

Selected Daily Reflections

06/29

A good beginning makes more accomplishments. Dr. Tseng began the course with the program introduction and a web tour of Collab and E-portfolios.

The first section is about 5c's and 3 modes which lead to a heat discussion. All the teachers, including me, know this standard but are still looking for a deep understanding of it. We are much more confident to identify and spot 5C's and 3 modes in teaching after today's discussion. I have been using 5C's for many years while I always have a question about how to effectively incorporate it into curriculum design. I feel the 5C's hinder me from designing thematic unit freely and initiatively to at least to some extent. Thanks to today's course, I have learned that it is not necessary to implement all the standards at the same time. In addition, other participants shared many great ideas and activities that did unlock my thinking.

I have heard of **ACTFL OPI** and **Linguafolio** before without systematic learning. It is great to know more details of them through comparing and contrasting.

We have also got a better understanding of **Backward design** and **ACTFL guidelines for k-12 learners**.

06/30

There are two well known mountains, Mountain Rainier and Mount St Helens, in WA. I used to regard learning theories as the Lake on Mountain St Helens which is surrounded by hills without flowing water. It feels dry and non-active. My today's experience moves the process of leaning theories to Mountain Rainier which has a river (Dr. Tseng's knowledge and instruction) into which all the creeks (other teachers' comments and thoughts) run. Fresh and not boring at all!

We reviewed the history of the theories and approaches in L2 teaching today, The Five Phases are Behaviorism, Innatist Perspectives, Psychological Perspective and the Sociolcultural Perspective. It is good to know the Hypothesis 5 of Affective Filter except the famous Hypothesis 4 of i+1 input. Teachers are required to consider students' affect, mood, emotion and feeling and try to lower the filter for a more leaner-friendly environment, though the differentiation should NOT be ignored. I used to get confused about a few phrases, Content-Based Instruction, Task-Based Language Teaching and Performance-based instruction. However, I got a clear answer today. We also had some

activities to tell which a real task is. The seven points of the TASK definition help us design a good task. Although the traditional exercises have disadvantages, we could still use them as the first steps prior to the open-ended task of an activity.

In addition, we have an interesting discussion on corrective feedback. The strategy of recasts followed by reinforcement is the most effective and recommended for immersion learning.

Today's review and discussion helped me cone my skills in designing language learning tasks. It also inspired me to consider how to change exercises to tasks and to turn the simple yes/or corrective feedback into recasts in computer games for Chinese teaching.

07/01

My first experience in learning the biology of the brain today is impressive. Also, today is my first day in Minnan dialect class!

Dr. Ruth Ferree introduced the concepts of neurons, pathway and the synapse. We were all actively engaged in taking part in her two experiments. The first experiment tells us EMOTIOS can help us learn or interfere with our learning. This experiment result is in accordance with the fifth hypothesis, Affective Filter Hypothesis, of Krashen's Monitor Model. The second experiment was originally designed to prove that adding action to verbal expressions aids in recall of those expressions. But it is interesting that the experiment result was totally different, which caused our consideration on what other facts can improve successful memory. "*We remember what we understand; we understand only what we pay attention to; we pay attention to what we want.*" - Edward Bolles" Dr. Ruth told group 2 the words they all **understand**. The participants in group 2 pay more **attention** as they cannot see the information giver (they turned back). Prior to this experiment, the participants in group 2 had already known they were put in a disadvantaged situation. Internal motivation pushed them **want** to try their best to memorize the words.

We talked about how to teach grammar and vocabulary this afternoon. Teachers connected the four teaching demos with their own teaching experiences through weighing the pros and cons of different approaches. Preview plays an important role in Chinese learning. How to implement this strategy in a real high school learning environment is the hot spot we are eager to discuss. It is recommended to move the preview section into classroom if we carefully tailor students' preview work to their appropriate level and the expected output.

The brain study shows that the highlighted (orange) spots in the brain means the brain works hard while the grey area means the opposite (enough proficiency). I hope I have highlighted spots during this academy. In another word, I have more room for "new water". However, I hope my brain can be grey when returning to teaching. That is to say, I am able to teach confidently and skillfully because my bottle is full of "valuable water".

07/03

Dr. Tan gave us a great speech on culture teaching and authentic learning as well as sharing her rich hands-on experience with us today.

