The Bridges of the Pond

A Language Explorers Story About Words and Much More

The Language Explorers Series – Volume 9

David I Schoen



Toad University Press

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This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents are products of the author's imagination, and any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, is purely coincidental. The language concepts, however, are very real.

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Appendix A

Teacher and Parent Notes

The Language Explorers Series – Book 9: *The Bridges of the Pond*

These notes are designed to support guided reading, discussion, and reflection for *The Bridges of the Pond*.

As in previous volumes, the goal is not to interrupt the story, but to help adults notice what the book is quietly practicing—and to support readers as those habits begin to form.

Use what is helpful.
Skip what is not.
The story comes first.

Big Picture Focus of Book 9

Book 9 continues the series' movement away from visible instruction and toward **ownership, permanence, and responsibility**.

Where earlier books explored:

- observation,
- perspective,
- and restraint,

This volume asks readers to consider what happens **after** good thinking becomes structure.

Rather than introducing new rules, Book 9 invites readers to notice:

- how decisions turn into commitments,
- how systems quietly replace improvisation,
- and how language begins to carry weight once it is written, shared, or relied upon.

Learning here is less about *what to do* and more about *what cannot be undone*.

Readers are encouraged to observe:

- when something stops being temporary,
- how clarity differs from neutrality,
- and why endings matter as much as beginnings.

Chapter-by-Chapter Learning Focus

Chapter 1 — Almost Finished

Focus: Readiness, hesitation, and the moment before commitment

Key ideas modeled:

- "Not finished" as a deliberate state
- Pausing as an act of judgment
- Awareness of consequence before action

Quiet practice:

- Sentences waiting for punctuation
- Decisions delayed not from fear, but from care

Discussion prompts:

- Why does Lucia hesitate even when she knows her options?
- How can waiting be responsible rather than uncertain?

Chapter 2 — The Quiet Weight of Decisions

Focus: Decision vs. commitment

Key ideas modeled:

- The difference between choosing and binding
- Responsibility as something others must live with
- Leadership without announcements

Quiet practice:

- Listening before speaking
- Allowing silence to carry meaning

Discussion prompts:

- How does the group behave differently in this meeting?
- Why does Mr. Bubo say this is not "a decision"?

Chapter 3 — Whose Is This?

Focus: Ownership in language and responsibility

Key ideas modeled:

- Apostrophes as markers of ownership
- Neutral language as avoidance
- Clarity through claiming responsibility

Quiet practice:

- Precision in possessives
- Language revealing intent

Discussion prompts:

- Why does the original document feel "dangerous"?
- How does adding ownership change the weight of the sentences?

Chapter 4 — Field Research

Focus: Evaluation vs. enthusiasm

Key ideas modeled:

- Observation without interference
- Distinguishing effort from intention
- Structural consequences vs. emotional reactions

Quiet practice:

- Professional restraint
- Evidence over performance

Discussion prompts:

- Why does Andrew D'Toro not need to raise his voice?
- What does "correction" mean in this context?

Chapter 5 — Fleachicks Sky Harbor Hareport

Focus: Finality, systems, and non-negotiable endings

Key ideas modeled:

- Systems that do not adapt to feelings
- Authority through consistency
- Language that ends cleanly

Quiet practice:

- Periods as boundaries
- Acceptance without argument

Discussion prompts:

- Why does the Hareport feel calm but unforgiving?

- How does certainty differ from kindness here?

Chapter 6 — When Sentences End

Focus: Punctuation as responsibility

Key ideas modeled:

- Periods, semicolons, and comma + FANBOYS
- Meaning shaped by structure
- Ending as an ethical act

Quiet practice:

- Grammar as choice
- Accountability through punctuation

Discussion prompts:

- How do the three versions of the same sentence differ?
- Why does the Hareport reject run-ons?

