

Xiaohong Xu
Self-Reflection

06 / 22 / 2011 Class Reflection

First of all, I reviewed four historical phases in second language teaching including theoretical background and representative teaching approaches. I can able to identify the different characteristics between CA , ALM and GTM. I can break the communicative approach into five categories: CLT, NA, CLL, CBI, TBLT/MTBLT. I also learned the grouping steps (at least 2 steps) in Jigsaw activity.

Speaking of the task-based language teaching, I realized the following characteristics are essential when I start to design the task.

1. Students' self-determined language resource;
2. Mainly focus on meaning;
3. Real-life experience and situation;
4. Clearly defined communicative outcome.

Finally, I keep the following expert advice in mind after today's class - "Keep authentic material intact and what we can edit and revise is the task, NOT the authentic material!"

06 / 23 / 2011 Class Reflection

Today was the third day of the UVa training session. I truly enjoyed the multi-faced interactions with my teacher, assistants and peers in a risk-free environment. They were all my mirrors through which I reflected my own teaching experience in different stages of my TCFL career. Looking ahead, I feel more confident and energetic to start a new teaching cycle in my new school as I can envision a lady who is moving up on spiral stairs day by day during this intensive training.

Mingjuan Laoshi's "Authentic Task with Authentic Material" morning session inspired me to invite Chinese advertisement to my classroom this coming fall. It is worth exploring!!

With regard to Zeng Laoshi's TBLT afternoon session, I realized I had used task-supported language teaching method more or less in the past 3 year unconsciously or consciously to guide my students of each level in the process of complete six projects every school year. Language focus as the wrap-up / add-on/last but not least period to my previous project-supported teaching is a really fascinating idea.

I also reinforced and deepened my understanding of Zeng Laoshi's several pieces of advices on communicative classroom question design from teacher's perspective:

1. Questions should be multi-layered and focus on practicing the same target language item;
2. Questions should be able to elicit/push more and richer output;
3. Always ask myself three questions before my classroom question design: what kind of questions can be treated as the initial part of the teacher-led discussion task, what kind of question is more likely to generate the most useful and authentic language for different level of learners and what could be the least useful?

Finally, I would say that how to design a series of pedagogical tasks is the first crucial step to make the core task and optimal outcome happen later.

06 / 24 / 2011 Class Reflection

The technology session this morning was filled with many new websites, term and combination ideas to me who was not technology-savvy. I will compare and contrast what I experienced this morning like Palm Treo input, CESTAR software. QQ input, www.goChinese.net, magical voice, Moodle (cloudy computing), Voki with what I already used in my classroom like Facebook, Youtube, DRILL lab, Garage Band, I-Movie, Flip video and www.nciku.com.

The afternoon's session was also kind of new to me. I did try TPR in my classroom before but never go deeper. Like pedagogical task can be sequential, so is TPR&TPRS. You can always dig more gold in a small area if you want in your life! ☺ Helen Laoshi also made me realize the difference between Chinese and German can hinder my learning. Now I can put myself in my Chinese students' shoes to feel their struggling feelings.

Mingjuan Laoshi went back to stage today. To my surprise, she quickly shifted from an "authentic" lady to a "fake" lady. I always asked my student some personalized questions in my class before but I have never imagined these questions can go wilder and funnier. If I had the second change, I would teach that funny boy who always has the wildest imagination in my previous school better. In that boy's eyes, I was too rigid and did not give him much freedom to demonstrate his creativity in my Chinese class, I guess. Thanks to Mingjuan Laoshi, you solve another teaching puzzle for me!!

06 / 29 / 2011 First Practicum Reflection

The purpose of the vocabulary review and game in the last 50-minute session:

1. Reinforce the frequently used number-related words;
2. Lay the vocabulary foundation for next interview activity;
3. Recognize the character without pinyin's help;
4. Notice the time expression order;
5. Make connections between sound, meaning (context created if necessary) and form (character)

The purpose of the interview, zodiac sign and birth month grouping activities:

1. Shortened the distance between students and teachers
2. Blur the clear cut between student-fronted and teacher-centered activities to create a stage for fast learners to take an initiative role and in the meantime make sure "no weak learner left behind" with teacher's and peers' dual help;
3. Simulate a natural environment to make dialogue of unknown information exchange happen.

Today's first practicum triggered my interest to explore the questions below:

1. Is output product or process? If output is process, what kind of output is occurrence and what is acquisition? What can teacher do to change occurrence into acquisition more quickly? What kinds of classroom activities/tasks can be associated with three functions of output: noticing, hypothesis testing and reflective functions? (theory and practice)
2. If we can make short-term (9 days - 9 weeks) Chinese immersion program happen without

- English's help, can we make short-term character immersion program happen without pinyin's help? (classroom action research)
3. What are the merits and disadvantages of using PPT for Chinese immersion program? (brainstorm)

07 / 02 / 2011 Second Practicum Reflection

I taught the first 50-minute period of our second practicum and felt the teaching difference between first and last sessions. Dr. Zeng's comments after class pushed me to design more performance-based activities in the first period even though it was just a few turns of information exchange.

I liked my review session before I introduced the new vocabulary in the first period - I randomly "made a phone call" to students respectively, asking them what they would like to drink and incorporating what they learned in the previous class. This activity went pretty well and made me believe review sessions should also be task-based - the results were much better than the revision of the isolated words or sentences.

Our group also spent a lot time making a "dinning" movie for an interpretive task in the last 50-minute session. Students enjoyed listening to a birthday song and watching their teachers' dinning related performance. To make this movie more comprehensible to our novice learner, we decided to play one segment a time and focus on one or two questions after our peers' and teacher's suggestion. It proved to be effective.

The advantage of quick shifts between teacher-centered activity and students-fronted was obvious. It guarantees that "no student left behind" and helps teacher to decide when to move onto next circle. It also makes input and output of each circle possible.

As a foreign language teacher, I feel excited to design all components in classroom settings beyond the lesson plan: scene, font, color, taste, smell, light, sound, intonation, facial expression, movement, etc. These components also deliver real-life meanings to our students like the words we use. The "beyond-words" components should not be neglected.

It is the best dinning lesson I have taught so far in my teaching career!

07 / 06 / 2011 Third Practicum Reflection

I truly enjoyed teaching the second period of my last teaching practicum at UVA. My classroom became the streets and parking lots while teachers and students were taxi driver and back-seat drivers. I could experience the power of spatial design in language classroom.

Ming Laoshi's comment after my performance based on a detailed observation checklist was so helpful to make me realize the importance of maximizing the time of student's centered activities. For an experienced teacher, the good timing of a class lies in the fact that the teacher can well control the proper length of teacher-centered and student fronted activity and clearly know how to balance both.

Looking ahead, I need to improve my teaching in the following aspects:

1. Take full advantage of cooperative learning opportunity. If students can do it and help with each other, let them play the key role in classroom.
2. Keep each student busy and stay on the track all the time. Avoid any distraction possibilities.
3. The demo/instruction part of a complicated student-centered activity should be divided into several easy-to-follow simple and clear steps.

This productive and reflective summer program has inspired me to further explore the topics below:

1. The feasibility and flexibility of task-based language teaching in K-12 classroom;
2. The authentic task design based on authentic material;
3. Improvement of students' proficiency at intermediate-advance level through the design and implementation of spiraled-up theme-based AP and IB syllabus;
4. Differentiated learning - content, process, product, readiness, learning profiles and interest;
5. Effective grammar and vocabulary instruction;
6. Reflection and practice on two scholar Freda Mishan's and Carol Ann Tomlinson's theories.