

"The three weeks' STARTALK teacher program at University of Virginia was wonderful training for my 2014 summer. I enjoyed the discussion with teachers from different states, the inspiring questions from instructor and teachers, the friendly and productive sharing time with teachers, the cooperation in three-teacher team teaching for the thematic units, and so much more ! I like the positive learning atmosphere and professional development network with teachers from diverse teaching background at the beautiful University with beautiful weather! I learned a lot from the program and will use what I learned into my future teaching. I believe Chinese programs in different school settings will grow better and better with the efforts of fantastic teachers I met in this program!"

Day One Reflection

Today we discussed about the ACTFL national standards (the five Cs), the three communicative modes, the backward design , LinguaFolio and OPI (Oral Proficiency Interview) . Through the discussion with the program teachers, I had much deeper understanding about the topics .

What I learned most and will use in my future teaching is the LinguaFolio. I like the “I can do “ statements that clearly show what students have achieved after a period of time on target language learning. Teachers can also use the feedback and data from students survey and peer survey in LinguFolio to make effective adjustment to better meet the different language needs of students.

Today’s discussion about ACTFL Oral Proficiency Interview is especially useful for me. I like how each group of teachers demonstrated their understanding about different OPI levels. The indicators and key words in different OPI level descriptions really make me think that how I can identify different students’ language skills and , what I need to do to better help students develop skills into higher levels.

Some questions I have after today’s discussion include:

1. Does the Five Cs national standards also apply to the elementary school FLEX programs?
2. In different tasks, we may have different communicative focus with the interpersonal, interpretive, and presentational modes. Do we always need to balance the three modes in our curriculum?
3. If students have unbalanced skills in listening, speaking, reading, and writing , how do we use the three modes activities to help them find more potential in the four areas of foreign language learning ?
4. I found that sometimes it is very difficult to define which stage a learner is , especially between novice high and intermediate, and between intermediate

high and advanced. If a learner's performance is between the two levels, which level do they put them in ?

Some Thoughts about "Epilogue: Implications for Teaching"

This passage mainly discussed the five general implications for language teaching that is acquisition-oriented.

Implication One clearly states that input need to be communicative-intent and meaning-based. Also input need to have meaningful goal when we present all the materials as input. In our classroom teaching, we often try to cover all the textbook lessons without thinking what goal or communicative intent we want students to reach, so the input slip into just more language practice without meaningful purposes. Students feel bored in those practices as they do not use those input to complete real meaningful communicative tasks .

The Implications also makes me think that we need to produce more effective teacher-student and student-student interaction through good questions and good language stimulation. In the process of high quality interactions, the input become more and more comprehensible and eventually will help students to produce good output. Also we need to create more opportunities to let students produce language in order to express some kind of meaning instead for tests or for just mechanical drills or language practice. We teachers need to be sensitive

to students' production abilities and know very well what help and strategies students need to develop into more productive language use.

Day Two Reflection

Today we read passages about student-centered classroom, communicative approach, authentic materials and discuss their applications in our classroom teaching.

I think the core value of student-centered classroom is to stimulate more desired learning outcomes from students and to eventually reach autonomous learning of students, by working together in many ways including effective grouping and pair, developing high-interest topics for motivation, effective correction strategies for better fluency than accuracy, and good facilitation from teacher. One misconception about student-centered classroom is that teacher doesn't need to anything or do less than students do. Actually an effective student-centered classroom needs much work from teacher's preparation, modeling, scaffolding, and monitoring in order to help the student-centered learning move on into the most productive directions.

What I learned most from today's discussion is about how to choose appropriate authentic materials and use them effectively for the learning targets.

Besides the “CALL-IT” principals of choosing authentic materials, the most important factors in authentic material applications I think , should be the learning objectives and meaningful communicative purpose. We need to think what learning objective we need students to reach and what authentic materials will help them to reach it . Also we need to choose and analyze what communicative goals the authentic materials will help students to complete , then we can use the authentic materials more effectively. Sometimes I feel that we rush into authentic materials for the sake of “authentic” without thinking what teaching and learning goals we desire to reach with the help of using authentic materials. We sometimes just display the authentic materials instead of using them in more meaningful context.

Day Three Reflection

Today in the morning we had lecture about brain research and language learning, and discussion about comprehensible input in the afternoon.

The Brains research provided much convincing support for the benefits of being multilingual and gave us many implications for teaching language. As “the most effective state of mind for learning is relaxed and alert” from brain research, we classroom teachers need to create a learning environment that students feel comfortable and also try their best to reach the expectations. We often need to

think how to design engaging activities that students have fun in practicing language and at the same time have positive pressure to complete learning goals. Both extremes (no stress at all and too much stress) will not be helpful for effective learning.