Chapter 7 — The Case of Saying It Again (and Again)

Focus: Redundancy and clarity

Key ideas modeled:

- Saying something once, well
- Respect for the reader
- Confidence without repetition

Quiet practice:

- Editing for meaning, not length
- Removing what no longer serves

Discussion prompts:

- Why does repetition feel helpful to the writer?
- When does repetition weaken meaning?

Chapter 8 — The Matter of Percentages

Focus: Proportional reasoning and fairness

Key ideas modeled:

- Percentages as relationships, not tricks
- Decimal movement as structure
- Fairness through transparency

Quiet practice:

- Mental math through logic
- Calm numerical reasoning

Discussion prompts:

- Why does ten percent feel intuitive?
- How do numbers help resolve conflict?

Chapter 9 — What Is Not Sung

Focus: Emphasis through restraint

Key ideas modeled:

- Silence as chosen meaning
- Revision as removal
- Knowing when to stop

Quiet practice:

- Editing through withholding
- Ending with intention

Discussion prompts:

- Why does Samantha stop herself from singing?
- How does restraint create emphasis?

Chapter 10 — The Prince Writes

Focus: Formal language and audience awareness

Key ideas modeled:

- Institutional tone
- Writing without performance
- Clarity without embellishment

Quiet practice:

- Matching tone to audience
- Ending sentences cleanly

Discussion prompts:

- Why is the Prince's letter effective?
- How does formality change responsibility?

Chapter 11 — What We Call Ourselves?

Focus: Agency and attribution

Key ideas modeled:

- Passive vs. active construction
- Clarity of action

- Accountability in language

Quiet practice:

- Naming actors
- Avoiding vague authority

Discussion prompts:

- Why does unclear attribution matter?
- How does agency change meaning?

Chapter 12 — Who is Actually Doing That?

Focus: Precision and modification

Key ideas modeled:

- Misplaced modifiers
- Accuracy vs. intention
- Language alignment

Quiet practice:

- Careful placement
- Reading for unintended meaning

Discussion prompts:

- How can small shifts change meaning entirely?
- Why is "almost right" still wrong?

Chapter 13 — Close, But Not Where You Meant*?*

Focus: Quantities as modifiers

Key ideas modeled:

- "Half" and "some" as incomplete without context
- Numbers attached to meaning
- Language and math reinforcing each other

Quiet practice:

- Asking "of what?"
- Clarifying groups

Discussion prompts:

- Why is "half" meaningless alone?
- How do numbers depend on language?

Chapter 14 — Of What?

Focus: Perspective and limitation

Key ideas modeled:

- Point of view as constraint
- Knowledge shaped by position
- Honest limitation

Quiet practice:

- Acknowledging what cannot be seen
- Speaking from where you stand

Discussion prompts:

- Why does perspective matter here?
- How does limitation create honesty?

Chapter 15 — Even From Where?

Focus: Completion without spectacle

Key ideas modeled:

- Systems functioning quietly
- Endings without applause
- Integration over announcement

Quiet practice:

- Letting structure speak
- Knowing when to stop

Discussion prompts:

- Why does the ending feel calm rather than dramatic?
- How is restraint the final lesson?

Chapter 16 — The Way Things Were Becoming

Focus: Gradual change, permanence, and systems settling into place

Key ideas modeled:

- Change as accumulation rather than event
- Stability created through repeated good judgment
- Growth that does not announce itself

Quiet practice:

- Noticing patterns instead of moments
- Trusting systems once they have proven reliable
- Allowing progress to feel ordinary

Discussion prompts:

- What has changed in the Pond by this point—and what has not?
- Why does the story end with "becoming" rather than "finished"?
- How does this chapter show responsibility without explaining it?

Adult note:

This chapter is intentionally understated.

It does not resolve conflict so much as confirm that conflict no longer needs constant attention. The Pond is not perfect—but it is predictable, stable, and cared for.

Readers are not asked to celebrate the outcome.
They are asked to notice it.
If the ending feels calm rather than triumphant, the chapter has done its work.

Cross-Book Skills Reinforced in Book 9

- Grammar as ethical choice
- Math as reasoning, not computation
- Writing as responsibility
- Silence as meaning
- Structure as kindness

Adult Reflection Note

Book 9 is not about teaching rules.

