

Assignment 1 (6/26)

I read Chapter 7 and 8 for the assignment today. In Ch.7, Dr. Zeng gives us more instruction on teaching design with communicative approach. Then there are a lot of details about authentic materials, activities for listening practice and reading practice. When I was reading the part of authentic materials, it recalled me some of the teaching activities I did before. I used to teach in the summer camp for foreign students in Taiwan. When those 17 to 22-year-old students were traveling around after my Chinese class, I assigned them worksheets and ask them to copy Chinese words on the street or in their living environments. The requirements are such as "Write down the 8 Chinese words on the menu you read," "8 names of the MRT stations," "8 words you see on any signs everywhere," "8 food you like at night markets," etc. Certainly these kinds of activities are very easy to do in Taiwan but there are still some problems. For example, some words on the signs are in some specific fonts which are different from the ways we write. Sometimes the students can't copy the exact correct characters. However, this assignment made students try to read and recognize the words around them, and they always showed much motivation when we talked about those learning materials which were collected by themselves. I can see how efficient the authentic materials help on students' learning.

In Ch.8, there are 4 real teaching examples based on 5Cs and 3Ms. Since I am having elementary school students now, the only topic I ever introduced to my students is the Chinese New Year. For little kids, the stories about Chinese New Year are always the most attractive way to begin this lesson. Because they don't have any Chinese cultural experience, I usually have to search some videos and explain the traditions to them first. Then I design teaching activities which focus more on 2.1 Practices of cultures, 2.2 Products of cultures and 4.2 Culture comparisons. They improved their writing skills with "products", chunlian. We also compare the most three important festivals in Chinese culture and western culture. But it is always difficult for me to design any activities with group discussion or peers work for younger students. According to learner-center approach that we discussed in class today, I think I still have to try harder to create more opportunities for my students to reach more on communication standard.

As we learned so much in class and through reading today, I am trying to connect those theories to my teaching experience and hope I can evaluate my teaching skills with correct evaluation construct. Therefore, I can determine that I am leading my students to walk on the way to the correct goal.

Assignment #2 (6/27)

The five implications in this chapter inspired me to reshape my teaching philosophy, especially the first one: The more input, the better. Being a teacher of younger kids, I always design my lessons with different topics. I usually pick 9 vocabularies for each topic and try to make my students memorize those vocabularies through different games. However, I can definitely notice that how much I worry about giving them “too much”. I think I always try so hard to narrow the learning goal and range, in other words, it seems like I don’t have enough confidence for my students to accept more input. Therefore, I felt very excited to be encouraged with this article which inspired me to input as more as I can. Actually in the past school year which is the second year I teach in this school, I tried to use the same project I asked my 4th graders to do before in my 2nd grade class. The result showed me that when the teacher tries to input more, some students can be aroused more output than we predicted, even they are only 7 or 8 years old. So in the coming year, I think I will adjust my stereotype and try to design the learning content with more input confidently.

Besides, implication 3: All learner production should be meaning-based, or communicative, also brings me lots of thoughts. Upon to my observation, I found out younger students only show their learning motivation on something “meaningful” to them. Instead of structure practicing, grammar explanation, they only show high motivation on some tasks, challenges, and things in their own life experiences. Therefore, the teacher needs to create activities for learners to produce meaningful and communicative output related to their cognition. As the author said in P.110, a focus on form should happen in one of two ways: (1) through a communicative interchange or (2) through some kind of comprehension task. In my opinion, it is especially important for younger learners who care about having fun more than study. This implication reminds me to evaluate my lesson plans with correct approach which is able to improve my students more.

This reading assignment connects closely to what we learned in class today. I learned so much about TBLT and had very great stimulation through small group discussion. I appreciate to have Liu Yu being my partner. She has much profession and very special experiences in this field and we created some pretty practicable teaching ideas together efficiently. The pace in our class is still going very fast. We are fed full everyday by Zeng LaoShi. Thanks to Dr. Zeng for such rich “input”.

Assignment #3 (6/28)

The most impressive part for me in Prof. Ruth Ferree's presentation today is the pictures that showed us how the brain operate when people have two or more language schema inside. The color blocks show more coverage part which means the brain is more active in bilingual people's sample. The evidence strongly supports the theories that foreign language learning has more positive effect on people's language function with physical points of view. It helps us to encourage our students, parents, communities to have more motivation in foreign language learning. Generally speaking, Prof. Ruth Ferree introduced us lots of physical evidences that some teaching learning theories are based on. It led us to explore more and deeper in what we are learning now.

In the afternoon, we watched the teaching demo from two teachers. For teaching observation, today's reading assignment and the Class Observation Checklist from our program gave us examples to think about how important the teaching theories work on teaching evaluations. In Liang's paper, she generally listed some points that should be awarded when we are observing a class. However, all the items listed seem not to be organized or categorized under specific structure of any theories. So the readers feel like we can understand each point she hits but after reading, we still can't really evaluate with an organized standard construction. On the contrary, our Observation Checklist is based on foreign language learning standards and has very clear dimensions that provide complete structure to help people doing class observation. Reading both lists benefits us most while one of them consider more about explanation of details and the other one gave us a frame with organized content.

