

Selected Self-Reflection

Day One

In today's class, we revisited the concepts of the Five Cs from Dr. Tseng's introduction of the STANDARDS FOR FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING. Through her explicit and systematic delivery and her carefully designed, student-centered learning activities (role-playing and jigsaw cooperative activities), Dr. Tseng guided us through the relearning and clarification of each national standard, and assessed our learning outcome through the class activities and exercises.

I now have a better understanding of the structure and precise definitions of the Oral Proficiency Interview, as well as its functions in relation to improving student learning outcome. A clear understanding of OPI will be helpful in my future student evaluations, and will help me to understand where I need to improve my teaching to facilitate student learning.

I also gained a new understanding of the Lingua Folio can-do statement. As an assessment method, the Lingua Folio statement gives students the opportunity to evaluate themselves in the three areas of communicative mode (interpretive, interpersonal, and presentational) through listening, reading, person-to-person communication, and spoken and written production. Lingua Folio also provides an effective way to encourage students by giving them a sense of control of their own learning outcome. It sets a positive tone for their learning processes (a "can-do" attitude).

In the coming weeks, I wish to learn how to design lesson plans that use only Chinese. This will be a new adventure for me. I also need to familiarize myself with the national standards and the three communication modes so I can use them to guide my lesson plans. I am excited to be in this positive learning environment, and I look forward to more learning and practicing opportunities.

Day Two

Summary and my understanding of "Epilogue: Implications for Teaching"

"Epilogue: Implications for Teaching" is the concluding section of the book "From Input to Output: A teacher's guide to Second Language Acquisition" by Van Patten, published in 2002.

In this section, the author provides a summary of the five key implications in second-language acquisition, with emphasis on the critical role that input plays in language learning. The author defines input as what "the learner hears or reads that has communicative intent or is meaning-based. The student's job is to find the meaning in

that language” (Patten, 2002). Therefore, the more input the language teacher incorporates in the curriculum, the better for the language learner.

Communication involves interaction, and the second implication the author stresses is interaction: the more interaction (using the targeted language to interact) the learner has, the better for the output. Achieving this kind of output requires the learner’s willing participation, so the interactions cannot be teacher-centered. The language level must also be appropriate for the learner.

The third implication refers to the fact that, while language learning requires memorization, its reproduction should also be meaning-based. Teachers should design sentences that fulfill the communicative nature of this requirement.

Implication number four states that learning grammar can also be a meaning-making process. Instead of cutting each sentence to pieces for grammatical analysis, presenting complete sentences to the learner that focus on constructing meaning using the sentence form are a more effective way to teach grammar.

When language teaching is based on the foundations of the communicative mode and is focused on making meaning, students will learn.

“The Student-Centered Classroom” (2002) by Leo Jones, and Dr. Tseng’s book “推动专业化的 AP 中文教学” (2007) both contribute ideas for the creation of a student-centered classroom, and both provide ample guidelines and examples for student-centered activities. As enlightening as my reading was, however, I was even more inspired by watching Dr. Tseng in action. Her classroom facilitation is student-centered; she demonstrates her theory of teaching by modeling it.

This morning, Dr. Tseng used the following student-centered activities to facilitate the class discussion: group discussion, information gap, interview, and a survey that contained twenty questions. All these activities fit the communicative mode.

In the afternoon, the class focused on how to select authentic material for teaching. The guideline for choosing the material is CALL-IT (Context, Age, Language level - Importance of the Task). In the process of introducing the guideline, Dr. Tseng used different materials to illustrate why and how to select authentic material according to the CALL-IT guidelines. I have been an active learner and have been involved in each step of learning, and I have interacted with Dr. Tseng and my classmates.

What inspires me most is the pedagogy of student-centered learning. Tseng’s book provides the theory, as well as many detailed classroom activities that focus on student-centered learning. I plan to implement them in my classroom.

Day Three

This morning, Dr. Ferres from the Curry School of Education at the University of Virginia gave us a presentation on “Brains and Second Language Acquisition.” Her presentation was very informative and educational. There is no better way to understand how humans learn than learning how the brain works.

Throughout her lecture, Dr. Ferres involved students in the demonstrations and discussions. Her lecture refreshed our knowledge of the brain’s physiology and the primary functions of its different parts. For example:

- Thousands of neurons connect our brain, and each relates to the others by sending biochemical /electrical signals. The brain’s first function is to keep humans alive.
- The neuron's physical structure includes dendrites, axons, and synapses.
- The neuron sends its biochemical signals through the synapses, communicating excitatory or inhibitory actions to the next neuron.
- The chemical-electrical flow occurs in thousands of synapses simultaneously, allowing humans to perceive and understand the world around us in various ways, including the use of language.
- Learning creates new pathways for new patterns of neurons to work together.
- Humans cannot exist without communication, and language is the core of communication.

What does all this have to do with second-language acquisition?

- Humans have the innate ability to learn language.
- When humans speak two or more languages, the brain learns code switching, which will decrease the loss of cognitive performance associated with aging.
- For second-language learners, the more meaningful the input, the better they will learn (one of Van Patten’s five core implications).
- Meaning and communication are essential for acquiring a second language.

