

6/18/14 Day 2 Reflection: Van Patten Epilogue: Implications for Teaching

Van Patten's article focus on the five implications of the research findings of SLA (Second Language Acquisition) on language teaching that is acquisition-oriented. The author points out that language learning should have meaning-based and for communicative purposes. These five implications in language teaching are: 1) the more input, the better; 2) the more interaction, the better; 3) all learner production should be meaning-based or communicative; 4) focus on form should be meaning-based and tied to input or communication; and 5) we should watch out for what we expect of learners.

As I was reading this article, I felt that what he points out are important reminders for my teaching. In order to produce comprehensible output for real communication, teacher should provide a lot of comprehensible input. The output should also be performance-based, contextualized and meaningful which leads into acquisition of information and achieve purposeful communication. If it is necessary to focus on form (grammar or language structure), it must still tie to the input and communication. For the beginning language learner, teacher needs set a reasonable expectation for language output which is level appropriate. Most of these implications are not new concept to me, however, I should strive to reach the goal of using the target language (i.e. comprehensible input) 90 % of the time especially in my beginner class.

In day 2 class, the focus was on the student-center classroom, self-assessment of student-centered instruction, define authentic materials and how it's related to the instruction of UVa Star Talk students program in the coming two weeks. Dr. Tseng used the jigsaw activity to make us learn and understand two articles 'The Student-Centered classroom (Leo Jones)' and 'Student-Centered Communicative Activities (Dr. Tseng)'. I have learned the following and identify the areas that I need to continue to glow:

- The new relevant vocabulary can be put on the board to encourage students to incorporate it into their conversation. The purpose of the group work is to produce the comprehensible output, therefore putting vocabulary or language structure on the board is not a bad practice, it can provide a way to support students to make progress.
- Teacher should explain the importance and benefits in doing the group work so that it can help to reduce resistance from students and make the group work more successful.
- Student-centered activities should come after sufficient comprehensible input has been given. The allocation of time for teacher instruction should not exceed 50% of the class time. For lengthy activities, teacher should assign students to do the preparation work outside class and finish it before the group work starts.

- As a facilitator, teacher should provide follow-up session after each group activity. During the follow-up session teacher can have a Q/A session to answer students' questions and also should give feedback on students' performance and go over common mistakes.

After I did the self-assessment checklist to assess my own student-centered instruction, I found there are two best practices that I never incorporate into my instruction, first, to elicit students' input to create rubrics or scoring criteria, and second, to give opportunities for students to assess their peers' learning. With respect to these best practices, I am in need of getting help to understand how to do it so that I can incorporate these practices in my instruction.

6/19/14 Day 3 Reflection—Brain and Second Language Acquisition & Comprehensible Input

In today morning session, Dr. Ruth Ferree came to introduce us about the brain and second language acquisition and how does research findings can apply to Chinese language instruction. In the afternoon session, Prof. Tseng presents the concept, practice and different types of comprehensible input and output. These topics tie together and were very informing and interesting which have helped me in shaping my role as a language teacher and planning my instruction and activities. My learning and reflection are depicted as follows:

Emotion can help people's learning or interfere with people's learning. Powerful emotions increase the strength of inter-neuronal signals. The stronger the signals the better impact on learning. Thus, it is important to me as a teacher to create a supportive and welcoming atmosphere that conducive of learning.

What is learning? Learning means establishing a pathway, a pattern of neuron firings, that when repeated is recognized. The quote 'what fires together, wires together' illustrates how brain function when learning happened. Learning is also a relatively permanent change in neuronal firing patterns due to experience. Everything that people have learned has changed the firing pattern of brain. The pathway created slower in the beginning of the new learning experience then becomes quicker when pathway has strengthened through repetition. Based on the research finding, it is suggested that a new vocabulary or sentence needs at least 12 times of repetition through comprehensible input to be learned. Through repetition, the connection between neurons becomes stronger and better, therefore, learning can be solidified. As a Chinese teacher, although the class time is limited, when I am moving forward to cover new materials I still need to connect the new and old and review the previous learned materials in every possible way.

