

Selected Daily Reflections

6/30/09

Just finishing my assignment, I spent more time on it than I thought I would. I would have to think a lot before writing. My brain is still actively burning. Today was another a productive day. Tseng Laoshi used the morning periods to summarize the theories and approaches in SLA. I was very impressed because that's summary of one semester course. I really appreciate those well-sequenced handouts. Through the lecture, I clarified some concept I wasn't quite sure before or what I have already forgotten. I also like the part of practices right after every concept to make sure those were understood. I also like Zha Laoshi 's presentation on Feedback. I also have some suggestions if you don't mind. Before doing the pair discussion, those terms (purpose of communication, feedback, question type) should be taught in advance to avoid some confusions. I also liked the cartoon part which was fun for the language learning.

BTW, I had fun time talking with those students over the dinner. At first, they were kind of shy. I started chatting with them in a very casual way. They started to share their background and why they wanted to learn Chinese and I also shared my background of being an ESL and Chinese teacher. After a whatsoever conversation, I started to get to point of what they have learned in Chinese and how they like it. I started a little lesson right away. I also corrected their tones and taught them a better way to mimic the 4 tones comparing to English sounds. I also let them know the importance of tones. The wrong tones may lead to a big joke. For example: ma1 is mother, ma3 is horse. It is a big difference saying "where is my MOM" and "where is my HORSE."

I'd love to share my experience. When I teach four tones, I'd show students a diagram of tone pitches. The diagram help visualize the pitches of 4 tones. It shows the 1st tone is 55, 2nd tone 35, 3rd tone 214 and 4th tone 51. The first easiest example I would take is "ma1" (mother). The trick is the 1st tone always stays on the high level. I'd ask them to pronounce "ma1" with their hands drawing a line above their head at the same time and make sure the pitch stays here on high without falling down. Here goes the 2nd tone "ma2". In English, the intonation like this is when you say "yes?" (A: Excuse me. B: Yes?) They would correctly pronounce "ma2" with their hands waving from the position of the nose to the top of their heads. I usually teach 3rd tone the last, so here I go the 4th tone "ma4." This is definitely the easiest one and they'll never forget it once you tell them the tip I'm going to tell you. Corresponding to English phonetics, the 4th tone would be very similar the pitch of cursing words such as the F and SH words. (I believe NOW everybody reading this post is cursing now!! HA!) Students would get more and more excited to hear that at this point. So everyone would pronounce the "ma4" perfectly. (also ask

them to wave their hands from the top of their heads down very quickly.) The last one, and the hardest one, is 3rd tone. The alternative to say "yes" in English would be "ahuh." (I think Chinese say this a lot as well.) So I'd let them practice "ahuh-ahuh-ma3-ma3" I think 80% of the students could quickly get it though 3rd tone indeed takes more practice.

Any comments would be greatly appreciated.

7/2/09

I want to make sure I didn't get the wrong idea of today's activity "A good language learner." It seems to me every teacher rated those characteristics based on their beliefs and experiences. So there were no definitely answers, am I correct? After that activity, we went over the 8 factors which are examined in such "learner studies" and then filled those factors in the previous worksheet. It seems to me THOSE factors are ALL important somehow. For example, "i. begins learning children" which I rated "not important at all" would become "3 somehow important" because I am a strong believer of the Critical Period Hypothesis (CPH) as far as pronunciation is concerned according to the SLA research. Zhao Laoshi, have you thought about if you taught those 8 factors first and then we did the activity later, the answers might be totally different? Just a curious thought.

Helen's Small's TPRS was interesting though I don't particularly favor it. I'm conducting a lot of TPR activities in my class but I'm doubting the effect the TPRS in Chinese language just like the question I raised in the class. Throughout the activity, I couldn't find the connection of applying such a method (TPRS) in my class. Unlike the letters in Western Alphabets, Chinese is a tonal language. I really doubt how it's gonna work. Probably more research of TPRS in Chinese language should be conducted in this field.

7/3/09

I felt bad that I didn't finish writing the reflection yesterday. We were rehearsing the lesson until 12:30AM. Gee...Time runs out so fast these days. But everything was coming roses this morning. I'm glad our group was going well and I appreciate everyone who contributed their suggestions. That demonstration lesson was actually not my style and also that was my first try of a total immersion class (except once I slipped my tongue of saying NO). When I was teaching, I was very carefully saying the "comprehensible input" for the novice students and every procedures and activities was designed carefully and examined by the 5Cs. It seems to me writing lesson plans was easy but when we were rehearsing, a lot of problems popped out. We had to go over and over again to rethink the ideas how to make it work. Teaching for me is like a performance. Once you are on the stage, you need to forget who you are and just DO IT. Thoroughly preparation and team work were the keys for the success. I'd like to thank my partner Yu-Mei to bear my perfectionism and also my lovely roommate Kathy to offer her help and

suggestions.

