

June 18, 2013

For all the topics in today's reading assignment, I am interested in talking about Motivation.

I always hear teachers complaining that their students are lack of motivation in learning. It happened to my students also. As Leo Jones addressed in the article that we can't interest all the students all the time, but we can do our best to engage students as much as possible by using variety of strategies For example, the teacher uses an understanding of individual and group motivation and behavior to create a learning environment that encourages positive social interaction, active engagement in learning, and self-motivation.

For learning to occur, it is important to create a safe learning environment in which differences among students are understood and respected. In my own experience, I have discovered that some students like school just because they like the inviting nurturing environment in which they feel a sense of safety and connectedness. We know students need to feel accepted, feel free to be themselves and to express themselves without the fear or threat of rejection.

The teacher should know how to structure a language classroom in ways that encourage learning and cooperation. This can be done by incorporating instructions that use a variety of learning styles. In my experience, I have found a cooperative rather than a competitive classroom (although some healthy competition is good) contributes to a safe learning environment where individuals feel free from anxiety, frustration, competition and failure. I encourage but not compel participation in whole class discussions, instead, I sometimes bring students into discussion indirectly- using prompts, eye contact, and statements such as "Let's hear from the back (or second) row" or "Let's give an opportunity for the students who haven't been talking.

The quality of the teacher student relationship is significant to students' academic achievement and behavior. In my experience, I realized that it was important for the teacher to invest some time during the first two weeks of school individualizing relationships with students. The communication between the student and the teacher serves to bridge the connection between the two. The communication can be carried out in one-on-one or a group of students with similar interests or behavior issues. To get to know students personally, I usually start with a survey using a questionnaire that includes information of students' cultural background, their likes and dislikes, their preferred learning styles, and the information that I need to be sensitive to their needs and concerns. Then I draw upon resources, such as Bloom's Taxonomy 6 thinking levels which help me to differentiate instruction to meet the needs of all learners. It is also important for the teacher to understand that students, at all ages, are very sensitive to what they perceive as unequal treatment. When students believe that their teacher favors some students over others, conflict grows in the classroom, and their trust in the teacher declines. Like adults, students want to be listened to and respected as human beings with wants, desires, fears, and emotions, such as their desires to fit in, to be belonged to an ethnic or cultural group. For example school culture, like other cultures, must be respected.

Selecting instructional approaches that ensure students are motivated and actively involved in learning can also help for a positive learning atmosphere. We know there are many components that form students' motivation. As our instructor Ms Tseng demonstrated in our class today, besides providing an inviting rapport learning environment where students can receive recognition, approval, appreciation, and respect from the teacher and their peers, the teacher can also let students set up his/her own goals with the help of a group to increase students' goal-oriented sense. Students need to understand why they are involved in an activity. The 5Cs of the world language standards can be used as indicators to help students set up their proficiency goals in three modes of communication. In addition, it is equally important to make the content relevant to the learners' prior knowledge and their diverse culture so that students can understand better and willing to participate.

June 19, 2013

Dr. Tseng started today's workshop with assessing students' reading from Day 1 by using group activities. The techniques she used were a great demonstration for us on how to group students in class for activities, which was also one of my goals for this program. I observed that all the learners were on task and very engaged, I will definitely try this approach in my class. Dr. Tseng also gave us a self-assessment to reflect upon our teaching and choose the most appropriate answers for each statement given on curriculum, implementation and assessment, then, have the participants summarize the result of self-assessment by making "I can do it well" and "This is my goal". It followed by an activity of having the teachers share of their techniques for the statement that rated with score 4.

In today's class, I have also learned how to identify authentic materials and how to select authentic materials for variety of levels and age groups. This was what I wanted to learn from this program.

What most interested me in today's lessons I would say was how to teach a song in target language. Dr. Tseng gave us a whole demonstration how to teach "我和你". Dr. Tseng started the lesson with an introduction of herself nationality, family, and then played the music for students to identify how many characters they are familiar with in the lyrics, then asked students the following questions such as how did they feel about Chinese music? How about American Music? What is the name of the music? How many characters you recognize? After that she showed the lyrics with the characters that marked in different colors. Then have students read the words they know while the teacher read the ones that are new. Then have students count how many characters they know, and how many characters total in the lyrics. In this way, she made the students realize that they have learned so many words. What amazed me was that this song was used by her in the fourth week for her beginning level class.

Finally, the participants worked in group and discuss how to use those lyrics for other activities.

Today's reading assignment was about second language acquisition. Van Patten (2002) makes insistently address that language input should have communicative intent and must take place in a meaning-based context without focusing on meaning of vocabulary or form alone. The learner's job is to get the message contained in that language, which means the

meaning becomes central. An example of teaching family members was given by using circular questions about the relationships between each family member to recycle the vocabulary rather than repeating the names of family members. In this way, the teacher gives students enough input in a meaningful context.