How to establish networks in brain which aids in recall of learned expressions? The research finding suggests that adding multiple modalities such as watching, motor action to verbal expressions, can achieve more memorization and recall. Therefore, in the Chinese classroom, using TPR, realia, and visual aids (pictures, video clips and films) are important to enhance students' learning.

With respect to teaching Chinese characters, Dr. Ferree suggests us to use picture and tell a story to help students make connection with the character so that they can memorize it better. I do agree with her viewpoint, this is very important strategy especially when the first set of simple common characters are introduced to beginning Chinese learners. These characters are mostly pictographs, each one of them are associating with a picture and have a 'story'. I have used this method in teaching beginners and found out that students fell learning character writing is fun and not as difficult as what they had thought. However, when student progresses to higher level of materials, because of time constrain and characters are more related to determinative phonetics or borrowing from other word, this method will not be applicable. Then, teacher should use other strategy such as association technique to help students making the connection to learn the writing of the new character.

In this afternoon session, Dr. Tseng presented the different strategies of creating the comprehensible input without using the L1. These strategies include: 1) body language, gesture (TPR), facial expressions; 2) visual aids such as photos, images, realia, concrete objects; 3) language modification such as using the learned phrase to explain the new vocabulary, e.g. 食物=吃的东西; 父母=爸爸妈妈; 4) contextual clues: using the association of objects to explain the concepts of 买/卖; 便宜/贵; 5) give instruction and modeling. I have used these strategies in teaching different levels of Chinese classes and total agree that these strategies are effective and using in staying in L2. The challenge to me is consistently using target language in all circumstances.

Professor Tseng also talked about the frequently checking of students' comprehension, the needs to provide input flood to students and also have pushed output from students. In addition, she clarified the characteristics of three elicitation techniques in soliciating students output. The techniques include mechanical drill, meaningful drill and communicative drill. As I understand the differences among these techniques, I definitely will use these techniques to examine what kind of output I get from my students and when I make students produce output I should quickly transit the drill from mechanical and meaningful drills to communicative drills.

6/20/14 Day 4 Reflection-Creating Standard-Based and Performance-Based Authentic Assessments & Tasks

One of the goals that I set for myself in the UVa Star Talk Program is to learn more about how to create IPAs (Integrated Performance Assessments). I am so glad that it was covered in today's workshop. Today's workshop focus on creating standard-based and performance-based authentic assessments & tasks. Dr. Tseng first defined authentic tasks, then explained the evaluation criteria in a rubric and a checklist that she created. Next, we learned the flowcharts of prototype IPA and modified IPA. We also discussed an IPA that is based on three restaurant menus. Last, we were asked to create two IPAs based on Beijing weather report and the song 'Rainy Day in the Weekend 下雨天的周末'. I have learned a lot in today's workshop. My summary of learning and reflection is depicted as follows:

Authentic tasks should have the following characteristics: 1) primarily focus on meaning and communication; 2) based on real-life situations; 3) have self-determined language resources (vocabulary, sentence patterns, etc.); 4) clearly-defined learning outcomes. After seeing some non-authentic task and authentic task examples, I realized the tasks that I created for level 4 class are mostly authentic tasks but my lower level classes are not. It is time for me to modify these non-authentic tasks by adding the 'real-life situation' and 'clearly-defined learning outcomes (i.e. rubric and checklist) components in these non-task that I created.

