

Reflection on 6/21/2011

Kuanchen Pearson

My first day of the 2011 Virginia Startalk Chinese Teacher Academy at University of Virginia was a great success. I enjoy being a student again after finishing my third year of teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language at Fairview Elementary, Fairfax County, only yesterday.

I am a great admirer of Dr. Tseng, and felt excited to be one of her Startalk students.

This morning we had an overview of “The 5 Cs: Objectives for Foreign Language Instruction.” Dr. Tseng took us sailing the 5 Cs with various learning strategies and best practices. These strategies for instruction will help me become much more aware of how students learn and how they can learn more efficiently and effectively.

In class, we have many top-selected participants (experienced teachers). After watching a short video of one teacher’s teaching demo, we discussed and exchanged the rationale of language teaching. I found myself becoming a better language teaching facilitator. Dr. Tseng consistently emphasized meaningful and student-center teaching practice and I could see how these best practices help students become more autonomous.

This evening, I am writing a commentary on one of my homework assignments. “Implications for Teaching”; my mind is becoming clearer about the myths of teaching foreign language. That is, we must better prepare students to take responsibility for their own learning by providing them with meaningful interactions through the use of the target language and comprehensible input, with learner-centered instruction and with backward design in mind.

Reflection on 6/22/2011

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We started our day with thinking back how we learned second language in 70's.

Thus bring me back to my childhood memory of learning language with lots of drilling and memorizing. I began self-conscious to compare myself how I acquired my second language (English) to my students' Chinese learning today.

Dr. Tseng again used her wealth knowledge of language teaching to explain the background of these theories and approaches in second language. She let us sail through 1970 Behaviorism, to 1980 Innatist perspectives and after 1990s: Psychological perspective to the he Sociocultural perspective and the present with easily understand language teaching and learning examples.

In the afternoon we emphasized on the Task-based Language Teaching (TBLT), it has four features of primary focus on meaning, self determined resources, real-life experiences and clearly defined communicative outcomes. We all excited by this task approach because it shows a new way of language learning and teaching in this post-methods era.

Reflection on 6/23/2011

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Today Ms. Pierce / 明涓老師 gave us a wonderful presentation of teaching language and culture in a meaningful communicative and authentic context.

She began with clarifying what is authentic material and what is the most appropriate translation for “Authentic Materials”. Students responded with all kinds of translations, they are from 原汁原味, 道道地地, to 真實語料/材料, but none of them as good as 第一手資料/first hand materials she interpreted for us. Later we shared our concerns we face in working with authentic materials. Ms. Pierce also tipped us how to create authentic tasks through effective incorporate of authentic materials (some original video clips). Her presentations help us understand that teaching language/culture and vocabulary/grammar in meaningful communicative and authentic contexts is a great way to encourage students learning Chinese.

Dr. Tseng came back to the teaching stage in the afternoon and lectured us with her passionate language teaching model, TBLT/Task-Based Language Teaching. I enjoyed so much in listening to Dr. Tseng’s insightful best practices and happily exchanged my opinion with other startalk participants during each pedagogical task activity. In “Task”, student becomes group participant, risk-taker and innovator while teacher’s role is selector and sequencer of tasks. (M)eaning-focused language use, clearly defined communication (O)utcomes with self-determined language (R)sources and real-life (E)xperience, so does the “MORE” the better becomes my daily motto of language teaching.

Reflection on 6/24/2011

Kuanchen Pearson

We have finished Day 5 of the Startalk camp today! We were having fun from beginning to the end of the day.

Today we started our day with hands on technology. We walk into classroom to find many gadgets already displayed on the table. Teacher Tseng taught us how to use these gadgets to write Chinese characters so our students would be able to use these devices in the class. He also introduced "Go Chinese" to us; it is a fun and interactive program. I am looking forward to use this new program with our students at practicum next week.

Another fun activity was the TPRS introduced by Ms. Small who gave us a great tool to teach language. Teaching Proficiency through Reading and Storytelling, TPRS builds proficiency in the use of grammatical structures by having the students read and invent stories. Students are not learning about the language; they are learning to use the language. Ms. Small showed us how to create a fun context in which the target structures and vocabulary return repeatedly within a conversation. In this context, students acquire proficiency in a natural, conversational way. Students are not learning about the language; they are learning to use the language. I can't believe that I did learn some basic German 101 over this fun activity.

A TPRS lesson even got better and more understandable after Ms. Pierce further did post review activities with us. I was having fun to find myself did PQA in front of class for my group. Asking the students questions about themselves (PQA, or Personalized Questions and Answers) keeps them actively involved in the entire process.

I believed that it is the teacher's job to show enthusiasm and to be supportive at every step of every lesson.

Reflection on 6/29/2011

Kuanchen Pearson

Today, our group has finished the 1st day of practicum teaching.

It was exciting to see students' progress from ground zero. To imagine that most of the students came to the camp without any Chinese background, and now they are able to greet, to say/ask one's name, age, Chinese zodiac, and understand question words "誰 shei2 - who" and "嗎 ma " and be able to say related time in Chinese. It seemed an impossible mission to me before this practicum started, but we did it!!!! It's such a big achievement! Big thanks to my team's hard work last night and all the encouragement and advices gave by Shi Laoshi, Ming Laoshi and Dr. Tseng during pre-practicum rehearsal.

Although we had some issue in planning schedule because Doty Laoshi over used her teaching time for reviewing previous learned lesson. In general we had a great success day, We were being able to provide interactive and fun teachings on Day 3 to keep students' learning spirit high!!! THANK YOU!!!

Reflection on 07/02/2011

Kuanchen Pearson

Today is my second time practicum teaching (day 6), it went great.

The theme of this lesson was Dinning in a Chinese restaurant (Beijing Hotel). I designed an interactive lesson to let student role play the waiter and the customer.

They were not only learned to take order in the restaurant and also learned Chinese currency by counting the money using colloquial speech/ spoken language.

The sentence structures they have to familiar are

你想喝/吃什么?

我想喝/吃 + beverages/ food. 來 + number + measure word + beverages/food.

And proceed to pay the bill in the restaurant with 多少錢? and report to the class what they have ordered and add up total price from the menu with 一共多少錢?

I think a good lesson design will encourage students' best outcome and induce their classroom performance. When the teacher shift classroom learning responsibility to students, let students immerse in plenty of student's center activities, the output of their language skill would be tremendous.

徐老师 started out our co-teaching with fun activity by giving students' different flavor source to test to connect their real life experience. Students were able to activate their just learned new phrase to describe their tasting samples with 甜甜的, 酸酸的, 辣辣的。 It was a fun moment to see their faces with all kinds of expressions.

In the third section of the day, 兜的老师 presented a short video clip which we self-made last night (11pm--) to assess students' understanding and listening skill。 This is also an interesting activity in which we / three teachers were acting out dinning in Chinese restaurant (the theme of lesson). Since we were making sure the conversation we used in the video students already had learned in the previous lesson, it was not surprised to me that students be able to answer most questions using target language.

I appreciated that my group's cooperation so we can have a wonderful day of teaching and learning experience.

Dr. Tseng also gave me advices to let me focus even more onto leading students to practice and students' self-practices in the class. I also need to be careful when using English instruction on board. Dr. Tseng wanted us to demonstrate what we want students to do in the activity instead of merely showing the English instruction on the PPT slide.

I will remember these good advices and put into my final practicum next Wednesday.