

Day 1 Reflection: Student Centered Communicative activities by Miaofen Tseng

I have taken another STARTALK Teacher Academy, numerous STARTALK training, workshops, and conference, plus have had the experience of teaching STARTALK student program, I still feel that I am not be able to plan a well prepared lesson. What I have been missing? I think I have found some missing puzzle pieces, the connection between the theories and the practical teaching. Those are some subtle applications but require tremendous time and effort to plan to produce more effective learning result.

Ms. Tseng, Miao-fen Laoshi, precisely described the Communicative Approach vs. the traditional Grammar Translation and Audio-lingual Approach, which has three elements of expression, interpretation and negotiation of meaning. It consists of the activities of both teacher-centered and student centered, and she chose to focus on the student centered, group work activities in *Student-centered communicative activities*. I am not a stranger of those definitions, but compared to Ms. Tseng's rich yet free and flexible utilization, I have been long wondering about the key points of group activities application. I found so many treasures which I have longed for and would like to reflect and share my thoughts with my peer and Ms. Tseng.

Thanks to my same assignment groups' great reflections as well, I waited to reflect your inspiring reflections before my writing here.

1. The real function of a language is for people to use it communicate other than the study of grammar. So allocate more time on learning by using in the proper environment appropriately.
2. Needs analysis at the beginning the semester to find out the interest background and learning needs.
3. Time management: Need to inform the students before the activities, I want to name it the time goal for the lesson planning. A class will be under control if the time is well allocated and controlled, and thorough consideration of time is called for upon each single one activity and/or each single step of the instruction and learning. Time is money, it is an unrecyclable resource, need to pay the price if any elements calling for time were ignored for both the teacher and students. The teacher will be the planner, facilitator and the manager of the group activities. (The practical use of timer in class today is an easy and effective way to inform the teacher and the students of the time to plan for their use.)
4. The prerequisites for student centered group activities: Communication strategies - The password to the negotiation of meaning. The group activities will eventually come to an end if the students will not be able to use this in the real life target language communication

environment. Few short and simple expressions will keep the activities going in a total immersion of target language, will apply this right away to my teaching practice.

5. Grouping principles: Group the high and low leveled students, and the mixed the students of various cultural background. (Same principle applies to the seating as well, we have experienced the benefit in our own class group activities.)
6. Provide feedback based on the closely observation is well known, yet need to provide timely feedback, and keep the evidence as the formative assessment to inform the needed future instructional adjustment and evaluation. The feedback can be from both the teacher and the peers.
7. Adoption of more Information Gap: Though time consuming, it involves the students' active participation in the process of negotiation of meaning, which is the interactive language and information exchange between the listener and speaking, until one or both parties agree to a termination of the communication. Need to learn more on the proper design on this.
8. Need to examine the nature of different communicative approach activities to make sure to plan properly and effectively, and looking forward to learning by doing in our program!

Even though short and simple from the way they were presented in Ms. Tseng's writing, it is absolutely an art in teaching! Different artists will present it in various ways, and I would like to study and refine this art in my teaching and practice.

**We also got to revisit** the National Standards and three communicative modes that serve as governing principles for the standards-based curriculum, and we were able to memorize and match all the 5C standards. I also got to review the ACTFL's OPI & K-12 Performance Guidelines, and LinguaFolio - the student self assessment, and Backward Design. These are all the basic foundations for a STARTALK program teacher.

The great group warm up activities showed us vividly about the time management, proper grouping and seating, group activities to share and inspire a big variety of teaching techniques in Chinese instruction! Ms. Zhong and Yaching are really two master teachers demonstrating the standards we are aiming at!

Listening to your lecture is like enjoy a nice show, accurate improvising speech with well prepared and designed activities, as a teacher myself, I can't imagine how much time and effort you have put into, and it is a system project but make the audience feel so engaged:) I have to say, I am totally your fan, I am so glad that my name is listed in your student roster, it will be a huge asset for me just mentioning that I have been one of your students!