Assignment #5 (6/30)

From the case of blackout, I was so surprised to see how serious and hard our classmates worked. Even there was no electricity, I still saw people keep on typing for preparing the mini demo. Even there was no electricity, our classmates still finished assignments in time. Even there was no electricity, we still learned a lot in a technology class together. In my mind, I just can't stop admiring their serious attitude toward learning. That is definitely one of my biggest lessons in this program too. Thanks God for giving me these outgoing partners, my awesome models.

Of course, our great team also finished mini demo without electricity. That was a very productive lesson for me during that afternoon. In the first time we showed our peers how we teach, we tried very hard to evaluate the teaching plan with all the theories we learned. Then we found out some popular "games" and common activities are actually not that perfect when we deeply think about their contents and goals. We are used to ask students to do mechanical practice so often and believe this kind of practices must help students to "memorize." However, we seldom try to upgrade all activities to meaningful or communicative level if we don't emphasize this topic. Hence we tend to regularly use strategies which are not that ideal and never be aware to try to make our activities richer and help students learn more efficiently. Our group took much time to adjust our activities and I thought this is a great lesson and practice to push us to upgrade our strategies "mechanically" as a habit.

Assignment #6 (7/5)

Reflections on my 1st teaching practice for practicum

Team work

I appreciate much that I am in a very great group. We had very productive brainstorm which gave me a lot of learning. The idea of Avatar connected our three sections together and helped students to remember their information. In my section, I thought Chinese zodiac is a familiar topic for me. However, the legend that I think is the most important part of this topic is hard for students to understand if we are only allowed to use Chinese. The second challenge is the twelve animals, contained twelve new information which is considered too much for one time input. The solution for this part is also the method I have been used is, let students to read it as a chant. Separate 12 to 3 parts and read 4 words together once. It decreases the information input to 3 and increases the brain's efficiency to memorize.

Classroom language

We are still trying to train ourselves to get used to switch language using in an immersion class. In some situations the pet phrases (e.g. ok, good, all right.etc) just come out without awareness. This will be a part we need to keep on training.

Students' feedback

Students in Gugong ban have very positive learning attitude. They show much attention and learning motivation during class. We noticed that one of the students who can't always speak well concentrated much on his Avatar. He even brought it with him when they are required to practice those dialogues during tutorial time. It reminds us that the multiple teaching approaches provide different students with different learning styles more ways to learn.

Lesson plan and teaching procedure

It has been a long time since the last time I wrote each step, even every word I have to say in class, in the lesson plan. Now we are like turning back to be a student teacher and try to evaluate the teaching procedure with a well equipped assessment system. During this process, we help each other to see our blind spots and share different points of view with others.

In today's lesson, I didn't connect "XXX(third person)属 ooo" to "你属 ooo" well with enough pair works. So students can't practice the exactly sentences we need in their interview activity. Besides, when we were celebrating birthday, I should teach them the lyrics before playing the song.

Generally speaking, our team had a great teaching cooperation for our first teaching practicum.

Assignment #7(7/8)

Reflections on my 2nd teaching practice for practicum

Class pace

This is the first time I met ChangCheng class so I did not able to predict their initial level accurately. I planned to take more time to review but finally knew that they did catch most lessons well. Therefore the review part seems to make the class pace too slow. I was reminded to aware that high school students could be pushed more with richer content.

Loss of pair work

I planned to model the students how to do role play because we have the same parts in our three periods. Since I focused much on the role play part, I did not notice that I didn't arrange enough time for students doing their pair work. Actually some of the sentences could be easily inputted and outputted with pair practice. And the class pace can be also more efficient with more pair work before presentation.

Role Play

Role play is considered as a very important part of today's lesson. So we discussed many details about this part before. First thing we might adjust is the way we marked the roles. Wearing a sign with string as a necklace took too much time. It might be better if we just taped a card on each role. Secondly, I supposed to ask students to play their skit without handouts but I did not have enough confidence for the students to output by themselves. Thus they played the scene with reading and it became hard for me to check their comprehension.

Assignment #8(7/12)

Reflections on my 3rd teaching practice for practicum

Student center

In the 3rd practicum, I realized what the core of my problem is in teaching. It seems like I can't firmly trust the students' ability, so it makes me automatically try to control the whole class all the time, which is so-called teacher-centered mode. I always think that students need more repetition of demonstration and instruction for the coming assignments. This thought effects much not only on my class pace but on the space I preserve for students to build up their cognition by themselves. Since I found the main problems in my teaching styles, I now have very clear direction to improve myself. After seeing the successful achievement those students made in this program, I think I have put this experience as a model, a goal for me to go after. The first adjustment for me to do will be that to be more confident with students and leave them more opportunities to stretch their self-learning system.

Authentic material

This time I was pretty satisfied with the try of using authentic material in novice level. Because this topic is based on a real tour to Beijing, which should definitely include much authentic situation. Since the topic of my unit is transportation, Li lao shi from Beijing told me that most people there take subway usually. Besides, according to my personal experience, it is an easier way to recognize the relative positions of all the tourist spots in a city with subway map. So I finally decided to try it still and hoped students can use this material to review sentence 先...再... to express how they take subway in Beijing. Surely it is not the best way for them to learn this sentence construction, however, I think I was trying to simplify the authentic material to fit the novice level students' need. In the end of the class, after taking so much time to explain, I saw their output with my predicted sentences. I was glad that I really tried and got some feedback.