

Self - Reflections

Tiantian Wang

June 26, 2012**Reflection for today's class:**

This is the first day of the Startalk program. The lecture was very informative and so efficient. Professor Tseng used the form of workshop to get everyone involved into discussion and enhanced our understanding of different concepts in language teaching.

I learned from the workshop the five national standards which I'm not that familiar with. We also explored the three types of drill practice including mechanic/meaning/communicative drill practices. It occurred to me that the best way to improve students' language proficiency is to use the communicative practice which means students provide answers that are unpredictable and have new information. The communicative questions are more effective as it makes the students to make active thinking while practicing the target language. Another important aspect we discuss is teacher-centered practice vs student-centered practice. Professor Tseng also introduced in great details about the OPI test. I remember her description of "same topic, spiral up" which expressed how different level of speakers perform differently even though they are talking about same topics. This helps the teacher better understand and adjust their teaching to help students build up their language proficiency/level step by step.

The lecture also touched upon many important topics including immersion class(target language only), the use of authentic material, performance-based assessment, the incorporation of culture, language and content in class. I expect to learn more about these topics in future class.

Reflection for today's reading – Chapter 7 & 8 of *Promoting Professional AP Chinese Teaching*

To better my understanding of the concepts I learned from today's class, I chose to read Chapter 7 and 8, which are about three communication modes and five national standards.

Chapter 7 introduces how to design different practices and activities through the use of different modes of communications. It occurs to me that there are actually different ways to achieve one teaching objective. Take the practice of listening for example. For me, I usually just use two forms of multiple choices and answering the questions to test students' listening ability and help them practice listening. The author summarized different forms of listening practices which can be used in different situations. These forms of listening practice have different focuses on interpretive/communicative communication, which I plan to incorporate in my future teaching. As for reading, the author introduce in details how to carry out a well-structured reading practice

for students which covers four phases of pre-reading, skim reading, intensive reading and post-reading. Such information are so enlightening and make me come to think about how I should better structure different tasks in my language class to make students better use the material while practicing different aspects of their language skills. It mentions in the book the importance of the step of braining storming in both the reading and writing activity. This is a helpful warm-up step which lets the students better prepared for the language tasks, which I intend to include my future teaching.

Chapter 8 summarizes the five national standards and provides a number of specific topics and examples which teacher can use to achieve these goals. I get a lot of inspirations from the lists provided under each category of communication, culture, connection, comparison and community. The four activity examples in the later part of the chapter 8 provide me inspirations. Even though I'm teaching middle school students at novice and intermediate level, I think these examples can be adjusted into the form of weekly project which I can carry out in my class. Take the activity of celebrating of the Chinese new year (1st example Page 263-267) for example. In my class last year, I also assigned the students to research and learn about Chinese new year. But I didn't plan a lot when I carried out this research activity. I only asked them to research by themselves and write about the different between Western counterpart festival and Chinese new year. Without much thought about my goals and without much detailed plan, it is impossible for me to make sure that students achieve the goals of different standards and practice some language skills. In the example in the book, when planning this activity, the teacher provide a list of well-designed questions for students to research which makes the students' work more focused and more goal-oriented.(before/during/after activity). Such examples are very enlightening and useful for my preparation of my teaching material and the way I teach and I learn that I need to bear in mind the target standards I try to realize throughout my teaching.

June 27, 2012

Reflection for today's class:

On the morning of day 2, Dr. Tseng first introduced the history of language teaching from last century and effectively reviewed several leading theories of language learning and pedagogical approach in the four major phases: behaviorism, innatist perspective, psychological/cognitive approach, sociocultural perspective. She used the example of the immersion class in Canada to illustrate the importance of both input and output in language learning. She also clarified the difference between forms, meaning and form. The last option form that combines both the structure and the meaning, is the most effective way for students' language acquisition. The methods that match with form is content or task-based language teaching(TBLT).

Dr. Tseng spent a lot of time in the workshop today to discuss about TBLT. I feel time passed really fast because we were all asked to work in groups to design several specific tasks which are

to be used in our language class. I really enjoy my group discussions with my partners Maan and Jessica. They are both very experienced teachers with insight. The ideas they provided also gave me a lot of inspiration. I enjoyed working as a team and feel that our cooperation is effective. After each group discussion, we also have class report and analyze and criticize each group's design, which were very helpful practice to make us notice a variety of details that we should pay attention to make sure the task is authentic, clear and purposeful. I expect we can have more group discussions in our future workshops, through which I hope to learn and share with each other.