Thank you for teaching me, guiding me, inspiring me, not only for the knowledge and skill learning, but also your advice of being a good person in additional to a good teacher!

Day 2 Reflection: Epilogue: Implications for Teaching & reflections

Looking at the title, I suddenly recalled one of our childhood rhymes, "Input into the left ear, output out of the right ear! I sleep while the teacher is teaching!" What signal is it sending? If I had a student in my class with this behavior, I am in serious doubt how much Chinese acquisition he will realize.

As a second language teacher, our goal is to have our students receive certain language input to produce the desired output - to acquire some level of language achievement. Just like we were talking about how to maximize the best effective interaction between the teachers and the students group activities with the least time invested, how can we plan and administer our language input and assess our students' learning outcome - the students' acquisition?

Learn from the expert, like Ms. Tseng, to avoid the erroneous path, Vann Patten (2002) clearly listed five instrumental implications of SLA research for the development of L2 curricula:

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

This can be one of the possible reasons causes the students sleeping in the class. "If learners perceive that they don't have to pay attention, they won't." ( Van Patten, 104) Perhaps they will wake up at 3.

2. **The more interaction, the better**

An effective way to keep the students awake:)

3. **All learner production should be meaning-based, or communicative**

Who will go to sleep if there was a party. If not, take a nap, go back to 1.

4. **Focus on form (or grammar instruction) should be meaning-based and tied to input or communication**

Focus on form + meaning is better than a focus on form without a focus of meaning

5. **We should watch out for what we expect of learners**

The goals of fluency and strong output abilities = end products of acquisition.

**Wake up finally. Class is over!**

Patten's five implications were all reflected in Ms. Tseng's class today, even though it is for second language teaching instead of acquisition, but as a student, I totally experienced a great class:

1. A lot of input were delivered within comparatively short time, great variety of meaningful ways of teaching Chinese songs, Jigsaw, sang songs while demonstrating about teaching Chinese song, the authentic materials definition, advantage of using and how to use them.
2. Different group combination, group song game, no one fell to sleep even though we were all tired:)
3. Group activities with communication to discuss about ways to teach Chinese songs.
4. The songs can be taught as a grammar point still with meaning conveyed.
5. Ms. Tseng paid attention to various students' needs in her instruction.

Theory + rich variety of practice = great instruction/acquisition

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### **Day 3 Reflections**

#### **I. Workshop: Brains and SLA by Dr. Ferree**

Thanks to Ms. Tseng for introducing a great Brain lady, Dr. Ferree to present the workshop about the brain function in relation to SLA, I discovered the answers to some questions experienced in my classroom, and learned some great solutions and tools to use in my own teaching, esp. after the reading and reflection last night.

- The attention getter - Will apply it right away to my own classroom.
- "Emotions can help us learn or interfere with our learning - Powerful emotions increase the strength of interneuronal signals - etching a memory."

I will try to design learning activities involves the students' emotional elements, and try to bring more fun and personal connections to meet their interests to elevate their motivation.

- Repetition produces memorization, and powerful emotions increase more repetitions

Need to remember to have at least 12 times for the students to be exposed to the input for them can really take enough to memorize, but with variety of delivery.

- "You and your students may see the world differently"

Combine with the group activity we did for giving instructions in target language, I thought that I gave my partner clear instructions when we were rehearsing, but yes, she did interpret different from my intention. I need to plan more carefully about the activity instruction.

- "Code switching may be necessary"

This helps me to understand the students if they use the translation or English when they try to accomplish the tasks.

I didn't cover those other implications that I have been doing already, but still need to polish and bring out the best learning outcomes.

## 2. The Immersion Techniques

Right after absorbing enough "myths" from Brain and SLA by Dr. Ferree's, Dr. Tseng directly presented with more influential SLA Hypotheses from other scholars, really a fruitful day. But just the research result will not help us in our daily classroom instruction, we need more strategies to put those instrumental theories into action. Dr. Tseng scientifically provided us with the practical strategies!

