Summary

This article tells the story of Han, a young girl in kindergarten from Vietnam and her journey during her first year in an American school. Han’s parents had immigrated to the United States before she was born. They moved from California to the Midwest, and because of the jobs and community that her parents held and lived in, her parents never learned to speak English. Although she faced a greater challenge than other children in her ethnically diverse classroom because she had neither older siblings nor parents to help her with English, “Han was one of several children who demonstrated the most literacy growth by the end of the school year” (248).

At the beginning of the school year, Han was unable to follow simple directions given in the classroom because she did not understand them. Throughout the year, she studied the things and people, especially her peers, in her environment that drew her attention. “Each day for Han was filled with observation, question-posing, and theorizing about her new world. Han took in information, connected it with existing hypotheses, and made adjustments to fit her new schema” (251). By the end of the year, Han’s literacy development surpassed many of her classmates. Because she was a second language learner, her main inquiries lied in wanting to know about the culture and language that surrounded her. “Han’s language and literacy development required her persistence and desire to learn a new language as a means of being able to function and
Gradually over time, Han was able to construct an understanding in different areas based off of her initial inquiries.

“Inquiry [is] an assumed ‘openness’ to learning, in which learners are not constrained by predetermined objectives that restrict their ‘personal construction of meaning’” (Harste 1223). Inquiries come from the learner. Children who explore areas that interest them the most become better immersed in learning as a whole. When they are driven to learn because of personal interests, information is better retained because it is something they want to know. This is called “learner-generated inquiries.” And because inquiry-based knowledge ties in with second-language acquisition, literacy development improves at a much greater rate.

Teachers are responsible for facilitating the structure of literacy learning, not only in the classroom, but also in the home and in other nonacademic environments as well. Teachers are especially important in settings like these because they are the ones who create the learning environment in which their students can develop literacy skills to the best of their abilities.

**How to Use in Major Essay #3**

This article gives many examples about how teachers can pursue to accomplish Goals A and C. If someone is going to argue that classroom instructors should commit to these goals, this article will provide evidence for the confirmation of the paper. This little girl was put in an inquiry based classroom that was rich in its curriculum and “will be a bridge rather than a barrier between home and school, will encourage children like Han”. Because this classroom encouraged her Han to intersect her home and school culture, namely the use of Vietnamese at home and English at school, Han was able to successfully find her way to learn Standard English. “This classroom environment encouraged and supported Han’s inquiries into a second
language and a second culture.” If teachers provided their students with this type of classroom environment in which both the home and school language would be encouraged, teachers would be able to pursue and more importantly accomplish Goals A and C.

**How to Use in Final Paper**

This article points out the importance of reading different stories both in the classroom and at home. “These experiences taught Han the significance of letters and words. She saw these symbols in school and at home in stories that her parents read to her in Vietnamese. Han’s experiences with literacy sparked her interest in writing.” This is a very important quote because it points out the importance of stories and how they can encourage students to read, write, and learn to speak Standard English. No matter which topic you have for the final project, this article provides evidence that stories are important in encouraging students to think critically and analytically. Han, began to learn how to write in English by imitating what she heard in stories that were read. Thus, this article shows the importance of stories and how they can build bridges between the home and school environment. By reading books, such as those that we will be making lesson plans around, students will begin to learn and appreciate other languages and cultures.

**Quotes from “Inquiring into a Second Language and the Culture of School”**

“…teachers must be agents of socialization to effectively assist students in acquiring a second language. When teachers assume these roles by contributing to and becoming part of the classroom’s physical and social contexts, they enhance the language-learning environment and the practices, values, and beliefs of the cultural community.” (pg. 249)
This quote really relates to goal C because it expresses the importance of students showing an appreciation for different languages. It is also arguing that it may greatly benefit the class as a whole when teachers are supportive and helpful with the students learning English as a second language.