It is about noticing when rules begin to matter.

It asks adults to trust young readers with:

- complexity,
- restraint,
- and unresolved quiet.

The learning here is subtle by design.

If it feels understated, it is working.

Notes and Ideas

Appendix B – Glossary

absence (n.) the state of being away or not present.
absurd (adj.) silly, impossible, or not making sense.
acceptance (n.) approval; the act of receiving or agreeing to something.
acknowledge (v.) to notice or show that something is understood.
active (adj.) busy, moving, or doing things.
activity (n.) movement, work, or action.
adequate (adj.) enough for what is needed.
adjust (v.) to change something a little so it works better.
advanced (adj.) more difficult or more developed than the basics.
affection (n.) warm, kind feeling toward someone.
aligned (adj.) arranged correctly; working together in the same direction.
alignment (n.) how well things work together in the same direction.
announce (v.) to say something clearly or publicly.
announcement (n.) an official message meant to inform people.
apostrophe (n.) a punctuation mark used to show ownership or missing letters.
applause (n.) clapping or cheering to show approval.
approach (v.) to move toward something.
approval (n.) agreement or praise.
arrange (v.) to put things in order.
authorship (n.) the fact of being the person who created or wrote something.
authority (n.) the power or right to make decisions.
available (adj.) ready to be used or reached.
balance (n.) an even or steady arrangement.
basket (n.) a container used to carry things.
becoming (v.) changing into something.
behavior (n.) the way someone or something acts.
binding (adj.) creating responsibility and not able to be ignored.
borrowed (adj.) taken or used for a time, but not owned.
casually (adv.) in a relaxed or not serious way.
ceremony (n.) a formal event or special action.
clarity (n.) how clear and understandable something is.
cluster (v.) to gather closely together.
collective (adj.) done or shared by a group.
comma (n.) a punctuation mark that shows a small pause or separates parts of a sentence.
comma splice (n.) an error where two complete sentences are joined only by a comma.
commitment (n.) a promise that affects others and must be followed through.
community (n.) a group of people or creatures living or working together.
competence (n.) the ability to do something well.

compose (v.) to create, write, or arrange carefully.
composed (adj.) calm and controlled.
conclusion (n.) a final idea or judgment reached after thinking.
confidence (n.) belief that you can do something well.
confusion (n.) the feeling of not understanding what is happening.
conjunction (n.) a word that connects sentences or ideas.
consistency (n.) doing things the same careful way over time.
consult (v.) to check, ask, or look at something for information.
continue (v.) to keep going.
controlled (adj.) careful and not wild or rushed.
courier (n.) a person who delivers important messages.
crop circle (n.) a pattern made in a field of crops, often in a circle shape.
curiosity (n.) the desire to learn or know more.
dangling modifier (n.) a describing phrase that is not clearly attached to the thing it is supposed to describe.
decision (n.) a choice that is made at a moment in time.
defensively (adv.) in a way that protects against criticism or attack.
deliberate (adj.) done slowly and with intention.
delicately (adv.) carefully and gently.
demand (n.) something that is required.
descend (v.) to move downward.
describe (v.) to tell what something is like.
difference (n.) the way things are not the same.
direct (adj.) straight, clear, or honest.
discount (n.) money taken off the original price.
discrepancy (n.) a difference between what was expected and what actually happened.
distinction (n.) special quality, honor, or difference.
distortion (n.) a change that makes something look, sound, or seem wrong.
draft (n.) an unfinished version meant to be revised.
dramatically (adv.) in a big, noticeable, or emotional way.
elegant (adj.) graceful, polished, or beautifully simple.
emerging (adj.) beginning to appear or develop.
emphasis (n.) special importance or stress placed on something.
encounter (v.) to meet or come across something.
essential (adj.) needed; very important.
evaluate (v.) to judge carefully.
eventually (adv.) after some time.
exactly (adv.) precisely; with no mistake.
exaggerate (v.) to make something seem bigger, stronger, or more important than it really is.
expectation (n.) something believed will happen.

