

(1) Reflections Day 1: Tuesday, June 21st, 2011 by Hou-Dan Chin

“30 years from now, it won’t matter what shoes you wore, how your hair looked, or the jeans you bought. What will matter is what you learned and how you used it.”

Summary of Epilogue: Implications for Teaching

- The more input, the better: input is language the learner hears or reads that has communicative intent or is meaning-based; put communication at the center of lesson; meaning becomes central; learners learn subject matter or contents through the 2nd language (Immersion, content-based instruction, Natural Approach-TPR, picture-files?, vocabulary presentation). Food: the “meaning goal” is to categorize into “likes” and “dislikes,” or items needed for a receipt. Travel: match “personality types” with “traveling style;” input without a meaning goal or without communicative intent can become language practice.
- The more interaction, the better: interaction promotes acquisition. Classrooms in which interactions truly focus on meaning and are level-appropriate for learners will foster acquisition; task-oriented activities in which the task has a particular communicative or informational goal; learners’ modification of input heightens things that are missing in their developing systems, which makes learners more actively process the input.
- All learner production should be meaning based or communicative: two ways to use language to produce meaning- (1). Interactive tasks that are communicative, (2) tasks with a grammatical focus (“structured output”). As learners create structured output to express meaning to other learners, their output becomes input for others (ex. “add additional info” part to Obama’s “be allowed to,” “be able to,” and “will” exercise).
- Focus on form (grammar instruction) should be meaning-based and tied to input or communication.
- “Recasts”: restatements by a speaker when a non-native speaker produces something that is not quite right. The learner does not take the focus off meaning, but instead temporarily puts the focus on meaning *and* form (ex. the learner correct speaker’s grammatical errors but keep his/her meaning).
- “Confirmation Check”: a learner may query a speaker about something just said to confirm the informational intent, which may lead to a negotiated “correct way” of saying what the learner wanted to say.
- “Clarification Requests”: listener signals noncomprehension; listener asks overt questions about what the learner is trying to say. “Do you mean...?” “What do you mean?” “Huh?”
- We should watch out for what we expect of learners: learner simply can’t speak in full sentences at some stage in any spontaneous way. They though they really want to and they like what they are talking about.

Reflections: Overview of research supported best practices applicable for the STARTALK program

- “5 Cs”: I was the first time openly told that I needed to be so proficient and quick in identifying which category a learning activity exemplifies the five National Standards to a point that I could pin-point the sub-standard of the activity in a few seconds without hesitation. I have known, learned, and contemplated about the standards, but have never memorized, or used them enough that I could differentiate them without any problems automatically. I need to work on this.
- “Backward Design”: I heard from a teacher who sat by me sharing her interpretation of Backward Design, to which she compared it driving a car to its destination. The desirable results were the destination, acceptable evidences were the ways to get there, and learning experiences and instructions were the actual action of driving.
- Ms. Chung’s video presentation: It was a really touching moment when I saw Ms. Chung, a Chinese teacher from Taiwan using the maps of subways from Taiwan and China to teach Chinese to American teenagers of various ethnicities and backgrounds. No matter what the political differences that Taiwan and China have had for the last sixty two years, the Chinese people were able to unite because of the same language and culture. In the beginning of the 21st century, Chinese people were teaching Chinese to the young Americans in the public schools, private schools and heritage schools. This is really exciting for me!

(2) Reflections Day 2: Wednesday, June 22nd, 2011 by Hou-Dan Chin

Theories and pedagogical introduction in second language acquisition & teaching methodology (Part I);
Clip#11: Communicating about Sports (Chinese 1, grade 6)

Reflections: Theories and pedagogical introduction in second language acquisition & teaching methodology (Part I)

On June 22nd Dr. Tseng gave us an overview of the SLA theories and pedagogy ranged from the Behaviorism in the 1970s to the Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) in 2003.

- I was brought up in the era of Grammar-Translation Method (GMT) and Audiolingual Method (ALM) in which years I learned my native language, Chinese and my second language, English. They were so much ingrained in me that up till today I still used these methods to teach my students who were born and raised in the U.S. thirty years later. We discussed Stephen Krashen’s Monitor Model and 5 (Input) Hypothesis and concluded that there was nothing about “output” nor was the role of a teacher. After the 1990s, Psychological Perspective provided a new approach, the Communicative Approach (CA) to explain learner’s use of complex syntax and ability to use the language.
- In this period, the Interaction Hypothesis (Michael Long, 1983), the Noticing Hypothesis (Richard Schmidt, 1990, 2001) and the Input Processing (Bill Van Patten, 2003) proposed many teaching strategies that are commonly used in SLA today. In 1978, Lev Vygotsky proposed the concept of “Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)” that empowers learners to a higher level of performance.
- The representative teaching approach from 1980s till now is Communicative Approach, which include four research-supported practices: (1). Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), (2). Natural Approach (NA), (3). Cooperative Language Learning (CLL), (4). Content-Based Instruction (CBI) and

(5). Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT). The feature of a task was gone over and we brainstormed in developing tasks for several topics and had fun in our small-group discussion.

