

Selected Daily Reflections

06/21

We went over the standards for foreign language, thematic unit, backward design, and LinguaFolio in the morning. Though these are old topics, after working on indentifying 5Cs with partners in group discussion, I gain better understanding on how each activity fits into a certain standard. I learned about LinguaFolio from participating in southern California Startalk programs. However, I only learned that it consists of many can-do statements, and all participants of Startalk programs are required to go on line to do the survey before the program begins and after the program ends. Today I learned it can be used as a guideline when I determine the learning objectives for each unit, and to check how each class makes progress over a longer period of time. After reviewing LinguaFolio, we watched a teaching demonstration. We discussed what areas the teacher did well in and make suggestions on what can be improved. After the discussion, I realized that no matter how well a teacher teaches, there is always room for improvements.

After lunch, Mrs. Lin, a teacher from our group, volunteered to show us her teaching demonstration. From her teaching video, I learned how to use “structured output” to help students produce meaningful sentences with a grammatical focus. Mrs. Lin’s teaching is outstanding. She used almost 100% of Chinese and the lesson is student centered. Like what we did in the morning, we gave suggestions to her on what can be improved. Mrs. Lin showed a positive attitude when listening to our suggestions. I do not like the thought of having other teachers observe and comment on my teaching. After observing and talking to Mrs. Lin, I know this process is necessary and will make me a better teacher.

At the end of today’s lesson, Prof. Tseng used a lesson she created to show us how to design a theories supported, best practice lesson and how to engage the students. Her lesson follows the guideline listed on Implications for Teaching. The five implications of SLA (Second Language Acquisition) are 1. The more input, the better (the more meaning-based the class, the better.) 2. The more interaction, the better. 3. All learner production should be meaning-based, or communicative. This means whenever learners produce language, it should be for the purpose of expressing some kind of meaning. 4. Focus on form should be meaning-based and tied to input or communication. A focus on form should happen in one of the following two ways: through a communicative interchanges, such as Recasts, or through some kind of comprehension task, such as Text

enhancement. 5. Watch out for what we expect of learners.

Prof. Tseng puts communication in the center of her lessons. Her pace is fast, yet students have many opportunities to engage in meaningful communication (high quantities and good quality).

In her lessons, students' interactions focus on meaning and are level-appropriate. She designed task-oriented activities in which the task has a particular communicative goal. Since the task is for beginners, it is heavily structured with lots of linguistic support built in. She uses different colors on the PPT input, so it "pops out" to the learners.

In addition to what I mentioned above, I also learned that there are 3 kinds of drill, mechanical, meaningful, and communicative. Students should be provided more opportunities to practice communicative drill.

I am glad that I learned a lot today and am eager to learn more for the following 3 weeks. I like the way Prof. Tseng teaches us. We have many opportunities to discuss with partners.

06/22

Today Dr. Tseng went over all the major theories and approaches in second language teaching. These theories and approaches are not new for me. However, in the past, I did not try hard to understand and remember the differences between them. Today, through the activities Prof. Tseng provided and discussed in small groups, I gain better understanding of them.

The most exciting part of today's lesson is working with group members to come up with meaningful tasks. I am blessed to learn about Task-based Language Teaching from Dr. Tseng when I attended southern California Startalk teachers' training last April and May. The definition of a task is not new to me, however when I was in my previous workshop, I had a hard time creating good tasks. Today with two very creative members in my group, we came up with some interesting and meaningful tasks. I am very excited and will definitely incorporate these tasks in my teaching later on.

Comments about the reading: I had many chances to observe classes when I attending the Credential program. In the past, when I observed a class, my focus was on how the teacher tried to achieve the teaching objectives, teaching techniques, and the interaction between the teacher and students in the classroom. After reading Professor Liang's "How to Learn Teaching Techniques from Classroom Observation," I realized there are so many more specific things a person can observe in a classroom. I agreed with Professor Liang that "effective enhancement of teaching skill can be achieved by systematically observing others' classroom teaching" and

“只有在清楚自己要观摩什么，想学什么，才可能看到学到。” I find many of her suggestions useful and would like to pay attention to those aspects next time when I observe a class. Some of the aspects she listed in the article I had never thought about when I observed a class, for example, 2.1.1, 2.1.2 get to know the class before hands and 3.1.2, 3.1.3 老师的穿著和目光. This reminds me that when I demonstrate I may be observed on all these aspects as well.

06/23

I had a chance to discuss Professor Liang's article with two teachers before class started. I told them I felt that Prof. Liang's list of observing items is too extensive and thorough. I never observed any teacher who dressed inappropriately and can't imagine any presenter would come in class almost late and unprepared. Much to my surprise, they told me the scenarios I mentioned have occurred before.