I always think it difficult to interact with students at beginning level. The author pointed out that interactions can be found in task-oriented activities in which the task has a particular communicative or informational goal. Task for beginning level may require minimum output or output that is easily pronounced based on a model; the task may be structured with lots of linguistic support built in. I would love to try this approach in my beginning level class.

June 20, 2013

Today's workshop started with the topic of Brains and Second Language Acquisition by Ruth Ferree, PhD. She is a French teacher from Curry School of Education and researcher at University of Virginia. What surprised us most was that she brought a REAL brain to class! Maybe she uses this way to try to show the point she was going to make " emotional meaning connection MATTERS " and make the workshop memorable for us by giving us this impact.

Dr Ferree conducted several experiments with us to support what she addresses. The first one was to have group one count vowels in the English words she gave, while group two check those words by marking + when they think they are positive and – when they think they are negative. After that she had both group write down the words we saw and remember. The result was that the group two remembers more words than group one. This experiment proves that learners memorize words better when they focus on meaning not the form, and how meaningful, emotional connection matters in learning a language. Dr. Ruth also addresses that people can remember better of their bright side of life as well as that of dark side, which means in language class, the teacher can use strategies to stimulate learners' brain by bring their emotion to connect to their learning. The conclusion Dr Ruth made was that What fires together, wires together. For second language learners, the more he/she repeats , the more he/she remembers or familiar with.

Dr. Ruth also addressed also addressed that the most effective state of mind for learning is relaxed and alert. Every brain is unique, experience we have had in our life changes our brain. Our brain is designed collect data and it is very adaptable; being bilingual benefits the development of the learner's cognitive and slow down the aging of brain after the age of 40 (wish my students could think that far for their future). She also pointed out, according her own research, that although left brain dominant language, but the right hemisphere of brain is more involved in acquisition of Chinese language. This will definitely make my students or other Chinese language learners/speakers feel more special . Overall, as a language teacher, I will take this advantage of the knowledge on brain and second language learning I have obtained today and bring it to my daily lesson planning and instructing.

In the afternoon session, Dr. Tseng went over the theories regarding second language acquisition with examples from her own practices. Dr Tseng especially addresses Krashen's Input Hypothesis $i+1$ and how it is important for a teacher to keep that mind set in instruction built up the learner's language proficiency. She also listed some Comprehensible input strategies such as body language, gestures, facial expressions, visual aids such images, realia/ concert objects, language modification. Although I am using those strategies in my class, but now I am aware of their usefulness and I will be encouraged to use them more frequently and accurately.

梁新欣的《如何从观摩课堂教学学习教学技巧》是我所读到的同类文章中最具体最详细的一篇文章。大多数人可能认为，听课因该主要着重看一堂课的教学内容和教师如何教并组织活动。但作者在这里所列的所有观摩细节除了与教学能容和教学方法有联系以外，还有许多我们平时所不能够想到的、看似细小但又能对教学效果产生影响的方方面面。当我读到每个条例时，我都会自我反思我是否做到了这一点，或我在这方面做得怎样。总之，这篇文章不但能指导教师做一个专业的课堂教学观摩者，给被观摩的教师提出有效的反馈意见，而且还是帮助教师反省自我教学的好教材。谢谢曾老师有意安排我们在上观摩课之前读这篇文章。

June 21, 2013

Dr. Tseng started today's workshop with a song recommended by Chen qinyin. The name of this song is "相亲相爱一家人", it is about a group of people who never met helping each other when they are in difficult time. I agree that this is a good episode for this program 5 days after we are studying and living together, it fits the program and atmosphere.

The morning session topic was how to teach Chinese through a movie or other authentic materials. Dr. Tseng played some episodes from three different movies, we were asked to generate questions based on three different levels. What I learned from this part of workshop was how to design questions that are level and age appropriate to assess students in three modes of communication. I tried to use video and movies as authentic materials a couple of times before but it did not come out a result that I expected. At this workshop I saw a complete procedure of it, and it will definitely give me more confidence and inspire me to use this approach more frequently in my instruction. I am now more aware of the effectiveness and power of using authentic materials in second language instruction.

Like most language teachers, I made mistakes in correcting students which may discourage students in speaking. I usually only use only one way which is recast, today my eyes were opened by more than one ways demonstrated by Tseng laoshi: explicit correction, recasts, clarification request, met linguistic feedback, elicitation, repetition.

Today's group activities have given us an opportunity to practice designing performance based assessments on three modes of communication. I think the Model presentation by Huang laoshi was a successful example for IPA, especially her presentation came with students' feedback and her own reflection upon her instruction.