I have been using TPR and Visual aids on a daily basis, as well as proper language modification and Contextual clues. And will pay attention to the modeling in combination with written instructions. I frequently check on the students' comprehension, and pay attention to find a proper time to do it. But one thing, I do need to try to keep my target language in my classroom at least 90%!

And then, our two master teachers, Ya-Ching and Alice's well prepared mini demos showcased great examples of implementing the theories and the strategies covered today. Those are my new goals I need to work on more to achieve!

Just when I had questions for the class observation check list, the reading of *How to Learn Teaching Techniques from Classroom Observation* (Liang, 2008) opened my eyes! Thanks to Dr. Tseng for another great guidance!

## 3. How to learn teaching Techniques from Classroom Observation

Liang stated the importance of classroom observation and listed techniques from five aspects:

1. Teacher's body language
2. How the teacher tries to achieve the teaching objects
3. How the teacher tries to control the class time
4. Teaching techniques
5. The interaction between the teacher and the students in the classroom

Going through her lists, I need to pay attention to several points, esp. the teacher's Action-system knowledge, before, during and after the observation of the class:

1. Well prepared before the observation and make sure be able to:
  - Confirm the class time, place, seat and be 5 minutes early
  - Check the classroom facilities
  - Observe the students
  - Draw the seating chart, the teacher's walking path
2. What to observe:
  - The teacher's body language
  - Clothing
  - Eye contacts
  - Facial expression and Gestures
  - Posture
  - Speech
  - How to achieve the teaching objects
  - How to achieve the teaching objectives
  - How the teacher tried to control the class time
  - Take notes
  - Fill Our Classroom Observation check list while observing and taking necessary notes and questions to ask the teacher after the class
3. After the observation:

- Thank the teacher
- Edit the notes
- Write constructive comment and suggest my own solutions to certain points taken in the notes

Exactly like it was mentioned that by Song (1955), the language teaching is a science, as well as an art. I will try my best to be an artist in teaching which is the ultimate goal for being a teacher.

Reference:

Liang, Hsin-hsin. (2008). How to learn teaching techniques from classroom observation. *JCLTA* 43(1), 1-16.

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#### **Day 4 Reflections**

What an exciting day! Started with Chinese song and movies, and commercials!

Compare to Dr. Tseng, I have been doing so little with Chinese movie, mainly use it as a way to expose the students to certain culture and simple interpretive listening questions. After today's learning with Dr. Tseng, I am going to use Authentic Chinese movies as my authentic material more than before, by using the interpretive mode to ask questions after watching the Chinese movies, follow the chronological order, using more open and close end questions as less as possible. If asked yes or no questions, better follow with why. Better to ask questions about the cultural elements, with the culture comparison.

Or, can watch a movie for up to a certain period of time, describe the plot in your diary. Handwritten only for checking the writing instead of typing, provide the guided question as prompts. It is helpful for the students to read those questions before watching the movie. Select certain time section of the movie, and design appropriate questions aligned with the students' level.

It is important to consider using target language when design the task and the questions for using Chinese movies as the authentic material, apply i+1 but don't go beyond the students' comfort zone.

I am so glad to learn about the Integrated Performance Assessment to prepare better for teaching my STARTALK Chinese Academy Student Program. It is better to write the instruction in Chinese, to maximize the students to Chinese. I did an IPA with Meiyao during the class really quick after Dr. Tseng's great guidance, please see it at the end of this post. I will pilot this out by finding some local Chinese restaurants' flyers to do a mock PLA.

If you think the movies are cool, then wait until you saw the Coke TV commercial in English and Chinese version, exactly the same but different languages! It can be also used as a great source for IPA, and don't forget to have the students to produce a commercial on their own, it is fun and great motivation.