I went to the Chinese Corner last night. I think that was not what I expected. I did chat with one of the students there but I thought this Chinese corner should be more organized. I was expecting probably every teacher would lead one group. But I saw a lot of students were doing their own business instead of talking to us. Some people were doing exercise which made loud noises and frequently distract our conversations. I wish I could talk to more students but time was constrained as well. I didn't feel the Chinese Corner was very productive.

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07/09/09

It seems all the burning midnight oil was paid off this morning. Our group's teaching went well today overall. I really appreciate Zhao Laoshi's constructive feedback over the lunch and I'll keep those techniques in mind. So far I think the most beneficial lesson I have learned was the direction of my THINKING. HOW do I use different techniques to create a meaningful activity and also to examine if the activity will reach the objectives of the topic. Another thing I have noticed today was a lot of teachers are pretty good at

technology. I was very impressed by Hu Laoshi's creativity on the Jeopardy game. So are Gao Laoshi and Qi Laoshi's flash and animation making. That means I still have a long way to go!

I like the idea of copy LEFT. I hope we can continue contribute ideas, materials and information. I definitely go for "the more you give, the more you receive."

I was very impressed by Wang Laoshi's painting on the scarf. She is an amazing person with beauty and talent!

ps. Again, happy birthday to Zhao Laoshi!

07/11/09

This morning's class was going well though we skipped some activities (buying fruits, souvenirs and bargain). The jeopardy was so fun and the students loved it very much. I was successfully using student center to run the game. Instead of teacher asking the questions, I asked one student to ask the question and the other answer the question. The one who asked the question was 1.2 interpretive because he/she would have to read the question and figure out what it was. Am I correct? So the whole game was 1.1 interpersonal. After class, I asked them "hao3wan2ma?" They said, "hen3hao3wan2." It was a perfect ending.

Tseng Laoshi was making fun of my gestures in class over the lunch. Ha... I think I will be laughing at myself a lot when I'm watching my teaching demos. I haven't started to look at them yet. But believe me, it's very much different from my style in my class. Anyways, I had fun in class. As soon as I'm on the stage, I feel like I become an actress and I'd do whatever I can to make it perfect (though it's frustrating nothing is perfect). I appreciate Tseng Laoshi and Zhao Laoshi's constructive feedback right after the class every time. I'm actually thinking about teaching undergraduates again in the future. I don't like too much classroom management. When I taught at the Upenn and Drexel, those were the jobs I really ENJOYED doing. But now, teaching elementary and middle school is just a JOB for me.

Thank you for Tseng Laoshi treating us a wonderful dinner. It was the best one ever since we were here. :-) And I really enjoyed the time singing afterwards. Thank you for JJ bringing his karaoke. He is such a fun person and I really think Tseng Laoshi and JJ are a perfect match.

I started to feel sad Tina is leaving. She is a wonderful teacher with very easy going personality. Wish you all the best, Tina Laoshi.

PS. Since the students liked the fruit song, I'd like to share my song if you are interested. The rhythm is "little little twinkle star".

水果歌
一根香蕉 两块钱
三个苹果 四块半
五个橙子 六块钱
七个草莓 八块半
九串葡萄 十块钱
你说便宜 还是贵

The song includes the fruits and prices. Those 5 fruits were the ones they have been taught. You can add on or replace any fruits if you want.

7/14/09

This morning was the last time of practicum. It seems I have accomplished something I have never achieved before. I'm really tired now but I think everything was worthy especially I knew the students really enjoyed the class a lot. I'd like to share my song again. Today's topic was "dining in the restaurant." I combined the sentence structure "先...後...然後...最後..." with the dishes.

(拉拉拉拉拉拉拉拉)

嘿!服务员!先来两个春卷,再来一盘甜酸鸡
然後来一只北京烤鸭,最后来一碗酸辣汤,请不要放味精。

(拉拉拉拉拉拉拉拉)

嘿!服务员!

先来二十个饺子,再来一碗蛋花汤,最后来一盘家常豆腐,不要放肉,我吃素。(拉拉拉拉拉拉拉拉)

I'm really proud of our group. 拍拍手,你好棒!

I agree with Tseng Laoshi saying this program was like a small society. Team work is the key to determine the success no matter how experienced you are. For me, on the stage, only well-prepared teachers could be successful. I'd say I have done my best to be perfect though nothing is perfect. I appreciate every teacher's feedback. This training made my summer shining and I'm not gonna forget anybody who ever gave me a hand here.