“Culture as the Core” (from CARLA’s popular summer institute) is a great idea. I agreed on her opinion that students are learning the Chinese language to understand and to respect the Chinese culture, further to attain the concordance between their cultures and the Chinese culture. If they misused the Chinese language, like ignoring or criticizing the Chinese culture on purpose, we would have lost the point to teach them the language. She mentioned six key concepts of proficiency-oriented foreign language instruction. The second point is **authenticity** of task and text. Even the words of restroom, men, women, entrance and exit can be regarded as a task. Authentic task doesn’t need to be difficult and dense. Dr. Tan gave us a great example, making Chinese food with Chinese measurement that I will apply in my teaching.

“Edit the task, not the text” is an important instructional guideline for teachers to design activities around an authentic text. This rule not only removes my worry about if the authentic text is too difficult for my students, but also frees me from preparation burden.

It is exciting to learn so many activities that I cannot wait to apply. I once asked my students to compose a song with the words they have learned in R&B tune. According to the guideline of “Culture as the Core”, I will adjust this activity by adding the instrument of “kuaiban”. I like to use riddles when I teach Chinese characters. My students think it is fun and helpful. It’s my pleasure that Dr. tan also recommends this method. I would like to share my riddles with other teachers and hope more teachers will “throw their jade” to me and to the class.

07/06

Today is my first day of my practicum in 2010 VSCTA. Teaching practicum plays a vital role in this program because it reflects the reality. I really appreciate the other academy participants who observed my teaching. Not only did they video-record my teaching, but also shared their great thoughts with me after class. My students are very cooperative and willing to produce output. They both made my first day enjoyable rather than nervous.

I need to teach the complicated question of “Qingwen, nin gui xing?” (“May I ask your surname please?” in a polite and respectful way) to the novice level. This question includes grammar structure as well as cultural feature. I found visual aids did help them understand the difference between American surname and Chinese surname. My students practiced this question in the activity (Ask each other the surname question to collect information for the bingo game). The observing teachers suggest me to add more activities to reinforce this sentence structure. In order to achieve total Chinese immersion, I used the body language and gestures to help students understand the words they were learning. Lee laoshi reminds me of the other benefit of the usage of body language to lower students’ affective filters (They are very shy on the first day). I’ll take her advice

and use more body language and gestures for my future teaching to create a relaxing but effective learning environment.

My students learned their first Chinese rap today. It's a pity they did not get a chance to perform it with music in front of the class because they just have two hour class on the first day. I am looking forward to the next practicum class.

07/08

Today is my second day as a practicum teacher. My subject is to teach the calendar, time and date. Also, I need to introduce the Chinese Zodiac in a full Chinese immersion environment. It's a challenge for me. Thanks to the other teachers' suggestions provided during the rehearsal time, I adjusted my lesson plan and added more authentic materials. This adjustment made my today's teaching go smoothly.

Many animation effects in the Powerpoint file were designed to help my students understand the concepts of day, week, month, and year better. I was gratified to see the facial expression on my students' faces telling me "Oh, I see!" The authentic materials also play an outstanding role when I taught the new words. One of my students asked the difference between "(xingqi)**ri**" and "(xingqi)**tian**". I not only told them the reason verbally, but also show them the real calendar and newspaper which deepened their understanding of when to use either "ri" or "tian". I also learned from today's teaching that teachers should be considerate of everything in class, even including the smallest thing. In addition, teachers should always have plan B in case. When we learned the Chinese zodiac by watching the animation of those twelve animals, one boy asked what kind of animal on earth "long" is. I did not know that he would ask this question. Usually the students in my school just accept it as a Chinese animal. I quickly checked around but did not find any other image of "long". To answer his question, I drew a dragon with clouds on the blackboard and tried to use the simplest words and phrases for the novice level to explain that "long" is not a real animal but Chinese people like it because it is good. Next time when I teach "long", I will carefully choose the picture with context or more help information rather than a simple cartoon image of "long".

We watched two groups' rehearsals this afternoon. Their subject is hobby. I am impressed by the amazing idea of Linlaoshi's group for teaching Kungfu, the game of Wii fit plus-Rhythm kungfu on youtube. Students could follow the actions of the cartoon characters on the big projector screen. It is fun! Our students must like it.