

2012 VSCTA

Self Reflections

Annie C. Ku

Day 1 – June 26

I am very lucky to be one of students of Dr. Tseng's AP Summer Institute in Goucher College, Baltimore in the summer of 2006. During my five years of teaching AP Chinese course since September 2006 I have been constantly referring to Dr. Tseng's book – *Gōutōngshìjīāoxuéfǎ* – (曾老师, 我没有找到这本书的英文标题。先斗胆翻译成 *Communicative Teaching Method*. 对不起。) This book has been providing continuous guidance to me, and my students of both AP level and Pre-AP Level have been the ultimate beneficiaries. Today through Dr. Tseng's exemplified communicative teaching mode in class, I have gained deeper and clearer understanding of this method. After re-reading chapter 5 and 6 this evening, I am confident that I am able to design my AP curriculum in a refined blueprint with more effective communicative teaching plans. Among my AP Chinese students, it is obvious that non-heritage students need to be more equipped, particularly in the listening and speaking skills, for the AP Exam. I am eager to learn how to enhance their abilities through learner-center classroom activities, homework arrangement and holistic comprehensive review sessions. I look forward to learning more from Dr. Tseng in the next few days.

Day 2 – June 27

In general, today in class Dr. Tseng introduced hypothesis, prospective and approaches of second language acquisition. She also briefly introduced to us her pedagogical innovation – The Modified Task-Based Language Teaching (MTBLT), which she has been working on recently. Reading assignment for tonight is also related to meaning-based or communicative learner production. Overall, the parts I am most impressed on are the Golden Rule. It reminds me that my students need to be frequently exposed to Chinese structures in meaningful communicative and authentic contexts instead of mere mechanical drills. It also reminds me that my students need to be given ample opportunities to perform and produce Chinese structures in meaningful communicative and authentic contexts. I also realize that my students' production is a "process" in their journey of learning Chinese, and their needs mentioned above will not be completely fulfilled until I changed parts of my routine teaching techniques.

There are many useful insights from teacher and classmates. Here are some of them.

1. We should provide comprehensible input depending on student's proficiency and intellectual levels and the complexity of the language elements.
2. Teacher's demonstration plus communicative interaction would stimulate students' ability to a higher comfort zone of studying Chinese.
3. Effective series of scaffolding activities or pedagogical tasks are crucial to the success of the final tasks.

4. Student's proficiency will be enhanced not through mere mechanical drills but through communicative and meaningful drills.
5. It is alright to let students generate grammar structures after good demonstration and ample opportunities of meaningful and communicative drills. It is worthy even the classroom is temporarily not in order.
6. We should be very mindful on designing authentic tasks instructions. Different tasks will generate outputs of different types, quantity and quality.
7. Questions used in the spontaneous conversation should be well planned in order to have a successful communicative speaking drills.
8. Only strong communicative skills with great spontaneous conversation skills can form effective speaking practice classes, which are the essential preparations for real-world conversations.
9. Ways to make input comprehensible includes linguistic simplification, elaboration, gesture, slower rate speech, comprehension checks, clarification request, self-repetition, paraphrase, etc...

Today's class further reassures me that both pre-AP and AP Chinese curriculum requires approaches of authentic task-based language teaching. It also brings no surprise to me that AP Chinese exam is designed in relation to this approach. One of good examples is E-Mail Response. Underneath is a comparison chart between the approaches of authentic task-based language teaching and the exam requirement of Email Response.

	Authentic task-based language teaching	AP Exam – Email reply
1.	primary focus on meaning	Reply an incoming email
2.	self-determined language resources	no specific vocabulary and structures are requested in this section
3.	real-life experiences/situations	Reply an incoming email which includes questions seeking for advices
4.	clearly defined communicative outcomes	Reply an incoming email from a friend Students should write in as complete and as culturally appropriate a manner.

Overall, to me today's content is a bit heavier than yesterday. Yet the training is very crucial, and I am happy that I am now equipped with more effective teaching methods. Thank Dr. Tseng for another great day.

Day 3 – June 28th

- The more students use the (firing) pass ways, the faster they recognize.
- The more emotional connection, the more we remember.
- Use a lots of meaningful repetition
- Language teachers help people see the pattern in the language we teach.
- Language acquisition is a slow process and not a straight line
- How to help students to switch to Chinese “channel” effectively?
Most importantly, teacher should keep staying in the Chinese channel all the time.
- First impressions mean a lot.
- Use gestures, pictures and props to clarify meaning from the beginning.
- How to encourage students to speak target language in ?classroom
 - Give them topics that they want to talk about
 - Give them problem or mystery to solve
 - Give them puzzle to figure out
 - Make classes interesting
 - What happen next
 - Playing small games in small groups

Day 4 – June 29th

Today I had a superb learning experience related to the Integrated Performance Assessments (IPA). The lesson title is *Empowering learners with performance-based tasks and assessments*. Dr. Tseng started the day with the prototype and modified versions of IPA. We then had many effective group discussions and productions on tasks of three communicative modes based on the authentic materials mostly provided by Dr. Tseng. Among the tasks there was one we needed to find weather websites of at least two cities, and we experienced some minor difficulty to locate what we expected. It shows to me that Dr. Tseng is an experienced and caring teacher trainer. Not only does she generously provide us with top-notch professional knowledge and resources of her own or what she has found, she also includes some challenges in her course and guards besides to give us necessary advice about how to handle the similar situations in our real lives. In addition, I feel extremely happy about my thorough (hopefully) understanding about performance-based learner-centered concept of SLA, and my accomplishment of designing several sets of tasks based on this concept with my teammate in a time-restrained fashion. I feel that I had broken through a long-time bottleneck, and I feel more confident when it comes to create thematic-unit curriculum with authentic materials in the second and third week of this course.

