

Day 1 Reflection

Today was the first day of the STARTALK Program. Dr. Tseng led us in reviewing and reexamining the national standards for Foreign Language Learning--- the Five Cs and the three modes of communication. We also revisited LinguaFolio; backward design and OPI. Today's lesson helped me in the following areas.

1. Memorizing the Five Cs and its contents. Before I came to the program I couldn't memorize the Five Cs and its contents. I greatly appreciate that Dr. Tseng helped us to memorize it seamlessly.
2. Better identifying the three modes of communication through a Bingo activity. Although I did not categorize all the activities correctly, I feel comfortable using the three modes of communication in my future planning.
3. Realized the benefits of using LinguaFolio: In the past, I thought that the learning approach was somewhat subjective and does not reflect students' real language levels, and also took some class time. Today's class changed my perspective. I realize that this approach not only empowers students to take responsibility for their learning, but also help teachers to plan effective lessons.
4. Expanding more knowledge on backward design: I heard this term before, but I did not know exactly what the contents were. Today, I have learned the three stages of backward design and what I should do when planning a lesson.
5. Getting familiar with STARTALK Instructional Principles and being prepared to use these principles for lesson planning
6. Better acquainted with the ACTFL's OPI: I know more about the criteria in each level and it will help me to identify my students' oral proficiency level in the future.

Day 2 Reflection

In this Epilogue, Van Pattern posited five implications of Second Language Acquisition research for foreign language teaching. These five implications aim to develop communicative abilities of students. They are the guidelines that allow teachers to explore a range of options and to identify appropriate materials and practices to fit their teaching. The five implications 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
5. We should watch out for what we expect of learners

This article inspires me to reflect upon my own teaching by asking the following questions:

1. What were the learning goals and main focus of my teaching? Did I put communication at the center of lessons rather than focus on grammar instruction?
2. Were the contents of lessons meaningful and related to students' lives?
3. Did I give enough communicative and comprehensive input to students in order for them to produce desired meaningful output?
4. Did the traditional teaching approach in which the teacher asks questions and the students answer still dominate my teaching? Did I design various meaningful and level-appropriate tasks that allow student-student interaction?
5. Did I set right expectations for students? Did I take individual differences into consideration? Was I sensitive to students' production abilities?

In today's training, we talked about a student-centered classroom and performance-based task. Dr. Tseng exemplified a student-centered instruction through a jigsaw activity. Then we were guided to reflect upon our own teaching in implementing this teaching practice. Although I have tried to design age-appropriate and level-appropriate lessons and I have been paying some attention to individual student's needs, I have not been doing a good job in utilizing strategies to create task-based communicative activities. I also rarely consider students in creating assessments. I realize that I have a lot to learn and improve. During today's presentation, Dr. Tseng also shared level-appropriate authentic materials to enhance the target language input. I also have gained more insight on how a teacher can use authentic materials to design task-based and goal-oriented activities.

Day 4 Reflection

Today, we learned the four principles of designing authentic tasks. Dr. Tseng demonstrated the authentic tasks she has designed for her students. Then she guided us to use the four principles to design our own authentic task in small groups. I have benefited a lot from designing several authentic tasks. I have gained great insights by working with other student teachers.

In the afternoon, each of us practiced a five minute mini teaching. It was a nerve racking moment. However, it was a memorable experience. It was also a good opportunity to collaborate with other student teachers and get a taste of what will come in the next two weeks. It was very helpful that Teacher Lin and Teacher Hsu provided us with teaching demos; I had a better idea about what to do with my own teaching preparation.

I felt a little nervous because it was my first time using 100% Chinese to teach a lesson. Even though I had carefully planned my lesson, I was still concerned if my thoughts were on the right track. I greatly appreciate Dr. Tseng, Teacher Lin and Teacher Hsu's encouragement and effective comments. I have also learned so much through other student teachers' exhibitions. Here are some lessons I have learned:

1. Being mindful of every sentence I say and every action I do when conducting a lesson, especially in immersion classroom. Anything I present should not confuse students.
2. Providing and withdrawing appropriate amount of scaffolding for student learning: I need to keep in mind that even when students have developed new skills and competencies sufficient to perform a task with my assistance, it may not mean that tomorrow they will be ready to perform the task independently. The transition from assisted to independent learning is a gradual process. To facilitate this transition, I need to scaffold student learning by designing and following a plan for providing and withdrawing appropriate amount of assistance at appropriate times.
3. Time management: Although today's mini demo did not reflect the real teaching situation. I need to reconsider how I can make the best use of my classroom time and how much I can accomplish.

Day 5 Reflection

Today we had a technology workshop led by Teacher Chen. I was so amazed by her knowledge and hilarious presentation skills. She demonstrated so many wonderful technology tools and I felt a little overwhelmed. I realized that I have a lot to learn. As we are living in the information and technology age, I should keep up with my students.

Through today's workshop, I have learned a new teaching model---Flipped classroom.