June 22, 2013

Although today started with some confusion on whether we should demo a lesson or talk about it, everything went pretty well. All the teachers were very engaged and each group successfully full-filled their demonstrations. From each presentation, we could see the effort each teacher put in. It was interesting that even I consider myself as experienced teacher, but when comes to giving presentation, I still felt 不知所措, 手忙脚乱.

I always thought that I was smart in using technology in teaching, today my eyes were opened by Mr. Zeng's presentation. I especially like 南极星 program he introduced. We can see Zeng Laoshi is a very dedicated teacher, especially in technology. I would say he is asset in our program.

During pre- practicum, I started right after we were assigned to be in the same group. Our had several meetings to go through the objectives of the unit and brain storm of activities we should use to reach the goals of this unit. After we watched the teaching demos by our mentor teacher, which is 100% target language teaching approach, we decided that we will have to give students enough support by putting every word that teach says on PowerPoint along with the structure of answer that student may use. It was quite time consuming, especially putting pinyin and Chinese characters together. Some teaches worked really late at night to make perfect PowerPoint. But the discussion on creating the activities to meet the objectives will definitely help in our future teaching.

June 23rd 2013

The first day practicum went by really fast. Teaching while being aware of what to do on every movement will be difficult and is different from every day teaching in the classroom. When I do my daily teaching, I could be more engaged to work with students and forgot that I am teaching. The comments from my mentor teacher were that I met the objectives except for time arrangement. I think I was still nervous and my teaching pace was faster than usual. It would be better if there were extra activities to fill in the last 3 minutes. To improve, I would give a time limit to finish the task and follow by student presentation to wrap up the activity. Overall, I am happy with the outcome of my first day practicum. Big thanks for Zhong laoshi who helped me go through my lesson the night before and gave me some good ideas.

June 26, 2013

My second round of practicum was on Friday; it was at 故宫班 and worked with Xu Laoshi. Students in this class are younger. The topic of today's teaching is meeting a Chinese hosting family. My lesson started with reviewing of likes and dislikes about drinks. I did keep in mind that I put every word in a communicative setting to practice. I started my new lesson by a demonstration with a teacher: responding someone who is knocking at the door, “是谁? “是我, XXX”“欢迎, 欢迎! 请进, 请进! 请坐, 请坐!”after that, I used body language to demo those language items and check students comprehension by saying those words and have students do them. Then I switched to have students say and I do, followed by two students come to the stage, one does what the other says. The whole practice process was supported by

the text with pinyin on the power points. Students did very well. My goal of this lesson is to have students role play "visiting a Chinese family" and serving and accepting drinks as their preferences. Students could do very well with the support of pinyin on the screen, but without them, they were kind lost. When taught this unit in my class at school, my students seemed did very well by just using body language without any text or pinyin support. I doubt if this really help students to practice their oral language by giving too much pinyin support on screen? Since the instruction has to be 100% Chinese.

I had difficulty explaining to the students that they were expected to role play on the stage without bringing their handouts. When the first group come on they performed with handouts, I accidently burst out some English telling that they were expected to give performance without handouts. Although I eventually had students reached the goals, I broke the rule of the program-100% Chinese.

In general, the student-centered activity of offering and accepting drinks was successful. The usage of real objects made the activity more fun. For middle school students, snacks or candies can be a hook for learning. However, there are still some area that I need to work on, for example, scaffolding modeling more before has students give output.

July 1, 2013

My third teaching practicum went smoothly. I should give credits to the teacher from the other group who was also teaching the same lesson. We worked together brainstorm activities that can be used in this lesson. It reduced the work load for both of us in preparing.

The main objective of my lesson today is to teach ten colors as well as describe a person's outfit. I started with the PowerPoint that used different colors as background to show colors. I also connected this part to conversation about their likes and dislikes of colors. Students learned a short song of colors. Followed by a survey on their likes and dislikes about colors. This part of lesson ended with a game of Jellybeans. I could see that students were excited enjoyed learning this topic and they were very engaged. However, I realized right away that I put too many jellybeans in each bag and students spent too much time counting different colors of jellybeans and there was not enough time for each student to report the result. I had to reduce the numbers of students to give report. Thanks for my quick decision that I had students work in pair reporting the result of the count of their jellybeans; this still enabled me to give each student a chance to deliver their report.

The most challenging part of this lesson was to link the clothes from the first period to colors. This included new words of clothes, different measure words with numbers and colors they just learned. It took quite time for students to give output. However, by being patient and giving enough time, they were still able to reach the objectives.

I ended this lesson by playing 2013 fashion show on Youtube with questions such as " what is he/she wearing?" or "what color of pants does he/she wear?". The music and colorful clothes makes a good closure for this lesson.