In the afternoon, Dr. Tseng showed us a number of tasks of different types to give us a better idea of task design. She asked us to compare different tasks to make us notice the difference of possible output student might produce due to the difference of task design, which is very informative to me. Through the lecture, I came to realize that when designing a task, instead of focusing on the topic and target language, I should give some thoughts to different options and choose from them the one that leads to most language output. I also need to pay attention to the instruction and procedures (pre/during/post tasks) to make the tasks most effective.

Reflection for today's reading – Epilogue: Implications for Teaching selected *from Input to Output: A Teacher's Guide to Second Language Acquisition*, by Van Patten, 2002.

I like the reading because it introduces new ideas while explaining the ideas with a number of examples to help the reader better understand. I start to realize that I need to update and improve some of my practice in my teaching to make sure the students have both comprehensible input and chances of producing output. The Epilogue introduces five implications of SLA research for the development of L2 curricula.

- Implication 1: the more input, the better. (The more meaning-based the class, the better).

Quote: Input without a meaning goal, without communicative intent, can slip into just more language practice. If learners perceive that they don't have to pay attention, they won't. (Van Patten, 2002, 104)

I'm very impressed by the example of teaching family vocabulary. I also taught the same topic and I always followed the routine of introducing each family member vocabulary first. I think in the example introduced, through the teacher's describing of his relationships with his family in a coherent way, the students can be better involved and become more active in their language learning as more attention are paid to the meaning of the input. It's important to have a meaning goal and communicative intent. I would probably apply similar method when I teach thematic vocabulary.

- Implication 2: the more interaction, the better.

Quote: Classrooms in which interactions truly focus on meaning and are level-appropriate for learners will foster acquisition. (Van Patten, 2002,108)

The comparisons between the two conversions in two language classes make me understand the meaning of true communicative interchange. The teacher needs a lot of skill to ask question and direct a conversation while encouraging the students' participation and active thinking. Strategies should differ among learners of different levels too. The last example of task in this part (discussion about sedentary and active activity) is very effective and I will probably apply to my class in future.

- Implication 3: all learner production should be meaning-based, or communicative.

Quote: What it suggests is that whenever learners produce language, it should be for the purpose of expressing some kind of meaning. (Van Patten, 2002,108)

This part introduces the idea of *structured output* which means learners are expected to use a form in the process of doing the task of producing meaning. Language teachers usually focus more on the structure when they ask students to do practice. (eg. Use a specific sentence structure to describe different sentence/topic) In most cases, students might just mechanically apply the sentence structure in practice without really acquiring the structure. But the implication in this part solve of problem by using the task that would engage students in creating meaning through the use of structure. In this way, it's more possible for students to really acquire the language through the production of structured output.

- Implication 4: Focus on form should be meaning-based and tied to input or communication.

Quote: There are just a handful of the various options available for focusing on form while keeping meaning in focus as well. (Van Patten, 2002, 112)

Implication 4 part explains the two terms of input and text enhancement. It emphasize the possibility of focusing on both form and meaning through the application of different strategies including recast, confirmation checks, clarification requests and structured input. I feel very confused when I read the part of processing instruction and structured input. After discussion with my roommate Wang Xuan, we become more clear of the meaning. The example task of making students discuss about teacher's activity last evening is probably more effective to help students practice the target structure (because the structured input) compared with some traditional way of practicing past tense by asking students to repeatedly complete similar sentence drill practice with the hint of adverb of time. The form is practiced through the discussion of meaning, good idea.

- Implication 5: we should watch out for what we expect of learners.

Quote: we shouldn't expect learners to produce what they can't produce. (Van Patten, 2002, 112)

This part points us the need for teacher to always be sensitive to students' level and need. The author mentions that some novice teacher always ask beginning student the "deadly question – why?" (Van Patten, 2002, 112) which is exactly the case in some of my class. I should really remind myself of students' level when I raise question or ask them to complete task. Only task and communication that is level appropriate can achieve good effect.

