

Day one, the first taste of the intensity of this highly anticipated course in historical Charlottesville. It was a beautiful day, not as hot as yesterday. Even though the schedule is long, it feels like a vacation for me: no chores, no demands; there is a cozy feeling associated with speaking Chinese most of the time, and being among people sharing a similar passion and career goal. Everyone seems so cheerful.

I like Dr. Tseng's metaphor that we are all like water jars with various amount of content in it. Coming to this program, we should all put aside what we have and start with the jar empty, ready for a refill of nourishment. I am ready, excitedly.

Besides self-development, another main goal of mine is to bring solid ideas back to Blacksburg to better our Chinese program there. Here are some of the goodies I gathered for the "take home basket" after today's lectures: assessment; practice of immersion and Backward Design.

- I. Self-assessment. We revisited the five national standards: Communication, Culture, Connection, Comparisons and Communities, and the three communicative models: Interpersonal, Interpretive and Presentational. We compared several assessment guidelines, including: LinguaFolio, ACTFL's Proficiency Guidelines and K-12 Performance Guidelines. At BCS, we should move towards a more standard-based curriculum. Assessment has been a weak point for us.
- II. Practice of Immersion. Today's lecture confirmed my intention to require other teachers at BCS to use target language in class as close to 100% as possible. Without a guideline, it is easy to throw in English here and there, when using Chinese is not only possible but more beneficial for the students. I am a firm believer of immersion method of language instruction, coupled with lots of visual aids, authentic material and body language, along with supplemental handouts that can be in students' native language.

III. Backward Design. This is a hot key word. To follow this principal at BCS, I need to talk to my co-teachers and together identify goals for each level of our classes; from the goals, we work to modify our curriculum and plan our lessons. The two “sins” described in Dr. Tseng’s lecture, I have to admit, were committed at BCS: Activity-oriented instruction and coverage of textbook.

I am happy to have some “water” in my empty bottle to crunch the thirst after the first day, and I am looking forward for more.

Xiaojin Moore

6/30/10

It’ s been a day of smooth sailing - the temperature dropped to a comfortable 80-ish; no more wireless access problem; the cool breeze and the much missed green leafy vegetables in the lunch box brought me much clarity. The lectures were as satisfying as the 排骨饭 lunch.

In the morning we went through the evolvement of the theories and approaches in second language teaching. The prevalent teaching approach is Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). According to today’s lecture, under CLT, the roles of teachers are: facilitator, independent participant, needs analyst, counselor, group process manager, generator of comprehensible input, creator of a learning environment conducive to a low affective filter for learning, creator of highly structured and well-organized activities, selector and sequencer of tasks, and preparing learners for tasks and consciousness-raising. I will be frequently reviewing this list in the future.

Just as expected, I am learning a lot of valuable knowledge through the classroom discussions. Most of the teachers have a lot to share from their teaching experiences and previous training. A few points that struck me the most are: pronunciation teaching, affective filter, task vs. exercise.

I agree that for novice learners, Pinyin should be introduced in context, instead of teaching the whole Pinyin system from the start. It is important to help students form a solid pronunciation foundation from the beginning, yet we should avoid over-correcting. We want to create a learning environment conducive to a low affective filter where students are not afraid to make mistakes; we also want to provide scaffolding for

students to improve proficiency. Distinguishing exercise and task was challenging at times, but the activities today were helpful for me; now I think I have a better idea designing tasks.

Reflection Day 3 7/1/2010

Xiaojin Moore

I think I've finally learned everyone's names by now and know which state everyone is from. It's been such a warm group. Most of us switch seats every day, at Dr. Tseng's request, so we will have a chance to work with everybody. Everyone seems to work well together. - I ponder at why so. I conclude that it started with the first gathering we had at the hotel lobby where Dr. Tseng met us with big smiles and hugs, and most impressively, calling out our names. She was in her pink t-shirt and sneakers, chatting and making jokes while welcoming us to the program. I was also impressed with how much details Dr. Tseng and her assistants put into the preparation to ensure us a smooth experience: they even calculated how many quarters and how many minutes it takes to do laundry. That first meeting, the school tour and a family style Chinese dinner sure took away my anxiety. I was ready for the ride. Now I look at the date, and think to myself: Great! We still have 15 days here!

