean that homework is very easy.

Student G: Thought he means just good cake for all the students.

4. The boy ran around the room like a chicken with his head cut off.

Student I: my's a classroom were the boy keeps running. I don't know what that means. I think it's the boys running crazy in the classroom. It said chicken, so there's the chicken with its head off.

Student J: Mine a son/boy playing in his room

Appendix F

ESL student's essay

<Sending text messages>

Sending test messages is easy and convenient. If a person learn some simple functions of a cell-phone, sending text messages would be a piece of cake. Also, when a person is in a quiet place so they cannot call, sending text messages is useful and text messages remain in the cell-phone it is good to remember. This is why I am going to explain about how to send text messages for the people who are not accustomed to using a cell-phone. The steps are clicking several buttons on the cell-phone keypad and finishing sending text messages by putting cell-phone number of the receiver.

Firstly, it is necessary to learn how to find the text message part in cell-phone functions. At first, open the cell-phone by pushing up upper part of the cell-phone (just in case of slide cell-phone). Then find the menu button on the cell-phone (usually that button is located the left topside). The next step is to find out which section is for sending text messages by using direction keys. When you access the text messages section, you can see several lists of options, like received messages and sent messages. Among them find the sending test messages part and click the OK button.

It can be difficult for people who are not familiar with sending text messages to make sentences with the cell-phone key pad. However making messages is easy because the principle of key pad is simple. You can see several letters on one small key pad. If you want to put the R letter on the screen among PQRS, just click that key pad three times. In case you want use special characters or numbers push the right button. After you finish making messages, press OK button and it is done.

The last process is inputting a receiver's cell-phone number. There are two ways to make the cell-phone number. First one is just clicking the buttons of one person's numbers that you memorize. Second one is finding the cell-phone number which is stored in the cell-phone. After clicking menu button, you can choose ways to find the numbers out, such as by names and groups. It is also possible to add several cell-phone numbers.

As you can read these directions, sending text messages is not a big deal. Since it became more essential to know how to use cell-phone well nowadays. I recommend the people who do not know well about cell-phones to learn with my directions in this time. Then a more convenient and comfortable daily life is waiting for you.

2

Student's journal entry

February 8, 2008

1. In United state I often make mistake. But I also know the more mistake I
2. make, the more progress I will make. I hope I will become more and more
3. better and in future's on day, I said, "Speaking English is a piece of cake!" with
4. pround. I know my hard work will pay back one day. Success calls for hard
5. work.

Appendix G

Negotiation Project Transcription

Non-native (NN)
Native (N)

Affection

(The native speaker thought the describing paragraph might be talking about the word attention. The non-native guessed, "maybe respect.")

N: Well, I think of affection as ummm…as an act of something, as a verb. Maybe more, that you show affection that you that it's an action. Which is probably why I was thinking something else here because umm…to give someone a gift I would think umm I think of affection as more of physical expression.

NN: Yeah, I thought affection is more…I don't know...interactive word for me. Than because affection… umm.. I don't know. Affection.

N: You could say '"to show affection" or "I will show affection". And it would be a noun, wouldn't it. Anyway, I think of it as more of an sign of something, an action more than just giving something to someone. Like hugging, kissing, patting, petting, cuddling. Let's see what else, saying sweet things to somebody. Like that could be affection.

NN: Like giving something?

N: I didn't think so. That's why I didn't think of it with the act of kindness or give a gift. I didn't think of those as affection so much.

NN: hmmm

N: you know the petting, cuddling..

NN: It is positive words?

N: Right!

NN: Ok.

N: Do you have this word in your culture?

NN: Umm. Yeah. I think so. But, it's not always positive I think. Cause in my culture holding hand or hugs or kisses are more intimate. Some people don't think it's not the thing to do in public, you know. So, I don't know, I don't think it's always a positive word in my culture.

N: So, can you hug a friend in public?

NN: Umm, it depends, if the friend is more close. I do that.

N: So, is it more appropriate to hug a friend than to hug your boy friend in public?

NN: I don't hug my boyfriend in public or my. I don't think I never hug my father.

N: Your father or you mother?

NN: My father.

N: Never?

NN: I think when I was little. Maybe I did that but no. My mom, sometimes, no people see.

N: So, what do you use instead of hugs?

NN: Maybe, say words, like you are good, or something like that. Give her positive words. But we don't do physical contact as much as American do.

N: So, is it weird when a American hugs you or touches you or puts their arm around you?

NN: I'm getting used to it. But first when I came to the States I was kind of uncomfortable. One of my friends kissed me when I talked to him. It was so… I was so shocked. Oh, my God! He was not my boyfriend but.

N: some of us, like myself, we are/ I am very touchy. I mean, I touch people a lot and I hug people a lot. I call people, you know, terms of endearment, a lot. And you know I do it genuinely. I just don't do it to do it. I always wonder about that too, because I am very outwardly affectionate to people. So, I know that is not always cultural what people are used to though. So, when I go to Korea I probably shouldn't hug people, right?

Both laugh.

NN: No!

N: Alright.

NN: I think Korean people cares more than Japanese people do. But they have more traditional soul.

N: That's good to know.

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