To summarize, the reading introduces some new ideas of how to combine form and meaning (both input & output). It makes me think about how to adjust my teaching philosophy and improve my teaching by adopting communicative meaning-based approach in both my interaction with students and in the design for language tasks. I know it's always easier to say than real implementation. I intend to learn more from the future workshop of how to practice this approach.

June 28, 2012

Today's reflection

In the morning, Prof. Ruth Ferree introduced to us the functioning system of human's brain and let us understand how human's brain build up pathways. These biological knowledge, from another perspective, helps us better understand things that go on in our classroom. The points that are important to me from the lecture is: A. to use the color code when present new vocabularies to help students better remember (better visual aid); B. people's perceptions always differ, especially for people from different cultural backgrounds. Therefore, we shouldn't take our students' perception for granted and should try to understand from their perspective; C. The method of storytelling to introduce new words is very engaging for students as they are receiving meaning (comprehensible input); D. there are usually 12 times of repetitions before one can acquire a word. Here the repetition should be meaningful repetition.

In the afternoon, we watched the demo teaching from two teachers. They used rich physical gesture, body language. Their arrangement between teacher-centered and student-centered activity is very good. they also provided clear instruction and demonstration for the activity. As I sit in the audience, I realize that it's always easier to criticize other's teaching as an audience. I can notice as an observer what needs to be improved. But it might be even harder for me to really implement a better approach when I am to teach in the front.

The teacher told us the grouping for our practicum and I'm glad about my grouping. Our group had our first meeting this evening till 11pm. I feel there's a lot more discussions in future and we are going to become busier in the coming week. Good luck to us!

Today's reading: how to learn teaching techniques from classroom observation. Hsin-hsin Liang, 2008

The article discusses about class observation and proposes several questions that teachers should bear in mind when observing other teacher's classroom including: teacher's bod language, how the teaching objectives are achieved, time management, teaching skills, teacher student interaction. As a novice teacher, I usually observe other experienced teacher's class. But I have never thought how much details I should pay attention to when I observe. According to the article, before observing, I should get well prepared by getting to know the background of the students and the class. During class, there's a number of details I can pay attention to. The detailed questions proposed by the author also reminds me of how I should teach in my class. For example, the way I dress, the way I use my gesture, how I stand, my voice volume, the speed of my speech, whether I inform the students our lesson goal in advance, how I warm up, whether I relate the content to students' real situation, how I combine the content with what the students already know, whether my input is appropriate for the students' level, whether I have good time management, whether I spend appropriate time for activity, whether my questions for students is systematic or random, whether I response well when I'm challenged by students, whether the students' seating is good, whether the students demonstrate interest in the class etc. With these questions on my mind, I can be a better observer and learn from more details I see in other teacher's class. As a teacher, asking myself these questions also gives me a chance to consider the aspects I need to improve in my class.

June 30, 2012

Today we had some very exciting discussion and the schedule is very intense. We learned about the integrated performance assessment, which is a new concept for me.

Ms. Tseng introduced the prototype of IPA: Interpretive, interpersonal, presentational communication and the modified IPA: interpretive, presentational, and interpersonal. We also were introduced about the way we can use authentic materials in different level of Chinese classes from novice to advanced level. Even though there are some concerns of using authentic materials, through careful design, it's possible to incorporate the authentic material and cater to students' need and suitable for their level.

We had group discussion and exciting brainstorming of how to design IPA for different themes including travelling, restaurants, calendar, weather etc. For each theme, we designed the IPA task into three phases that including interpretive, interpersonal and presentational. In the afternoon, Ms. Tseng shared with us some useful resource of videos that we can use as authentic material and asked us to discuss how to utilize these video resource to design task for students to practice their language. Through practice, we learn better how to adapt the task and material to make IPA.

July 1, 2012

Today there's no electric supply in the classroom. The condition is challenging, but we have some interesting experience. In the morning, Mr. Zeng from New York gives us a lecture of how to incorporate technology into our language class. He showed us how to use smartphone to let students practice writing Chinese. It's interesting to know there're different options for students to practice writing with new technology. Mr Zeng generously shared with us many software and online resource that can facilitate our teaching. I especially like the recommendation of 文林, 南极星, Voki, 点心. As a novice teacher, I have little information in the area of language teaching technology. The information I learned today can definitely apply to my teaching in future.