Everyone seems light-spirited, but it doesn't mean the work is light. Our training regimen is quite intense, as it was meant to be. This morning we had a very interesting lecture by Dr. Ruth Feree on Brains and SLA. Part of her study seems to be the neurophysiological foundation of some of the language education theories, such as TPR and Communicative Approach.

In the afternoon Dr. Tseng lectured and demonstrated teaching grammar and vocabulary in a meaningful communicative and authentic context. Now we have a small-group 10-minute micro grammar teaching to prepare for presentation on Saturday.

Reflection Day 4 7/2/2010

Xiaojin Moore

Another highly dynamic day. Dr. Dali Tan led today's lectures and discussions. Another highly qualified, and extremely personable educator! Today's lectures were

particularly rich in classroom application of integrating culture with language instructions. My “goodie basket” got fuller fast. It was especially helpful to realize that a single character can be taught with big culture ideas, such as “shū 书” is associated with the Chinese traditional emphasis on scholarly pursuit; “门” can bring out the ancient social classification, etc. The handout of the character-art was just amazing. I look forward to applying these two new tools to the 识字 part of the BCS summer camp in August.

I guess Dr. Tseng had her reason not letting out the teaching arrangement of the practicum earlier. Now that we squeezed the information out of her, it means less sleep for us - just because we are all very dedicated people:) The good news for me is that I am paired with very experienced teachers. The 6-minute demo teaching tomorrow will be the prelude of the challenges ahead of me - practicum that starts Tuesday. Again, when I think that I only teach an average of 3 hours by myself, while I get to observe 45 hours of real classroom teaching of the other 14 teachers - what can beat that!

Reflection Day 5 7/3/2010

Xiaojin Moore

It started as a day of anxiety for me, because of the micro-teaching; it ended as a day of hearty harvest. There were so many things to learn from the micro-teaching this morning from all the groups. Everyone tried their best to build upon their experience and to apply what they learned during the week into these compact teaching units. We all put in hours of preparation for the 6-minute micro-teaching and exchanged candid feedbacks afterwards; that’s how dedicated everyone is, at improving, and at teamwork.

Some techniques and reminders that will be helpful for me include, preparing the language that the teacher uses in class, to details, using structured prompt to guide student response during grammar drills; “单一化导入” .

Mr. Zeng’s technology talk about using Palm Treo in Chinese instruction excited everyone. We decided to let the students use them during the practicum.

I keep being amazed at how open-minded every teacher is about accepting new ideas and constructive feedbacks, and how generous everyone is at sharing their resources and ideas.

The practice from the micro-teaching took away some pressure; I am excited about observing more, whole-length classes during the practicum.

#### Daily Reflection 7/11

Two thirds of the program is over. The second week gave us opportunities to put theories in practice, by student teaching the StarTalk students. It is through the teamwork of the first two teaching sessions and through observing other teachers' classes, that some of the essential points came into focus in my mind: how to design a class following backward- design; how to avoid teacher-centered instruction trap; how to design student-centered activities to provide students with effective communicative practice opportunities, how to design precise input in immersion instruction.

It has been an invaluable learning experience for me despite the exhaustion. Most special is the sharing of the teachers' knowledge and experience, and even their mistakes. The generous sharing and the practicum link the theories to practice. I felt I learned a lot the first week, but now I feel a deeper level of understanding after the second week of "grilling".

#### Daily Reflection 7/13/2010

Hooray! Practicum is over for me today as of 10am. I have to say again: it's been such a valuable learning experience for me!

The practicum part of the program allows us to apply the theories we learned during the first week. Even the most experienced teachers worked into wee hours preparing for the lessons. I was nervous during my first teaching; I felt watched and unsure; I had trouble executing my ideas. Second teaching was a big disappointment due to lack of preparation and rushed timing. When it was time for the last teaching session, I found myself at ease, because I had enough individual time to sort out most of the detail, and incorporate much advice from teachers and classmates. As an

immersion program, the teacher's input needs to be well thought-out: the input should be comprehensible, yet provides the "1" in "i +1". The main objective should be brought out step by step. Teacher-centered instruction should alternate with student-centered tasks. - These are some of the main reflections from my three teaching sessions, and will remain my target for improvement.