IPAs must contains three elements: interpretive mode, interpersonal mode and presentational mode. It was a painful process in the past school year when I was asked to create IPAs for my middle school level 1 class. I am the only full time Chinese teacher who had a very little exposure to IPA before. On top of that it was very difficult to find authentic materials that can be used for novice-low level students. However, through this painful process, I have learned the steps of creating IPAs. Therefore, I could enjoy the workshop very much especially in the hand-on session. I appropriated Prof. Tseng has found the authentic materials for us to work with which make the job much easier. Because of time constrain, the IPAs that I created for novice-low students did not present to our class today, I am hoping that Prof. Tseng can look it over and give me some feedback so that I can learn from my mistakes. I also would like to suggest Prof. Tseng to clarify the similarities and differences between communicative instruction and performance-based instruction.

6/20/14

Day 5 Reflection-Technology

Flip classroom is a teaching strategy that has been used by teachers in different subject areas in U.S. and has become popular in the past few years. UVa Star Talk 2014 incorporates this idea in the student program to help students to preview lessons. To prepare us as teacher trainees to understand this teaching strategy and using the related technology tools, we are immersed in the topics of using technology in teaching Chinese today. Ms. Henny Chen who is an expert in using technology in teaching Chinese taught us the concept of flip classroom and how to use technology to make this teaching strategy become real in Chinese classrooms. She also taught us and shared with us some in-class tools in the afternoon session. She is a very dynamic, full of energy and very humorous teacher who made this entire day workshop with laughs and was enjoyable.

In an ideal flip classroom, teacher provides preview materials ahead of time so that students can follow instructions to learn and study these materials which will help them obtain knowledge and achieve understanding before class time. In this notion, teacher uses class time to provide tasks or activities to help students achieve higher level of learning such as applying, analyzing, evaluating and creating. These four levels of learning are higher cognition functions according to Bloom's taxonomy. Therefore, in order to help students to preview the lesson, it is more effective if these materials contain audio instruction and visual aids. In today's technology class we learned the tools such as 'screencast-o-matic', '1Know' and 'google MCQ'. Each tool has different usage such as creating preview lessons, monitoring student's preview process and provide comments. The 'screencast-o-matic' allows teachers to use PPTs or other documents to add audio and annotated notions to create video files that can be upload to YouTube. '1Know' is used for checking students' preview activities and 'google MCQ' is to provide comments to students. After the flip classroom materials, check and comment system being created, it requires to use an on-line platform such as Moodle, Edmodo or Schoology to manage the flip classroom. In the morning workshop, we also had hand-on practices to get familiar with these tools. Before I came to UVa Star Talk, I was studying flip classroom because of the combined levels in my Chinese 4 and Chinese AP class next year. I am so glad that I have this opportunity to experience how this is implemented in UVa Star Talk 2014 students program and also learned the necessary tools that are used to make the flip classroom possible. I will definitely give a try to implement the flip classroom strategy into my Chinese 4 and AP classroom next year.

Besides flip classroom technological tools, Ms. Chen also introduce and give us downloadable tools such as 'White Board'—can be used for bingo games (practice character writing or words/phrases recognition), 'Stopwatches' – these are different kind of on-line stopwatches for setting activity time, and 'Pointofix' – has colors, shapes, textbox for teacher to make annotation. We also learned the 'Pera Pera add-on' which provide Chinese-English meaning while students are reading Chinese materials and use mouse to roll over unrecognized word or phrases. At the end of the workshop, we practiced how to use ipad apps such as

'edurecreation – create and share videos', 'puppet pals' and 'telligami' are apps to create audio story.

In today's technology workshop I learned a lot of new tools that I can use in my classrooms. I was empowered and a little overwhelmed by the amount of technological tools that I was exposed to today and I know it will take time and practices to digest them. After I have digested these materials, then I can choose what are applicable in my classrooms. I really appreciated what I have exposed to and learned in this workshop.

6/25/14

Practicum Reflection 1

Topics: Date, Day of the week, Birth Date

Today is my first time to teach a Chinese class using 100% target language. It was also the first time that I tried to adapt more student-center classroom strategies into my instruction. In the past week, professor Tseng has taught us theory and instructional strategies, and through her teaching and our reflections, I knew this is the time to have the paradigm shift and use the best practices that I have acquired into today's practicum.

