

Self-Reflections
2011 Virginia STARTALK Chinese Teacher Academy
Hui Mao

Daily Reflection, June 22

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Daily reflection

Thank you for the wonderful class today. It helps me a lot to be a better thinker, learner and teacher.

Today is the second day of our program. I feel the atmosphere of our class's more exciting. We started with four phases' theories and approaches in second language teaching. From Behaviorism by 1970s to

Innatist perspectives 1970s-1980s to Psychological perspective after 1990s and then The Sociocultural perspective. They all have the pros and cons. Teacher explained each of the theoretical background and representative teaching approaches of the phase. Students were asked to discuss the features of every phase by group and then selected a speaker from the three people group to present the final thought. The pace of class was close to perfect, class was divided into different segments. About 5 minute's teacher-centered interpretive communication and then about 5 minutes student-centered interpersonal discussion or presentational communication. It told us what is the effective teaching, learning and communication.

Classmates in my group liked the third phase Psychological perspective. It's focus on interaction, observation and input processing. The interaction is very interesting part, which mentioned the "i+1" principle and strategies for it. "i+1" is like helping a toddle from climbing to walking. "i" means input. Comprehensible input is highly recommended in interaction. It makes the communication less stressful.

Linguistic simplification means using easily understandable language. Elaboration can be using visual aids to help student understanding input. Gesture is my favorite part. I combined the Chinese character and body language to teach students new vocabulary. For example: There are two dots in Chinese character "Dad", it looks like the mustache of a mid-aged man. So we used two index fingers of both hands to point between nose and mouth to act like a mid-aged dad. Etc. We combined gesture with AL to play games like "Simon says" or "Do what I said and Say what I did" game. From primary students to middle school students are very excited to do the interactive activities like this.

Hui Mao

Daily Reflection, June 23

The class today is very charming. Ming Juan Lao Shi brought a lot of wonderful authentic materials to us. Authentic material doesn't mean the old traditional handcrafts or books. It's very close to the practical experience and up-date skills. One benefit is a "real life" curriculum can provide more different vocabulary than in textbooks. For example: post card, newspaper, menus, flyers, Chinese yellow book, letter, animated movie, map, news report, advertisement, a speech from authentic Chinese speaker.

One of the materials was commercial advertisement: short, effective, visual supportive, interpretive. We watched a silent Mac Donald advertisement, which can help students to create their own dialogue according to the real situation they saw. This type of materials also can be used to set up a discussion topic for students. And then followed up with a survey or presentation to promote students' output. Besides, commercial advertisement, singing authentic Chinese songs and having/ watching the singer's interview is very appealing to learners. Read a story and continue to write it. Movies, internet forums often can provide models for expressing opinions informally. Real-life receipt, custom form, passport, currency and so on. Interest can be the best teacher. Today's class really helps me to broaden my horizon.

The afternoon class was about TBLT (task based language teaching). To be frank, that is a brand new theory to me. It considered every segment of the class. How to use authentic materials on the right time? Which of the 5 Cs can be used in the activities? Which of the learning objectives does it assist learners in reaching? Is it teacher-centered or student-centered? What's the difference between tasks based language teaching and task supported language teaching? How to turn exercise to task? All of the questions are considered to learners' need, and how to meet the need.

All in all, I've learned not only the theory itself, but also how to turn the theory to practical teaching and planning. Thank you so much for our wonderful teachers and warm-hearted classmates.

Hui Mao

Daily Reflection, June 24

I had a very rewarding day today. In the morning, I'd learned how to use mobile learning devices & applications in classroom. Mr. Tseng presented not only hardware like i-phone, palm computer and pocket-PC but also software as CE star (Chinese character reading system), QQ input (Chinese input and recognition system) and ifly (Developed by China Science and Technology University which can turn the text content in to voice and vice versa) . That's not end, we also learned how to use the platform of many websites like: *Go Chinese* and *live Mocha*. All these technology can be used to improve students' language abilities. For example, we can use the hardware to input/output Chinese characters to communicate with people on line, or use the software to make a animated image to express students ideas which raise their interest of learning. What more amazing is the software *Go Chinese* can check students' homework and send to their parents any time you want?