In the afternoon, every of us presented a five-minute demo teaching in the class. I like this practice a lot because it gave me a good chance to observe all other teachers' teaching and reflect about my own teaching. I also taught five minutes. I'm very glad that I receive feedback from other teachers that helps me to better notice what I need to improve. I need to raise my voice volume. I also need to improve my time management. I learn from Dr. Tseng how to use hand gestures to encourage students to speak a complete sentence. I also learned how to use appropriate body language to realize the target language only instruction. From the feedbacks given to other teachers, I also learned a lot. I learned that teacher should not deprive students their chance to produce output. Instead of mechanic drill, it's more effective to use communicative drill so students can learn better. I think such observation of different teachers' teaching is really very helpful.

July 3, 2012**1st Class Teaching Reflection by Tiantian Wang**

On Tuesday, July 3rd, I had my first teaching in Chang Cheng class (9th -12th Grade students). I taught the second period from 10:00 – 10:50 am. The theme of my teaching is talking about family members and students identities.

Pre-practicum,

Our group had several meetings of discussion and rehearsal before the practicum. In our first meeting we decided about each period's content. It's very important that every teacher is assigned some new content (vocab and structure) to teach and practice.

After clarifying each teacher's part of teaching, we brainstormed together to think about student-centered activities. We had many ideas and we went over every detail of every activity. (totally

nine activities) We discussed the feasibility of every activity. We also analyzed the possible difficulty and challenge for students when doing these activities. Then we tried to adapt the activity to make sure the activity can be carried out smoothly without bringing students too much cognitive load.

Before the class, we also rehearse in our workshop. Ms Tseng, Alice and Ms. Hsu gave me their suggestions of how to improve my student-centered activity which can be more communicative and purposeful. Other teachers also gave me a lot of feedback of how to improve my powerpoint and teaching. I'm glad they noticed a lot of detailed thing such as the pin yin (capitalize the first Pin yin letter) on my powerpoint, the gestures that can enable students to better understand my input.

Our group also surveyed in our class one day before the real teaching. We asked students to fill out the form about their parents' and sibling's occupation. This survey is very important and helpful for our preparation for the teaching.

During – Practicum

In my class today, I generally covered all the content that I prepared to teach. I think generally the class went smoothly and all the activities were carried out with the expected effect. Several teachers observed my class and gave me feedback. I especially want to thank Prof. Tseng and Alice for their useful feedback. The following is some important points when I reflect about my teaching today.

A. student-centered presentational phase

I had several student-centered activities in my class today. Students had interpersonal communications. But after activity, I didn't give students enough chance to present their output. I simply asked students about their interview result. This is still teacher-led conversation. It's better if I can let students themselves produce more output by providing certain structure. I will try to improve this aspect in my future teaching by providing more chance for students to present their output after interpersonal communication in activity.

B. Voice volume and body language

Prof Tseng pointed out that I need to raise my voice volume when I teach so that I can better catch students' attention. I will remind myself to subconsciously raise my volume in class without hurting my throat. Using body language is also an important part I need to improve. Personally, I don't have a lot of body language in my daily life. But in teaching, body language and physical response is very important to impress the students. A gesture or body pose might be a lot more effective than verbal expression. I'd really like to learn more from other teachers in the coming classes of how to appropriately use body language to facilitate instruction.

C. Error correction and recast

When students produce some incorrect sentence or pronunciation, teacher should immediately recast by providing the correct form. Today I didn't implement this strategy well. For example, when students said “不是” instead of “没有”, instead of providing the correct form, I repeated students' incorrect phrase “没有”. I will remind myself next time to recast appropriate and provide the correct form.

D. Give students confirmation and appraise

Alice pointed out to me that I need to constantly give students confirmation and appraise when they provides their answer. Sometimes I noticed students not pronounce correctly and then I corrected them and asked them to say again. After they say it correctly, I simply move on to other students but forgot to give students encouraging feedback. I should pay attention and say more “非常好”“很好” to students with body gesture of thumbs up to give frequent confirmation to students for their performance.