How does learning Chinese affect the human brain?

According to the research presented by Dr. Ferres, people who have studied Chinese have more developed right brains.

In this afternoon’s discussions, Dr. Tseng elaborated on Krashen’s Input Hypothesis, Swain’s output hypothesis, Vygotsky’s zone of proximal development, and Long’s

interaction hypothesis. She also placed additional emphasis on the process of change from mechanical drills to meaningful drills, and to communicative drills. She mentioned that the communicative drill is the most important of all, because it gives students opportunities to use the language. During our brief practice teaching, I have noticed how other teachers incorporated the mechanical and communicative drills in their teaching demos. I realize from this that I need to make sure I understand these theories and concepts, and also to learn from other teachers. The assistant teachers' presentations are a good opportunity to observe modeling in action, and I hope to learn from their examples.

Day Four

This morning's discussion was about Integrated Performance Assessment (IPA). IPA has three phases. The first is the Interpretive Communication Phase, during which students listen to or read an authentic text (e.g. newspaper article, radio broadcast, etc.), provide information, and answer interpretive questions as a means of assessing comprehension. The teacher then gives students feedback on their performance. The second phase is called the Interpersonal Communication Phase. After receiving feedback on the interpretive phase, students engage in interpersonal oral communication about a particular topic which relates to the interpretive text. This phase should be either audio- or videotaped. The final phase is the Presentational Communication Phase, in which students engage in presentational communication by sharing their research, ideas, and opinions. Sample presentational formats include speeches, drama skits, radio broadcasts, posters, brochures, essays, Web sites, etc. (as in Dr. Tseng's presentation).

I have not used IPA often, but now I realize that it is student-centered and involves three parts of the communication mode. Giving students tasks using authentic materials not only gives them an opportunity to learn the targeted language, it also enables them to become better acquainted with its culture.

I have used some classroom activities that are student-centered, but in the future, I need to focus more on obtaining specific student learning outcomes. I also need to communicate learning objectives to students in a clear and well-defined fashion. Today, I learned from observing other teachers that teacher-student interactions and classroom activities need to be meaningful and focused on communication. Here are some specific areas in which I believe I need to improve:

1. Make sure the steps in the lesson are interconnected, to make the teaching meaningful.
2. Put tone marks on pinyin.
3. Give clear demonstrations to students before beginning group activities.

4. Reduce concentration on mechanical drills and increase emphasis on interpersonal and communicative drills.
5. Demonstrate clear language patterns for students to emulate.
6. Create more opportunity for student output.

Day Five

Reflection on Technology Training

In the past, I have shown videos, DVDs and YouTube clips in classes, but I have not used other technologies. Master teacher Chen's workshop gave me great exposure to a variety of current technologies that I can incorporate in my teaching.

I learned through Chenlaoshi's presentation that teachers can utilize such technology as 1know.net, Perapere, Flipped video + Google MCQ, YouTube, and many similar tools to work with students, and to prepare homework in a fun and innovative way that makes it easy for the teacher to assess student progress. Students can use their own time outside of class to accomplish the first two steps of learning: memorization and understanding. With the preparation already done before class, teachers can use their time more efficiently to facilitate steps 3-6 of learning: application, analysis, evaluation, and creation (from Chenlaoshi's presentation). Modern innovations and technology help to change the teacher-centered classroom into a student-centered classroom. They also increase opportunities for teacher/student interaction and communication. Teachers can answer student questions and give feedback instantly. Using technology also reduces paper usage, which helps protect the environment.

In the coming semester, I will use 1know.net to prepare material for students to work on in their own time. I do not know if everyone will have an ipad to use, but I do think that they can help students accomplish many tasks, such as working in groups to create projects through recording, taking pictures, and creating stories in Chinese. These types of activities will give students more opportunities to interact and get immediate feedback and ideas from each other. They will also inspire an interest in learning. iPads are a great tool to help students work collaboratively, acquire new information, and discuss and generate new ideas.

My first week of learning at the Startalk program has made me realize that it is essential to provide meaningful learning opportunities to my students through mindful practices, and also to utilize current technologies.

Reflection on last teaching practicum

Today was the last day of teacher practicum. I taught the third class. The learning objectives for my unit were "students will be able to identify the tourist attractions in

Beijing, and students will be make plans with their host family members or friends according to the weather forecast.” I made improvements in the following areas:

1. I had more confidence in using the targeted language to teach.
2. I paid close attention to each student when as they worked on the final project, and assisted with scaffolding.
3. This unit plan was clearer and better-connected than my last two.

The areas I need to improve are:

1. Giving students clear demonstration and meaningful input before asking them to work on tasks.
2. Presenting the material in a systematic way, and asking questions before showing the answers on the screen.
3. Learning to plan the lesson in an organized way with meaningful activities.
4. Giving students enough time to comprehended new material.
5. Not pointing at students when I ask them questions.

I had an “aha” moment after viewing the recording of the class I taught. I realized that I need to move from the teacher-centered mode to a student-centered mode. Without viewing my own performance, I would not have made this realization. I will strive to keep making the transition from teacher-centered practice to student-centered practice.