Before today's teaching our group which consists of three teachers Wu Fangyi, Gao Xinying and me had met many times to discuss our lesson plans, teaching strategies and activities. We also consulted with two leading teachers and professor Tseng to obtain assistance and feedback from them in refining our power point slides, instructional procedure and students' activities. In addition, we also had chances to get feedback from three teachers after our rehearsal in yesterday's afternoon. Last night I also spent time in modifying the summative activity and rehearsed how to deliver what I have prepared. Although I felt the lesson went well and the learning objectives were achieved, I knew there are areas that I still need to improve.

I need to control the pacing of the lesson better. Students were able to have one on one drill (独唱) and group drill (齐唱) with me on new vocabulary and sentence patterns regarding how to ask and answer date and week questions. They also did most of the activities in interactive pair work with their partner. Because of the checking and correcting individual mistakes, this result in the rushing of the last activity. Students did not have enough time to do this summative activity which related to ask classmates' age and birth date. The activity was cut short, they were only able to survey three classmates but not the entire class and also were able to report on their age and birth date. They didn't report the statistics of the number of classmates in each age group and birth month. One of the leading teachers suggested that I should move from one concept to the next in faster fashion so that the momentum of

instruction should be in faster side. I understand her concern and definitely I will change my pacing of the lesson next time.

I should also remove the activity of listening of 'Day of the Week (星期歌)' song and quicker get into teaching the concept of day of the week right away. There was no need to let them listen to this song before teaching the concept. I included this activity was because of thinking about the 'i+1' comprehensible input and hooked the students up before the instruction. Since the pacing is the concern, I should have spent more time in thinking about how to deliver the lesson in more effective fashion before the lesson.

One of the interpretive activity about listening to the song 'Friday 黑色星期五' was omitted also due to the time control issue. If time allowed I also need to modify this activity. The original design of this activity was having individual student write down what they heard about the frequency of different terms appeared in the lyric. This task relatively has some difficulty. Therefore with the principle of modifying the task but not the text and based on Dr. Tseng's suggestion I should have students do this task in pairs and assign each student focus on certain phrases. I really appreciate the feedback and reflection process so that I can improve on the detail consideration during the process of designing activities.

I really appreciate that I have this opportunity to practice how to use only target language in the classroom and how to have a lesson to have more than 50% of the time is student-center activities. I definitely will continue to grow and sharpen my skills in these areas.

6/28/14

Practicum Reflection 2 (Day 6)

Grace Paul

Topic: Dining in a Chinese Restaurant

Today is my second time to teach a Chinese class using 100% target language. Based on the feedback and critiques that I received after the first practicum, I decided to change my focus on the delivery of the lesson rather than trying to make the power point slides perfect. Because of this change I felt the flow of the lesson was better than the first time. I also felt I was more at ease to interact with students and made the transition from one activity to the next smoother than last time.

In this second practicum I also incorporated the strategy of checking other students' participation after someone's presentation. I found students were more engaged in listening when other student was presenting. I also had students to walk around classroom to practice pair speaking about the famous tourist spots in Beijing which was a review of what they have learned from previous day. Instead of letting students sit still, they had to move from one sightseeing place to the next to imitate the tourist, the incorporation of kinetics movement

was also well received by students, and they seemed to be interesting in this activity. Because of the amount of food vocabulary that had to be covered in this class, I adapted the strategy of spiral up by dividing the vocabulary into two parts and recycled the learned vocabulary. I had students do interactive activity right after they had just been exposed to the first half of vocabulary and then they had to present what their partner like and dislike of certain Chinese food to the classmates. The second half of the vocabulary was also done in the same approach, then we had bingo game, I also found students really learned these vocabulary in a very fast fashion. Since we learned the 'Poke' from Ms. Henny Chen, the picture bingo cards were created through 'Poke', it was fun to play bingo that each player had their own card. I am so glad that my partner Jana from the other Chenggong group (成功班) and I could use what we have just learned in technology class and produced different bingo cards for each student.