Clip#11: Communicating about Sports

- The teacher's dress looked conservative and traditional, eyes looked focused, and facial expression was serious. She started the class with students standing up greeting her, announced lesson's topic in the beginning, and gave instructions in English and taught vocabulary in target language using word cards through the Audiolingual method (ALM) that students repeated after her. She used real balls to demonstrate how each sport was to play and later tested students to see if they could identify and play a sport by calling out its name. Students seemed to like the physical aspect of the drill even though they performed it mechanically.
- In the second segment of the class the teacher paired students up for them to find out which sport they liked or disliked by filling out a worksheet. Students took turn asking questions and giving answers with each other while the teacher circling around different groups to give feedback. Students went through the items sequentially and patiently and enjoyed speaking and writing Chinese. At the last segment of the class, students regrouped to role play a skit to the whole class holding scripts in their hands. In it each student introduced himself/herself including name and family members such as parents, siblings and pets. Students participated eagerly and courageously without being afraid to make mistakes.
- I presented a task that set at a young American female student (who) wanted to go shopping at the Shiu-Shui Street in Beijing (北京秀水街) for clothes, shoes, purses, perfumes with a budget of \$1,000 dollars. She would need to need to negotiate price with various shopkeepers in order to buy as many items she could within her budget. On the contrary, the shopkeepers would sell as many items as they could to rid of the inventory in their stores. We needed to come up with a "mock" visit for this young female student to the street vendors to prepare her for the vocabulary needed without contaminated her decision of the "self-determined language resources." At the end Dr. Tseng presented her Modified Task Based Language Teaching (MTBLT) and we were all excited about this new model, which we all had a chance to contribute to the establishment of the framework.

(3) Reflections Day 3: Thursday, June 23rd, 2011 by Hou-Dan Chin

Theories and pedagogical introduction in second language acquisition & teaching methodology (part II)

- "Authentic Materials": Teacher Natasha Pierce opened my eyes and ears by introducing Authentic Materials such as postcards, poster, newspaper, cartoon, menu, magazine, yellow pages, fast food advertisements, street signs, receipts, tickets, invoices, children books (天啊, 錯啦! 丁點兒貓找朋友), movies, film critics forum, twitter, micro-blog, cooking video/website, Beidou.com, bands/singers, Youtube.com, and Public Services Announcement (PSA).

Artworks from talented contemporary musicians is a good source to approach to the young generation: Advertisements (McDonalds, KFC), young musicians (S.H.E., 杜德偉, 任賢齊, 王立宏, 卜學亮, 圖騰樂團), bilingual musician (Abigail Washburn), cartoon movies (西遊記 The Journey to the West, 花木蘭 Mu-Lan), cartoons (Sponge Bob, 水果奶奶, 范曉宣- 洗澡洗手)

- The Difficult role of a Foreign Language teacher: The more I think about it, the more I was amazed by the educational expectations that are put on the foreign language teachers. Compared to the teachers of other subjects (ex. math or science), foreign language teachers have to prepare curriculum encompasses other fields – 5C’s, target culture and host culture (Culture), comparison b/w two languages or cultures (Comparisons), connections to other subjects (Connections), and target community and host community and goal of lifelong learning (Communities). A teacher of one subject only needs to prepare curriculum for that specific subject; however, a foreign language teacher has to prepare contents stretching from language out to other fields.
- The concept of “culture” may include products of history and literature. For example, the poems of the poets 徐志摩 and 郭沫若 are connected to their specific historical backgrounds. Therefore, other than the poems they wrote, a Chinese language teacher can use the incidents of the Chinese history periods associated with the two poets as materials to teach students.
- Today Dr. Tseng finished introducing the concepts/model of Task Based Language Teaching (MTBLT). We had been assigned into groups to brainstorm tasks for our Practicum next week. I also taught a short 10 minutes lesson on the Quantifier and the Possessive. I did not even have a clear idea when I went up front to teach this lesson. Anyway, I survived. (Our classmates were tough students! They would not cooperate with me in the beginning.) We also had a heated discussion of the details of the concept of “Language Focus” in the model.
- Language output depends on the task teacher designs. So I am responsible if my students do not talk.

(4) Reflections Day 4: Friday, June 24th, 2011 by Hou-Dan Chin

Instructional technology, TPR/TPR Storytelling & differentiated instruction

- Teacher Mr. Leonard Tseng taught us how to use “Palm PC,” ”CE Star” + “QQ Star,” ”Pocket PC,” “Chinese Voki,” “Speech to Text,” “Live Mocha (Live Chat),” “Google Voice,” and “Go Chinese.” There were so many hi-tech devices to use to approach our young 21st century students. I found out the “Go Chinese” is more friendly than the on-line “Moodle Virtual Classroom.” I plan to use it for my students in the coming September.

Mr. Tseng is such a knowledge teacher and a nice person. He demonstrated how to use those devices to input Chinese, explained how these devices could work with iPod, iPhone, cell phone, PC, which our students might have. It was unbelievable that as a Chinese teacher, I had to learn about modern technology so that I could keep up pace with my students. I felt like I was like those outdated devices, old, dead but charged!