This morning Natasha shared with us how to use authentic materials with authentic tasks to teach students. Before she started, she asked us what and how many kinds of authentic materials we already use. As I was counting, I felt pretty good about the frequency and variety of materials I used. However, when Natasha showed us how she used authentic materials in her classes, I examined my own teaching, my satisfaction about myself turned into embarrassing. In addition to feeling guilty of not doing enough, I felt very excited that I was able to learn so much from her presentation today. She opened my eyes to see how each simple authentic material could be turned into interesting teaching resources. I truly appreciate her sharing.

The authentic materials she used include advertisements, songs, children's books, manga excerpts, cooking videos, printed recipes, poems, short stories, and much more. Natasha described advertisements as short, effective, and providing visual support. One example of using ads is to watch a McDonald's ad and create a caption/dialogue for the advertisement. Another example is watching three promoting environmental protection ads. After viewing, students interpret these clips, discussing how to create their own environmental protection ad in groups, create and present their product, and finally students vote for the best one. I like all the examples she shared with us. I can image how much time and effort she had spent on finding these materials. My goal for the next semester will be designing more activities and tasks with authentic materials.

Dr. Tseng continued to teach us about Tasks. I like the acronym Yuqing created for the four features of a task: "MORE." Now I will forever remember the four features.

06/24

This morning Mr. Zeng brought in several technological mobile devices to the class and showed us how to use them. Mr. Zeng not only tried to teach us how to use all four different devices, but also mentioned several other online resources in his first part of presentation. I feel there was too much information and I did not learn any of them well. Mr. Tseng's is very knowledgeable about technology and passionate in sharing them all with us. However, most(all?) of us do not have those tools in our schools. I feel maybe it would be better if we only focused on the tools that we are going to use in the following two weeks. In addition to that, all of us have different needs in terms of choosing which online resources to use in our classroom, so whenever a resource was introduced, we couldn't resist asking more questions and that sometimes made Mr. Zeng's teaching off track.

Later Mr. Zeng showed us GoChinese a website he helped created for our practicum. We are all very thankful for this website.

From TPR and TPR Storytelling lesson, I realized how difficult it is to learn a new language. This experience will help me to always remember to provide students with enough repetitions when teaching a new vocabulary/phrase/structure.

06/25

We were assigned in groups of three and were told to present a 10 minutes mini-demo on Saturday. Even though it is just a 10 minute mini-demo, all of us worked until very late last night. It was the first time we applied what we had learned during the past few days in class and presented in front of everybody. Most of us, including me, felt stressed out.

Because all five groups had prepared so many activities and tasks, we used the whole morning to present. After each group's demo, Dr. Tseng asked presenters to reflect on what they could do to make their teaching plans better. Then she and other fellow teachers gave their advice.

We all received many useful suggestions. I appreciate this early opportunity for letting us practice before practicum. Without the demo, I would not be able to know my own weakness and how to clarify some concepts and practices. Through this assignment, I was able to learn to work with teammates, observe other teams, and listen to everyone's reflections. This experience will prepare us to be better equipped for the next nine days of practicum.

06/28

Today is the first day of our group's practicum. Even though I worked as late as I did the night before my mini-demo, I was less stressed out. The reason that I was not so stressed out was because Ming Laoshi's had taught students many useful classroom expressions on the first day lesson. I observed Ming Laoshi very closely yesterday and remembered all the gestures she used for the classroom expressions. Through her modeling I was able to know how to teach Chinese without speaking any English and did it myself today.

There are a few things I want to improve. First, it took a little bit longer than I expected for students to understand a new structure. In the future I will post the learning objectives in English on the first slide for students to view on. Second, I left out pinyin too soon. Though students were able to understand what I said, they were struggling when pronouncing the sentences. Third, I used rising tone to ask yes/no questions instead of 吗 and paused between two choices instead of 还是. I am afraid of adding new vocabulary. In the future, I will follow Krashen's $i + 1$ theory providing students with new vocabulary when it is appropriate.

After today's class I know I can use full immersion to teach Chinese and will continue to do so.

06/30

We had first practicum on Tuesday and second rehearsal on Wednesday, so our group did not have time to meet and discuss what we have prepared before the afternoon rehearsal. Afterwards, we knew we had to sit down and find ways to connect all three hours lesson. We saw Ming, Shi, Tseng Laoshi there along with other groups after we went down to the dining lounge.

Thursday is the second day of our group's practicum. It was a great joy to see students making progress. Even though I was physically tired, I was looking forward to teaching 故宫班 again. I knew I had incorporated many useful activities in my lesson this morning, but I would like to reflect what I have not done well today for future references.

There are a few points I would like to improve. First of all, I need to be careful not to say "okay" when teaching in class. The interaction between the students and I were going very well until I modeled how to invite a friend to go see a movie with me. None of the students understood the Chinese expression behind the act. I tried not to be

discouraged and repeated the same act two more times until they understood what I was trying to teach them. Secondly, I realized that “go see a movie” was not taught at second period plus no one has chosen this activity which increased the difficulty to imprint this phrase. I learned that I should have picked a popular activity that was also taught at the previous lesson. Lastly, Tseng reminded me that there is a doc cam that I can make good use of it.