explain (v.) to make something clear.
expression (n.) a look on someone's face, or a way of saying something.
extended (adj.) stretched out.
final (adj.) complete and not meant to change.
finale (n.) the last part of a story, show, or series.
formal (adj.) proper, official, or serious in style.
fraction (n.) a number that shows part of a whole.
gradually (adv.) slowly, little by little.
grammar (n.) the rules that help words make clear meaning.
grateful (adj.) thankful.
gratitude (n.) thankfulness.
guidance (n.) help or advice that shows a way forward.
hover (v.) to stay in one place in the air or water.
identity (n.) who someone is and what they are called.
immediate (adj.) happening right away.
impeccable (adj.) nearly perfect; without mistakes.
impossible (adj.) not able to happen.
impressed (adj.) feeling respect or admiration.
impressive (adj.) causing admiration or respect.
inquire (v.) to ask about something.
institution (n.) an important organization, such as a school, company, or government office.
intent (n.) purpose; what someone means to do.
intentional (adj.) done on purpose.
interrupt (v.) to stop someone while they are speaking or doing something.
introductory phrase (n.) words at the beginning of a sentence that lead into the main idea.
invitation (n.) a request to participate or respond.
judgment (n.) careful thinking used to make a decision.
language (n.) a system of words used to communicate meaning.
lantern (n.) a light inside a case.
leadership (n.) the act of guiding or helping others move in the right direction.
ledger (n.) a book or record used to keep track of information.
linger (v.) to stay longer than expected.
literally (adv.) exactly as stated, not as a figure of speech.
marginalia (n.) notes written on the side of a page, in the margin, not in the main text.
meaning (n.) what a word, sentence, action, or event is meant to show.
measured (adj.) careful, controlled, and not rushed.
misleading (adj.) causing someone to understand something the wrong way.
misplaced modifier (n.) a describing word or phrase placed too close to the wrong word, making the sentence confusing.
modifier (n.) a word or group of words that describes something else.
multiply (v.) to find the total when equal groups are counted together.

multiplication (n.) math that counts equal groups quickly.
necessary (adj.) needed.
neutral (adj.) not taking sides or showing ownership.
nonessential phrase (n.) extra information that can be removed without breaking the sentence.
observe (v.) to watch carefully.
observation (n.) careful watching or noticing.
ordinary (adj.) normal or usual.
ownership (n.) responsibility for something that belongs to you.
pause (n.) a short stop.
percentage (n.) a number out of one hundred.
period (n.) punctuation that ends a complete thought.
perspective (n.) the way someone sees or understands something.
persuasive (adj.) able to make someone believe or agree.
phrase (n.) a small group of words that works together but may not be a complete sentence.
placement (n.) where something is put.
poised (adj.) ready to move or act.
possessive (adj.) showing ownership or belonging.
precise (adj.) exact and careful.
precision (n.) being exact and accurate.
prepared (adj.) ready.
professional (adj.) skilled, serious, and proper in behavior.
pronunciation (n.) the way a word is spoken.
punctuation (n.) marks used in writing to guide meaning and pauses.
reflection (n.) careful thinking about what something means.
rehearse (v.) to practice before performing.
regulation (n.) a rule or system for controlling something.
remainder (n.) the amount left over after dividing.
repetition (n.) saying or doing something again.
reputation (n.) what others believe about a place or person.
responsibility (n.) something you are expected to take care of or answer for.
restraint (n.) the choice not to do too much, even when you could.
revise (v.) to change writing, music, or work to make it better.
revision (n.) changing something to make it clearer or better.
ripple (v.) to move in small waves.
royal (adj.) having to do with a king, queen, prince, or princess.
schedule (n.) a plan for when things will happen.
selection (n.) a careful choice.
semicolon (n.) punctuation that links closely related complete sentences.
sentence (n.) a group of words that expresses a complete thought.
sequence (n.) an order in which things happen.