“Additionally, teachers create learning environments that approximate literacy learning across diverse environments—academic and nonacademic, school and home, informal and formal—so that students may build on existing schema as they expand their literacy repertoires. Once children learn the cultural schema of a particular community, they participate more fully because they understand the community’s underlying meanings.” (pg. 249)

- This quote would be helpful if you are arguing that teachers should pursue both goals A and C. It mentions A because it discusses the fact that teachers should implement an environment that promotes literacy learning across different environments meaning children will learn what kind of language is appropriate for formal or academic circumstances compared to informal and nonacademic circumstances. It also relates to Goal C because it mentions how this kind of literacy learning may also give students a better understanding of different communities which includes different languages.

“…books were already an important part of Han’s home literacy environment and therefore one of the critical components of her early literacy development.” (pg. 250)

- Her parents had gotten a call that Han had been struggling academically. They valued education highly and took this update as more of a progress report and threatened to throw away all her books if she did not improve in school. She took this threat as a
motivation to work even harder in school. This quote could help for ME 3 or for the final project. It could be helpful for the final project paper since it points out the importance books hold for young children and how they may be a “critical component of early literacy development.”

“The domains of literacy — conversational fluency (informal oral proficiency), discrete language skills (skills learned under direct instruction), and academic proficiency (specialized vocabulary and complex written and oral sentence structures) — [describe language proficiency] and can function as a dynamic whole within an inquiry based curriculum rather than as a linear process.” (pg. 254)

- These domains were periodically mentioned in the article when referring to Han’s literacy and inquiry. This quote shows a good example of what teachers could focus on in the classroom when teaching their students language skills and literacy.

“A rich curricula, one that will be a bridge rather than a barrier between home and school, will encourage children like Han, if she desires, to inquire more profoundly into her cultural identity and to “(re)invent and discover” (Fischer, 1986) new ways of defining who she is and who she will become, perhaps one who is both firmly rooted in the past and grounded in the future.” (pg. 256)

- This is a really strong quote because it is describing how a student may find their individuality and “cultural identity” through the help of academic pursuits in the classroom. It stresses how teachers may create a curriculum and classroom environment that encourages those ESL students to develop “this second culture wile maintaining
[their] primary culture.” (pg. 256) I think it would be great in ME 3 and it could possibly even help with the final project paper.

Some more quotes…

- “…Han’s access into the school culture depended largely on her inquiries into language and meaning.” (pg. 248)
- “…children explore the world through ‘a hundred languages, a hundred thoughts, a hundred ways of thinking, playing, of speaking.’” (pg. 249)
- “Through this project approach, young children engage in extended in-depth investigations and use ‘graphic languages’ to ‘record and represent their memories, ideas, predictions, hypotheses, observations, feelings, and so forth in their projects.’” (pg. 249)
- “Hence, within a learner-generated inquiry-based curriculum, teachers play a significant role by providing the learning structures in which the learners’ literacy development may flourish.” (pg. 249)
- “Through this web of experiences, Han constructed a semiotic understanding, or personal interpretation, of language and literacy, enabling her to establish her identity and set the groundwork for future learning and cultural negotiations.” (pg. 250)
- “All these events formed her cultural schema that gave her the foundational structure she needed to make connections with school literacy.” (pg. 251)
- “…Han hypothesized that meaning was mediated through letters, words, and pictures, and if she wanted to enter into this meaning-making environment, she had to mimic their forms, practice their usage, and learn the shared interpretations these symbol systems represented. And while Han might not have understood the significance of each literacy engagement, she
continued to persist, building a ‘cumulative representation of [her] interactions with [her] environment.’” (pg. 252)

- “Han’s attention to letters and illustrations helped her make sense of text and demonstrated her developmental use of and attention to her semantic, syntactic, and graphophonic language cues.” (pg. 253)

* On page 251 in the far right column it discusses the importance of story books or “the value of words in stories.” And on page 255 it discusses some interesting information about Han’s Vietnamese culture and the belief that women are “subservient to men” and should not be “too educated.” Pg. 256 has many quotes that could relate to goal C.