TPR/TPR Storytelling:

- In the afternoon, Ms. Helen Smaller conducted a TPR and a TPR Storytelling session with us today. It was amazing that I learned about fifteen German words in about one hour, acted out a story, and retold the story in German. I enjoyed this session very much because it reminded me of my experience learning English when I was young. I enjoyed sounding out German; I liked being challenged by the teacher’s commands and reacted as fast as possible. It gave me a sense of accomplishment when I understood the teacher’s commands and felt alive when I moved around physically. I felt like a little girl again and I enjoyed other classmates’ laughter.

- The happy spirits carried out to the next session when Ms. Natasha Pierce conducted a follow-up session. Even though I did not quite understand what my task was when I was called on to the front to do our story. (We ended up doing it wrong and did not involve our classmates in making the story.) But we came up with a very good, funny, and interesting story. I had a good time in it.

Later I laughed till my stomach hurt when I saw the next two groups conducting their TPR Storytelling sessions. It was so funny and wacky that I could not stop laughing but enjoying their performance. I finally realized that learning a language could be a fun and unforgettable experience. It does not have to be full of painful and unbearable drilling that I felt I was wasting the time of my life! I guess it was because I totally understood the meanings of those words and I could imagine the story would be a wacky and funny one. Therefore, it was so thrill for me to participate the learning and enjoy it.

(5) Reflections: of my First Teaching: Saturday, July 2nd, 2011 by Hou-Dan Chin

I did my first teaching yesterday. I was all sweaty when I finished it and desperately needed a cup of water. I did not go to bed until 1:00 am preparing my PowerPoint and woke up at 6:15 am to continue preparing it.

- Since I changed the background color of my PowerPoint, the “heart” in the PowerPoint changed too. I could not figure out how to change it back, nor put an “X” in front of it. I worked until 8:20 am when I left my hotel room. But I did rehearse in front a mirror of the whole presentation and realize that every word I said was the vocabulary I would teach that morning. No needed to converse to students because they would not understand me anyway...
- I exaggerated the acting/demo of each word toooooo much that wasting a lot of time and creating confusion for students.
- The position of the left and right needs to coincide with the student’s perspective.
- Before I moved to pairing students up to do practices, re-teach the key vocabulary one more time.
- Do not do too much teacher-centered talking/teaching; do more student-centered practices to allow students’ language output.
- Pacing is too slow: do no dwell on individual word’s acting/demo or students’ “solo or chorus practice;” once students get it, move on to the next word.

I felt that I am a real Chinese teacher and understand the role of it. I appreciate Dr. Tseng, male Teacher Tseng, and Teacher 施, Teacher 明, and every Teacher’s help and advises. Without you, I could not be where I was yesterday. Thank you so much!

(6) Reflections of my Second Teaching: Saturday, July 2nd, 2011 by Hou-Dan Chin

I did my second teaching today. I was all nervous when I woke up this morning because I thought my laptop was down and lost everything in it. I did not go to bed until almost 1:00 am preparing my PowerPoint last night.

- Dr. Tseng: The “flyswatter” game was too teacher-centered in which I asked one student at a time to identify a dish when I said the name of it. There was only interpretation/comprehension skills involved with no language output.

I should break the class into three small groups with 3 or 4 students each. Pair them up so that one speak the name of the dish and the other identify it (i.e. use the flyswatter to hit the picture of the dish). Thus there was language output from every student and

- Teacher Natasha: I should use any ways I could (ex. talk, or act it out) to teach a new word/phrase/sentence pattern. In today’s lesson, I did not teach the phrase, “First... Then” clearly thus students were unsure about what exactly the phrase meant (ex. a student asked me, “What does ‘Zai’ mean?”).

I should have clearly said the words in the phrase. Then I should have used my body language to act it out. If the meaning of a phrase is abstract, I should think of some movement/action to demonstrate its meaning. In today’s case, I used a flyswatter hitting one dish first, dramatically pause for a while before I hit the other dish. I should have demonstrated the phrase by acting it out like this several times. No matter what ways I did to teach a phrase, the purpose is to teach it very clearly so students can understand and learn it without using English. I did not get this when Teacher Natasha told me this activity last night so I did not design the activity well. I need to practice this skill more!

- I found out that when conducting a lesson, there were advantages and disadvantages of using a PowerPoint. If a teacher relies too much on a PowerPoint in which instructions are written in English and students read the instructions silently without any inputs from the teacher even in the target language, it is not “target language immersion.” The students still use English to understand what the teacher means, which is not the purpose of “target language immersion.” Teachers should give instructions in target language while students read the English instructions on the slide.

I remember in my son’s Japanese Immersion math class, the Japanese teacher not only taught the math concepts in Japanese, she also gave instructions in Japanese. The students were not allowed to speak English; the teacher very seldom speaks English nor shows slide in English. Hmmm! I wonder what the theory is behind the surface???

I want to thank Teacher Kitty Chung, Teacher Alice Lin, and Teacher Mei Reeder for helping me and putting up with me for my last-minute panic strike of losing my PowerPoint slides before the class. Next time I need to save an extra copy of my PowerPoint, be able to spell Pin In and know the simplified Chinese characters to teach my students without any interruptions. Thank you all Great Teachers!