TPRS class of this afternoon was very active. To be frank, I learned one semester of German in China while I was in college. But I learn more German this afternoon than the one semester I spent in College. The German class provided by Ms. Helen. At the beginning of class she gave us a vocabulary list and used physical activity to explain each word. Then let students to act what she said in the target language. The input part was great! One thing not sufficient was the output part from students were not enough? But as listening is the very beginning of the communication, it's a wonderful start. I used to have a big struggling situation with the story telling in class. How to make students more involved in the story was my number 1 headache. Today, TPRS solved this problem. Teacher gave us a piece of paper with several pictures about the content we've learned earlier, then we were asked to tell the story by ourselves, which maximally practiced our target language output and made us involved in the story.

I feel addicted to learn more from our Startalk class now. I really like our group members exchanging ideas together and helping each other. Thank you so much everyone.

Hui Mao

Daily Reflection, June 28

Today is the first day of our group's practicum. My class was in the second session. There were many things I need to improve. Thankfully, Dr. Tseng, Shi Laoshi and other teachers gave me lots of useful ideas. Here are some notes I need to remember during class:

1. Teacher should perform less, give more time to students to perform.
2. Power Point pictures must be clearly meaning and communication based.
3. Authentic setting/material is more efficient than plain reading text.
4. Modeling should be done before any activities.
5. Scaffolding teaching is necessary but be sure to use comprehensible instruction.
6. Don't let students feel they are pushed to learn something, but make students feel they are learning something they can use.
6. Meaning, meaning and meaning.

I never tried to teach Chinese without speaking any English in class before our Startalk program. I fell so good to challenge my skills. Today's class gave me more encouragement to continue using full immersion to teach Chinese.

In the afternoon, I learned how to use on-line chatting and voice input software for teaching. They made Chinese learning more practical and real life approaching. Students will have more fun to use the target language.

At the end, I want express my appreciation to Dr. Tseng, Shi Laoshi, Ming Laoshi and other teachers for helping me to improve my teaching skills.

Hui Mao

Practicum Day 2 July1

Reflection

Today is the second time for our group to teach. I taught the first class this morning. Dr. Tseng, Ming Laoshi and Shi Laoshi all gave me lots of valuable suggestions ahead of the time. I also got lots of ideas by observing other teachers classes. It's always great to hear the feedbacks from others.

Rehearsal class provided me an extra opportunity to improve my class flow. Thanks for Dr. Tseng's and other teachers' suggestions, I took all of them into consideration which made the class today better than the last one. It might be easier to learn a new language for students if they can forget they are pushed to learn it. Then, setting/atmosphere is very important, and how to create an wonderful activity for students to play with the target language is what I should work on. Visual aids like Power Point pictures and videos can save lots of time. Thankfully, Mr. Tseng provided picture resources information to us.

1. Speaking louder when I am inputting new vocabulary.
2. Providing more authentic setting/occasion for students to use Chinese.
3. I need to design more activities to do comprehension check.
4. There should be more teacher's Demo and moldings before students' activities.
5. Be more careful with the activities time.
6. Having more student-center time, make them feel learning Chinese can be fun.

Overall, I really appreciate Dr. Tseng and other teachers help and support. I will bring all the good teaching skills I've learned here to my teaching work.

Hui Mao

July 5th topic: Fruits and Colors

Reflection:

This was my third teaching practicum. I'm glad that I listened to Dr. Tseng and Ming Laoshi's suggestions, which helped my class flow more logical. I like my last teaching practicum, because I made progress speaking louder and designing more interesting activities. Here are the things I need to improve:

- Correct student's pronunciation mistakes on time.
- Use survey to do the comprehension check.

- Use real props like basket, picnic carpet.
- Use body language to show the instruction.
- First use modeling then use PPT instruction direction.
- Setting, setting, setting.

I learned how to be a “conductor” in the class, sometimes I need to guide students to have a solo practice, sometimes I need to let them have a group chorus.

What I can do to use the knowledge I have learned from UVA Startalk to the school I am teaching.

- Do more student-centered activities, let students choose the output way they want.
- Communication, meaning based task.
- Authentic settings, materials.
- Teacher determines the learning goal, and make sure the assessment connected the comprehension check.

I love UVA Startalk 2011, this summer Dr. Tseng, Ming Laoshi and Shi Laoshi did amazing job to make me a better Chinese teacher. This training experience will be a life-long valuable memory. I am looking forward to participating in more Startalk workshop.