Although the lesson went well and the pacing control had been improved, I felt there were areas that I need to do better in planning the lesson and make improvement. These areas are depicted as follows:

First, I should have all the handouts ready the night before. Because of the time constraint and keep revising the design of activity, we sent the print job out on the day before. Thus, we didn't get the handouts back on time when the class was about to start. I was a little panic when I realized the situation. Fortunately, I did have the handouts eventually. Therefore, a well-prepared lesson should also include the printed materials ready earlier.

Second, in the beginning I used realia, different kinds of drink, to review previous day's material, when the only student who didn't receive drink from me and was told to ask classmates to give her their drink, instead of providing the sentence pattern on positive answer, I should also include the negative answer 'I am sorry, I don't want to give it to you' to help student connect response to learned materials. This suggestion was given by one of the leading teachers Mrs. Lin, although she meant for providing scaffolding, but I still have doubt about how much scaffolding that a teacher should provide to students, I wondered if I have to give every possible answers to students and ignored their creative ability to use the language.

Third, this class is about learning to order Chinese food, the clearness of the food pictures are important in carrying out the survey activity. These pictures were reduced to very small size to fit in one sheet and were printed on black and white handouts. Thus in the beginning of the activity few students were asking which picture is which in order to put check mark on the dish that their classmates like to order. Although this was too detailed to think about, but I realized it was still important. Therefore, when I do the similar kind of activity in the future, I should have taken the color printing in consideration.

Overall this period went well and I felt I had delivered about 95% of what I have planned. When I saw how students engaged themselves in a student-center classroom, I really want to make this happened in my own classrooms more than before.

Topic: Sightseeing in Beijing

Today was the last chance that I had at UVa STARTALK program to apply what I have learned at Teacher Academy into my practicum. With the planning, feedback from master teacher and rehearsal, today's practicum went pretty well in incorporating 100% of target language and student-center classroom practices. I have achieved one of the goals that I set before I came here to learn the best practice and know how to use them in my classroom.

During the third period class, besides modeling how to ask and negotiate between partners about where and when to visit tourist spots and how to get to sightseeing places in Beijing, the rest of the class time was designated for students to do poster project through interactive pair work to decide and prepared their presentation on sightseeing plans. Students must include weather, places and activities in this summative activity.

In today's class, I found students could incorporate elements such as time, place, modes of transport and activity in complex sentence structure after such a short period of time in learning Chinese. I was amazed about students' progress and believed that this was all due to the good planning and coordination among practicum teachers and also the way each teacher had delivered their lessons. In addition, it was also because we had great team spirit and wanted to help each other to achieve the set instructional objectives. I really appreciated Professor Tseng and two lead teachers in guiding us and provided timely feedbacks to support us in completing our practicum.

I used to have problem in over planning lessons in my classroom. But today is not the case. After students presented their posters, I found that I still had three minutes left before the end of class. In order to use the rest of the three minutes, I decided to have students exchange posters and each group practiced how to describe other group's sightseeing plans. Students were cooperative and followed the direction to do this activity. With the assistance from other practicum teachers to check students' speaking was also a plus in making this period successful. One of lesson that I have learned from today's practicum was how to not to over plan my lesson.

However, there was one area that I felt I could have done better. Because of intention of not to over plan the lesson, instead of using the doc-cam to model how to arrange pictures on the poster, I displayed a pre-made poster. This might cause some confusing among students on how to arrange and paste the pictures on the poster board. This was a hard decision to make about which method to choose. If I used the doc-cam, I might result in rushing through the presentation activity after they had done the poster.

I am so glad that I came to UVa STAR TALK program and had learned so much in theories and also hands-on practices. I will never forget the wonderful experiences that I had in here and will carry it on by using best practices in my classrooms.