Day 5 – June 30th

Today we learned from Mr. Leonard Zeng about several technology tools for Chinese teaching and learning. One of them is to utilize smart phones to create files in Chinese characters. I think it is a very useful tool. First, the tool, Palm, is easy to purchase inexpensively online, for example via Amazon. Secondly, it does not have fancy applications or functions as iPhone, so students can stay focused while using it. Third, students can practice Chinese character typing conveniently in class instead of going to the computer lab or wait until they return home. Lastly, students can send the files to other students or teacher in seconds, so teacher can collect students' work before they leave the classroom. I think I will recommend this tool to teachers of schools district with less fortunate financial resources.

As for the mini-rehearsal, I am not satisfied about my performance at all. Due to the five-minute time limit, I skipped the scaffolding part (communicative drills) and rushed from the mechanical drills to the end-goal task. I suggest that in the future, either to prolong the time frame from five minutes to ten minutes or to require us use four minutes to show the communicative drills section in a five-minute rehearsal. In addition, providing last-minute demonstrations from either Dr. Tseng or assistant trainers about the correct practices of communicative drills will be very helpful for us to avoid any possible unintentional negligence.

Reflections on my first teaching for practicum
July 6th Friday

Theme / Topic: Hobbies 3rd block

Learning Objectives:

Plan and invite your friends to participate in activities on weekdays or weekends

A. Implementing a standards-based and thematically organized curriculum

- 1.1 Interpersonal
- 1.2 Interpretive
- 1.3 Presentation
- 2.1 Practice of cultures
- 2.2 Products of cultures
- 3.1 Making connections
- 4.1 Language comparisons

B. Facilitating a learner-centered classroom

Teacher:

Time-length/management – I used time longer than expected in the review section. Had I reserved time for the End section, students would have had more time to conduct the final activity. The teaching pace could also be a bit faster than I conducted.

Clear instructions – Due to the insufficient time for the End section, the final activity might be less clearly instructed. Other than that, instructions were generally clear.

Modeling prior to pair/group work – same as above

Opportune assistance/monitoring – I think I did a thorough monitoring, even in the last activity.

Comprehensive input – Generally input has been reasonably clear. Icons were effectively used for those words hard to express in Chinese of students' language level.

Attention getters – icons, animation of PPT slides and name-tag drawing were used as the attention getters. I feel they were liked by students.

Strategic Grouping – I like the way I pair up students by randomly draw their name-tags. This was the first time that I used computer print paper to make the tags, and they apparently were not heavy enough for easy drawing.

Students:

Engagement & participation: Some did voluntarily; few responded only when called.

Satisfactory language output: Yes. All of them had satisfactory output with 6 of 12 students did comparatively stronger than others.

Learning objective(s) achieved: Yes. Students were paired up to interview each other's hobbies and to negotiate a day to do the same activities.

C. Use target language and providing comprehensible input

Using the target language almost all the time: Yes almost. However I should also be more careful at avoiding using “Okay” habitually.

Strategies for making language comprehensible:

Body language/gestures/facial expressions: Yes. Students' responses suggested they understood.

Visual aids/realia/concrete objects: PPT, toys of varied kind of balls and activity sheets with icons, example sentences and instruction in English

Contextual clues: icons to express abstract words

Modeling for pair/group work: Yes. Liang Laoshi and I did many pair modeling. More rehearsal could have been helpful.

Age appropriate language use: Not only did I use age appropriate language input, I also designed the activities with students' ages in mind.

Level appropriate language use: Yes, especially when modeling for pair work.

Teacher scaffolding in other aspects:

Mechanic/meaningful/communicative drills: about 30% - 30% - 40%. The ratio of communicative drills could have been increased to at least 50%.

(Please refer to the modified version of the Lesson Plan in the E-Portfolio.)

Frequent invitations of student's responses: Yes. It could be more frequent.

Error correction: Yes, through recast and mechanical drills.

D. Integrating culture:

Playing table tennis was introduced as one of hobbies. More culture products and practices were introduced in block 4 or 5.

G. Technology:

PPT slides, pointer, doc-cam

H. Summary:

Time length for teacher-centered scaffolding vs. student-centered activities:

3:2. The modified Lesson Plan in my E-Portfolio has reserved more time (60%) for student-centered activities.

Time for student performance (teacher-centered AND student-centered instruction):

40%. The modified Lesson Plan in my E-Portfolio has reserved more time (75%) for student performance.

Instructional objectives fulfilled? Yes.