sincere (adj.) honest and truly meant.
stability (n.) steadiness; the condition of not easily changing or falling apart.
stable (adj.) steady, safe, and not likely to fall apart.
stewardship (n.) careful responsibility for taking care of something.
structure (n.) the way parts are organized and held together.
subject (n.) the part of a sentence that does the action.
summon (v.) to call someone to come.
surface (v.) to rise to the top of water or become visible.
sustainability (n.) the ability to continue without falling apart.
technically (adv.) according to the exact facts or rules.
tone (n.) the feeling or attitude of words.
tradition (n.) a way of doing things passed along over time.
translation (n.) changing words from one language into another.
triumph (n.) a success or victory.
unconsciously (adv.) without realizing it.
unfold (v.) to open, spread out, or happen gradually.
urgency (n.) the feeling that something must happen quickly.
value (n.) something believed to be important.
visible (adj.) able to be seen.
voice (n.) the personality or point of view in writing.
withhold (v.) to hold back or choose not to give or say something.
withholding (n.) the act of holding something back.
wince (v.) to make a small face or movement because something hurts, bothers you, or feels wrong.

Notes and Ideas

Appendix C

Activities, and Language Games

The Language Explorers Series – Book 9: The Bridges of the Pond
These activities are designed to reinforce the language habits practiced in the story—especially ownership, sentence boundaries, modifiers, and responsibility in writing.
Use selectively. The story comes first.

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1. Lucia's Ownership Test

Focus: possessives and apostrophes
Write the following pairs on paper or a board. Ask the reader to choose the correct version and explain why.

- the Pond values / the Pond's values
- the squirrels tails / the squirrels' tails
- the prince letter / the prince's letter
- the bridges stone / the bridge's stone

Extension:
Ask the reader to explain *who owns what* before placing the apostrophe. Emphasize that the apostrophe follows ownership—not sound.

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2. The Bridge Check

Focus: sentence boundaries
Read each sentence aloud. Ask: *Is this finished, or does it keep walking?*

- The meeting ended everyone waited
- The gate closed, we were late
- The gate closed. We were late.
- The gate closed; we were late.
- The gate closed, so we were late.

Discussion:
How does punctuation change meaning, tone, and responsibility?

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3. Hareport Announcements

Focus: periods, semicolons, comma + FANBOYS
Ask the reader to imagine they are making announcements at Fleachicks Sky Harbor Hareport. Rewrite each idea three ways:
Idea: The flight is full we cannot board

• with a period
• with a semicolon
• with a comma + FANBOYS
Discuss how each version *feels* different—even though all are correct.

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4. Who Is Actually Doing That?
Focus: dangling modifiers
Read each sentence. Ask the reader to identify the problem before fixing it.
• Crossing the bridge, the restaurant appeared
• While eating dinner, the sunset was beautiful
• Running through the reeds, the lanterns glowed
Fix-It Rule:
The subject after the comma must be the one doing the action.

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5. Modifier Placement Game
Focus: clarity and precision
Give the reader one sentence and several modifier placements. Ask which is clearest.
Sentence base:
The wolf delivered the dish on a platter
Modifiers: steaming, rich, carefully prepared
Discuss how moving words changes meaning—and sometimes creates confusion.

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6. Comma or No Comma?
Focus: nonessential phrases
Read aloud:
• Zorro the fox ran ahead
• Zorro, the fox, ran ahead
Ask:
Which sentence means *there is only one Zorro*?
Which sentence sounds like extra information?
Explain that commas can gently interrupt—but only when the sentence can survive without what's inside them.

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7. Name Bridges
Focus: identity and language
Practice introductions in three languages (as in the story):

English: My name is ___
Spanish: Me llamo ___
Mandarin: 我叫 ___ (Wǒ jiào ___)
Discuss how names are actions in some languages—and labels in others.