E. Time management and back-up plan

Today in my section of teaching, I taught everything I prepared in around half an hour, about fifteen minutes earlier than I expect. For the time left, I didn't have any plan so that's an emergency situation. So I used a plan of bingo game which I didn't expect to carry out in class to. This reminds me two points: 1) I need to rehearse before class to make sure I can cover the content in required time and don't finish all content too early; 2) I should always have a back-up plan of activities or game to make sure if I finish the content earlier, I have something to do before the class ends.

F. The importance of modeling (demonstration)

In today's class, I had several student-centered activities. Some of them are difficult to explain in words in Chinese when I rehearsed them. I was very worried that students might not understand what they are expected to do in activity. In class, I had the idea of inviting Ms. Hung to demonstrate the activity together with me. (the activity of guessing families and guessing students identities using picture cards.) The demonstration with us saved us a lot of time and makes it very easier for students to get the idea. I think in my own class at school, though I don't have other teachers help me us for modeling, I can always using the methods of asking students (discuss with them in advance of how to modeling) to help me modeling or even making a video and show in class.

After Practicum

In the afternoon's workshop, our group reported our reflection about our teachings. I'm very glad that I received other teacher's confirmation about my teaching which game me more confidence. I also am very glad that other teachers gave me suggestions and advice of how I can improve my teaching.

I also intend to watch the video of my teaching for the whole period which I believe will help me notice more details of how I can improve my teaching.

After the teaching, our group members also shared feedback about each other's teaching. I really want to thank my group members Jessica and Maan who are always very cooperative, responsible, considerate and kind to me. I enjoyed working with them and sharing with them. I look forwards to having more cooperation with them for our future lessons in the program.

July 7, 2012

Reflection on my 2nd teaching practice for practicum

Pre-practice

Before the teaching, I have viewed my previous teaching practice video and summarized my weak points including the lack of body language, low voice volume, not provide enough chance for students to produce output etc. I keep these points in mind and remind myself to improve in these aspects.

My part is to teach students about vocabularies of places of interest in Beijing and expressions of discussing travelling plan. Our group had several meetings and shared ideas. The group members shared many ideas of activities, ways of scaffolding different topics, the design for powerpoint and handouts etc. We also discussed and shared resource with the other group who's doing the same teaching task, which provided us more inspiration.

When I prepare for my teaching, I kept in mind the characteristics of my target students group who are 8th Grade students. I try to design each student activity as simple and clear as possible to make sure the students understand what they need to do. I also spent a lot of time making my powerpoint to illustrate every step and things clearly.

In the evening before the teaching, I asked Wang Xuan to help me rehearse. I rehearsed my teaching and asked Xuan to observe me and gives me suggestion. She gave me some very useful advice including cutting my long questions into short ones, marking names on the characters on powerpoint slide to enable students understand more clearly.

Another important thing our group did before teaching is to video tape a short movie of an American student visit a Chinese host family's home. We designed the conversation first and try to let it cover all the target expressions. Then we chose the location, actors and actresses and prepare all the prop. We also cut the video into separate clips so our group teachers can use different clips when they teach different topics.

During Practice

In today's class, I taught the students about the vocabulary of the places of interest in Beijing. The content is majorly of three parts: vocabulary learning, the structure of “先.再”(first...then...), discuss about travelling plan. I covered most of the content I intended to teach and carried out three student-centered activities. I tried to use as little English as possible on my powerpoint. In my teaching, I didn't use English.

I used more body language including gestures, facial expressions, body poses etc to provide more visual clue to students. I have to admit that I didn't use a lot body language in my class previously. It is after joining this Startalk program that I learned from other teachers how to naturally use the body language to deliver message, which usually turns to be more effective than verbal explanations. I experimented more today in class and even act out a complete sentence by acting out every character separately so that students can understand. I also used gestures more to let students understand my instruction and request.

Today it's my first time to use self-taped video of situational conversation in class. the short movie is very effective. By watching it at the start of the class, the students can quickly understand the situation and their learning goals for the class. I cut it into very short clips that is about different topics I'm going to teach. So I can play repeatedly and students can seek the information by themselves when watching the video. I come to realize the effectiveness of authentic material and visual material. It's important for me to always keep in mind of using different media methods and incorporate into my teaching to achieve the best possible learning experience for my students.