I like the experiment of recognizing an icon from a part of the image. This brain experiment clearly show that “learning is relatively permanent change in neuronal firing patterns due to experience”. As a Chinese teacher, I need to create more opportunities for students to encounter the new characters and review the character images to help students remember the characters. The more visual cues students have about the new words , the easier and longer they will remember the words for future usage.

An interesting fact about language learning from brain research is: language acquisition is a slow and uneven process. Learning a language well needs much time and efforts. Parents and students need to be aware of this. Besides students may experience different “ stages” in the long process of language learning and need to keep the motivation for future leaning.

Day Four Reflection

Today we had discussion about authentic materials and IPA (Integrated Performance Assessment). Through the discuss I have clearer concept about how

to design real life tasks with the authentic materials to help learners use the target language .

Looking back on many classroom activities and tasks I used , I come to find that many of my tasks have meanings and are for daily life situations, but they lacked clearly-defined learning outcomes. So students just stayed in the stages of practice with role-play or recited sentences, but seldom been challenged to use the language for real effective communication. When we design tasks , we also need to think what learning objectives we need to reach and how students can benefit from the tasks to communicate more in target language and appropriate cultural situations.

What inspired me most today is Professor Tseng's effective usage of rubrics. She wrote rubrics for each individual task and listed each evaluation category very clearly in the rubric. For dialogue tasks, she has rubrics for each students with different roles. In this way, each speaker's specific outcome is more effectively assessed. Rubrics can never be "one-size-fit-all" tool. We need to focus on different aspects of different tasks and adapt rubrics for more accurate assessment of students' communication skills. Rubrics can be a very effective learning tool for students to guide their learning process towards communication.

The dilemma for us to use more IPA is that it is very time-consuming. We don't have quality time to assess each individual student . In many K-12 schools, the Chinese teachers are the only one in teaching Chinese. They don't other Chinese teachers' collaboration and the support in school to do more IPAs.

Day Five Reflection

Today we had the whole day technology training with the most humorous lecturer Henny Chen. After introducing the concept of "flipped classroom", Chen Laoshi discussed about many tools and helped us with our hand-on experience in the language lab. We had chance to try different tools that can be helpful to our teaching.

I tried google document, youtube, 1know.net, screencast-o-matic and some i-pad apps for foreign language teaching . I found we can use these tools for different kinds of communication tasks and can engage students more effectively. What inspired me most from Chen Laoshi's practice with her high school students is that her usage of technology in teaching helped to cultivate students' autonomous learning habits and motivate them to communicate in Chinese. With the help of technology, students can have pair exchange, bigger group communications, self-created language resources in multi-media, and learn from each other in the online class community.

Technology develops very fast each year. Some teachers may find that it is so hard to catch up with so many new technology tools. Actually we don't need to know how to use every tool, or switch to new tools frequently. We need to know clearly what communication objectives we want students to reach , then what technology tools can help us with that learning purpose.

Reflection on My Third Teaching Practicum

Today the unit theme is “shopping in Beijing” and I taught the second period. The learning objectives are to help students to speak clothes, colors and sizes in Chinese, to acquire information and to bargain price in shopping.

What I did well for this time’s teaching include: 1. I stayed in 100% target language for instruction by using PPT, real clothes, colorful pictures, song, gestures, body language and fun modeling, etc to help students understood the learning content and to immerse them in more comprehensible language input. 2. I had good interaction with students. Through asking questions to individual, pair groups or whole class, I had chance to check different students’ understanding. Through different class activities, students had chance to practice the words and sentence patterns in meaningful context. I walked through groups and provided help when students wanted to say more. 3. I had differentiation teaching. I asked Jiang Xiaozhi, a boy who already know most of the learning contents, more challenging questions to push him speak more, and gave him some personal “show time” to perform, so he was very active to participate in group activities to practice. Some students completed the group activities earlier than others, then I check with them individually and gave them some supplemental tasks to review. For students who need more time to complete task, I provided more specific help to make sure they understand the content. I used strategies to try to meet the different learning needs from students.

What I learned and still need to improve include: 1. Be more proficient in time control. In this period, I spent a little bit more time in reviewing and vocabulary learning, then there is a little bit rush in introducing the new sentence patterns and practice. 2. Keep better teaching pace. When I observed that most students already

know the words for clothes and colors, I need to go to next language point quicker to let students have time focusing on practicing the new sentences. I think a proficient teacher should be very skillful in making good spontaneous changes according to students' in-class performance . 3. I need to give students a better closure assessment. In order to check if the learning objectives are met, teachers may prepare variety of assessments such as speaking exit ticket, listening tasks, simple checklists, or short quiz to let students show what they can do .The assessments may be more flexible and diverse based on many factors such as class time, different teaching focuses, students background, and so on.