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8. The Committee Rewrite
Focus: clarity over caution
Present a sentence that sounds official but vague:
• Decisions are made with care and balance
Ask the reader to rewrite it so someone clearly owns the decision.
Discuss how unclear sentences avoid responsibility—and why that matters.

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9. Sentence Weighing
Focus: tone and intention
Give three versions of the same idea. Ask which feels:
• firm
• calm
• explanatory
Explain that grammar does not just say *what* happened—it shows *how we want it understood.*

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10. Final Reflection (Optional Writing)
Prompt:
Write three sentences about something important to you.
• One must use a period
• One must use a semicolon
• One must use a comma + FANBOYS
Then answer:
Which sentence feels strongest? Why?

Closing Note for Adults
Appendix C is not meant to be completed in order.
Choose activities that match the reader's readiness.
Stop before fatigue.
Clarity grows best when it is invited—not required.

Note to Parents, Teachers, and Readers

This book is about ownership.
Not possession.
Not control.
It is about the quiet responsibility that comes with choosing words—and standing behind them.

In *The Bridges of the Pond*, many of the most important moments are not announced. They happen in drafts, in pauses, and in sentences that are carefully examined before they are allowed to continue. Letters are written. Bridges are crossed. Commitments are made—not quickly, but deliberately.

This volume continues the series' exploration of language as a structure that holds ideas together. Grammar here is not presented as a list of rules, but as a system that reveals intention. Punctuation matters because it changes meaning. Ownership matters because it changes responsibility. Where a sentence ends, and who it belongs to, are no longer neutral choices.

Lucia's growth in this book is measured and precise. She becomes more aware of how words place weight on others, and how clarity is a form of care. Writing a letter is no longer an exercise—it is an act of representation. Choosing punctuation becomes a way of choosing how a message will be received.

For parents and teachers, this book offers opportunities to notice and discuss:
• how grammar shapes meaning and responsibility
• why clarity is an ethical choice in communication
• how endings give structure to ideas
• and how ownership in language reflects ownership in action

For readers—especially growing readers—the message is steady and reassuring:

You are allowed to pause.
You are allowed to revise.
You are allowed to think before you commit.

Learning does not rush.
Meaning does not guess.
And clarity is built—one careful sentence at a time.

As with all books in *The Language Explorers Series*, these stories are meant to be shared, discussed, questioned, and read slowly. Thoughtful disagreement is welcome. So is revision.

If you would like to share how this book is being used, or what it has prompted in your home or classroom, you are invited to reach out.

Careful reading is always valued.
Clear thinking is always encouraged.
And knowing where to stop is sometimes the most important lesson of all.

Notes and Ideas

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About the Author

David I. Schoen, known to generations of students as Professor Dave, has spent decades teaching language, writing, grammar, vocabulary, and careful thinking, helping learners of all ages discover clarity, confidence, and even a little joy in the way words work.

A veteran educator, tutor, writer, and lifelong lover of books, Professor Dave specializes in turning complicated ideas into simple, friendly explanations that actually stay with the reader. He has guided thousands of students through English, writing, grammar, vocabulary, test preparation, and the often-surprising process of learning how language works.

The Language Explorers Series grew from that same teaching spirit. These books are built on the idea that grammar and language do not have to feel dry, cold, or frightening. They can be playful. They can be musical. They can be funny. Most of all, they can help young readers understand not only how words are used, but why they matter.

Professor Dave is a great lover of English grammar, language, usage, vocabulary, and the maintenance of high standards in each. He believes that strong language skills give students more than better sentences. They give them sharper thinking, clearer expression, and a stronger voice in the world.

Before becoming an author and educator, Dave worked for nearly two decades as an Air Traffic Controller at JFK International Airport, one of the busiest airports in the world. That experience sharpened his respect for precision, timing, communication, and getting the words exactly right.

When he is not teaching or writing, Professor Dave can usually be found creating new educational books, experimenting in the kitchen, playing the piano, or working on inventive projects that combine family, learning, and fun. He lives on Long Island, New York, where he is constantly surrounded by stories waiting to be told.

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