The concept of this teaching approach is to take advantage of using technology. This model lets students study the materials at home at their own pace through listening to audio lectures or viewing podcasts before the actual class. This will allow more interaction between students and teachers in the real class. This model also addresses different learning styles and supports active learning environments.

In the class, we experienced different technology tools. I feel that Screen Recording is a very helpful tool for my teaching instruction. "I know" and "Pera Pera" are also very useful tools. Although there are many advantages of using technology in a language classroom, I still believe that technology is just a tool for effective learning and it is not to add fanciness to a classroom. Teachers need to carefully choose a technology tool that can support students to achieve their learning goals. I agree with what Teacher Chen said" Technology will not replace classroom instruction, however, the teachers who know technology will replace the teachers who do not know technology."

Reflection on 2nd teaching practicum

I have finished my 2nd teaching today. Thinking back on this teaching experience, I realized that I have expanded my teaching repertoire to create a more student-centered classroom.

Three student teachers work cooperatively to teach the theme of visiting a Chinese host family. I taught the 3rd period. My objectives for the day were to give and respond to compliments in Chinese culture and to act in a culturally appropriate way to visit a Chinese home: giving your hosts presents, accepting foods and beverages, thanking them, etc. In order to reach the

objectives of our theme, my teammates bought a lot of drinks as props. I also used any possible resources to prepare the gifts that the students need in the activity of visiting a Chinese host family; I even borrowed fake flowers and a café pack from the hotel. These props became the concrete teaching aids materials and they also helped to address different skills of the students.

In the 2nd teaching, I have made some improvements in the following areas:

1. Implementing a standards-based and thematically organized curriculum: Based on the Krashen's input hypotheses, I carefully planned each step of my lesson. At the beginning of the class, I helped the students to review the previously learned information and then introduced the new information in a step by step fashion. I tried to make a smooth transition between contents and activities so the students would not get lost in the process. I also tried to keep the standard-based curriculum in mind and implement three modes of communication when planning my lesson.
2. Facilitating a learner-centered classroom. Since it is required to use 100% target language in the classroom, I had to use different strategies to provide the comprehensible input without using English. I used lot of visual aids such as images, concrete objects and contextual clues. I did frequent modeling before asking the students to do work in pairs or group work. I also tried to modify my language by using the learned words and phrases to deliver the new information so the students were able to understand what I said. During the learning process, I monitored students' performance and provided scaffolding as needed. I tried to utilize the three elicitation techniques which included mechanical drill, meaningful drill and communicative drill in soliciting students output. I also tried to use what I have learned to create more info gap activities to engage student participation.

I appreciate Zhong Laoshi's comments on my 2nd teaching. Based on her responses, the following are the areas I need to continue to work on.

1. Involving all the students when facilitating performance-based activities. For example: if I ask a pair of students to report their interview, instead of only asking that pair to talk, I should also ask the other students what the information the pair just reported to keep the focus of the whole class.

2. Modeling before distributing an activity handout. In today's teaching, I distributed a handout before modeling. I had to capture students' attention and explain what they should do. It is definitely more effective to demonstrate the procedures before asking students to conduct the task.
3. Making clear instruction on the worksheet. Today, I handed out a worksheet for the students to practice the dialogue they have learned without telling them to perform it to the class after practicing. It is very important to give clear instructions to the students, so the students know what is expected of them.

Although I have fulfilled the learning objectives and the class was well-paced. I feel that there is still a lot of room for improvement. To have a successful class is definitely not a simple process. The teacher must spend a great deal of time to think and act. This involves planning the lesson and finding the needed materials. To prepare a class is definitely a time consuming process but certainly rewarding. The success of a class largely depends on the teacher's preparation. I will further evaluate my own teaching skills to be able to continuously make improvement in my 3rd teaching.

Reflection on the 3rd teaching practicum

Today I finished my third teaching in the University of Virginia Startalk program. The theme for our group was "Shopping in Beijing". I taught 3rd period. The learning objectives for the class were: students will be able to bargain for a better price, request their needs, and ask about price. Compared to the first and second teaching, I made some progress on the following areas:

1. Using a lot of modeling to show an expected outcome. I used different ways to do modeling. I not only did modeling with another teacher, but also did modeling with a couple of the more advanced students in order to motivate them.
2. Delivering the course content clearly and providing clear instruction before asking students to do any tasks.
3. Staying in the target language and providing the students with comprehensible input. I used a lot of pictures, body language and concrete materials such as clothing and drinks to get my meaning across.

4. Involving every student in classroom activities. I paid attention to every student's performance and gave each student opportunities to practice the learned materials.

The following are the areas that I need to continually work on:

1. Class pacing: Although I finished all the activities that I planned, I went overtime. Looking back on the class process, I need to learn how to arrange class activities more compactly.
2. Well-sequenced lesson plan: I realized the important of having a well-organized and properly sequenced lesson plan. It benefits both the teacher and the students. It reduces the stress on the teacher and the students will be better prepared to absorb new material when it is presented in an orderly manner. It also allows smoother transitions between activities and saves class time.