In today's third student activity, students were asked to pair up and plan a two day trip in Beijing. When I prepared the worksheets, I included the possible sentence structure they need to negotiate. But there's two things I should improve when designed this handout. 1st: I didn't use the best possible question structure students can use to negotiate. Instead of 你想先去哪儿，在去哪儿? I used the structure 你想先去___，再去___吗? If I put the first structure, it will be easier for students to produce more negotiable output compared with the second one. I shall keep in mind that I should choose the structure that can maximize students' possible language output and negotiation. 2nd: I didn't provide the structure for their report of plan after discussion on the handout. I asked students in pairs come to the front and report the result to the class. Without clear instruction on handout, it's hard for novice student to understand how to introduce the plan clearly. I should keep in mind that always providing students clear instruction including the patterns for the communicational and presentational phase.

I also paid some attention to the step of recasting when I hear students pronounce things wrongly in class. In the activity, I paid attention to the pronunciation by the students and corrected them individually. Then I chose the words that many students pronounce incorrectly and asked students to read after me together. I think recasting is important and there's different ways of recasting that I need to explore.

Post –practice:

After today's teaching, other teachers gave me a lot of helpful feedback including some very detailed suggestions such as the design of the interview questions, the way I can recast and help student with the pronunciation in class. I feel very grateful for their kind feedback and encouragement. I will observe the video of my teaching later and try to notice more aspects that I can improve. Hopefully, I can do a better job in my next teaching practice.

July 10, 2012

3rd teaching of practicum reflection

Pre practice:

For our third teaching practice, our group and the other group made the decision to cooperate together because we are teaching the same topic of shopping. Our corporation started from our meeting together. We six people discussed together about how to separate content for each period of class and brainstormed about possible activities we can carry out in classes. More people's corporations ended up in more inspirations. We efficiently decided about the content. Then I and Xuan, who's going to teach the same topic as me for 1st period of class, prepared together for our teaching. Xuan took the responsibility of designing worksheets for student-centered tasks while I took the responsibility of making the Powerpoint slides for the lecture. The corporation saved us a lot of time and made our preparation much more better than what I did alone as we two went over a lot of details together.

During practice:

In today's lesson, I teach the part of clothing items and measure words for clothing. I generally covered all the content I prepared for the class.

When I introduced the new words, I didn't ask students to practice pronunciation for enough time. It's always important for students to have a firm foundation when learning words in terms of pronunciation.

For the last student-centered task (find your lost suitcase), the task lasted longer than I expected. I guess the reason is that students didn't have enough practice of the expressions before they carry on the activity. During the activity, I noticed that a number of students had difficulty using the appropriate measure words when describing clothing items. I think I didn't have enough scaffolding and practice before the task. I also designed the task a little bit complex that created more difficulty for students. (five different clothing items in a suitcase might be too much for students because they also need to remember each item's measure words). Next time, I will bear

in mind the level of novice learners when I tried to design task so that students can practice the patterns with more focus and can communicate more fluently.

During the class, I also used the dock cam to demonstrate how students should fill out the worksheet in steps. The demonstration on screen made it more clear for students to understand what they are supposed to do.

I think in generally, I raised my voice volume during my teaching today. I also used as many body language as possible to give students visual clue. (eg. Long/short/wear/put on hat etc)

After practice:

I listened to different teachers' feedback. I'm glad that they confirmed with me about the way of my modeling, scaffolding and confirmation check. They also points out some points that I can improve. For example, Ms. Tseng pointed out that in the suitcase task, some students might finish the conversation earlier than others once he/she finds the suitcase. Next time, I would pay attention to the design of activity to make sure that students' amount of conversation time is average.

I think these three classes I taught for my practicum in general helps me to better understand the ways of making language class communicative and how to design communicative student-centered tasks that really get students engaged in meaningful interaction. The teaching practice also gives me a chance to reflect about my own teaching and come to notice the aspects that I need to improve. I feel really grateful that the Startalk program provides me this chance to learn about teaching and improve my teaching through observation, sharing , real practice and reflection.