Really impressed with Shuijun Huang's IPA workshop as well as her students' pronunciation, that is due to Ms. Huang's input flood and pushed output on a daily basis, we can tell the payback from her persistence and consistency.

During the feedback session, Ms. Tseng released her secret of why set our program's target language goal as 100%, it is a great example of i+1, or high expectation.

As for the error correction, I prefer to remind the students' errors first by a repetition or a reformulation as the Clarification requests, and if the students still can't get the answer, I will use Metalinguistic feedback if it is more grammar related, and will use elicitation to say something to directly elicit correct utterance from students if it is more for vocab. errors.

For grammar teaching, I will provide my students more with comprehensible/meaningful input, to let the students to be exposed to meaningful contexts and keep reasoning/cognition processing output. Don't explain grammar if without I can. The best will be conducting various tasks in different context.

Paulston (1972) was still remembered by his Three types of Elicitation Techniques, the Mechanic drills, the Meaningful drills and communicative drills. I would like correct errors in the order of : Clarification requests, follow with Elicitation, Elicitation, Metalinguistic, correction, recasts and repetition.

Wow! What a day full of exciting, thank you, Dr. Tseng!

Please see blow for class IPA projected by myself and Ms. Meiyao

Birthday party dinner at a Chinese restaurant

Interpretive reading: 10 min.

A group of six friends are going to find a Chinese restaurant to celebrate a birthday party., read each of the restaurant menu and decide which restaurant to call to check the info.

Interpersonal communication: 10 min.

Each two students are going to play as the restaurant owner and the customer, the customer call each restaurant to ask about the following info. and fill in the sheet.

名字	妈妈水饺馆	泰山汇自助餐馆	汉宫大酒楼
喜欢什么菜式? (Check what you like)	水饺等	自助餐	粤菜
想吃什么菜?			
要点几个菜?			
多少钱?			



六个人吃打折吗? 打几折?			
开业时间: 星期—— ——点 ——分			
开车要多长时间?			
有没有生日蛋糕?			
能不能唱歌?			
有英文歌吗?			

Presentational communication:

One student will present the birthday party dinner plan to all the friends, and ask the friends to review and make final decision of which restaurant to go to eat.

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### **Day 5 Reflections**

After four days' flood of necessary theoretical input, finally we started to try out what we absorbed. Nervous yet excited, I totally forgot the time count and three minutes passed like a blink. Need to set the timer and practice with the pace for the next rehearsal.

Easy saying than done, so many new methods learned together and it is really not easy to cover everything learned. I had student 1 ask student 2 a question, and had the student 2 ask student 3, but Dr. Tseng pointed out that I could have opted for pair work so the whole class could talk to each other the same time, thus the activity will have all the students' participation instead of just partial. This is the reason why I came here to learn from Dr. Tseng, to have her expert advice to diagnose my symptoms and prescribe the best remedies.

I love all our classmates' presentation, and learn some practical methods that I can use in my own teaching. I love the magician way of teaching "have" or "not have", and the simple but efficient way of teaching the measure words, plus the cute song of colors.

I am so glad to learn from Mr. Zeng again this afternoon after last year at Emory, and it is better this time since we got to operate with hands on the cell, to get familiar with using it as a handy and easy to use Chinese typing tool.

Assignment 7: Self-reflections on my 2nd teaching practicum **Reflections**

With the lesson from the first practicum, went to the classroom early to set up. It is great to have Dr. Tseng and Wei Gao's help to get the drinks learned and Chinese snack bought for the class as the best authentic materials. Ms. Hsu came to our room to go through slide by slide and made minor changes and necessary cuts. Also had a meeting with Changcheng Class group to discuss about the lesson plan, great brainstorm!

Finally, I feel normal to get my old feelings back for my regular classroom teaching, after the first tryout without satisfying result. Compare to the first one, I actually spent much less hours on the planning and working on the POWERPOINT, but the students produced communicative output all the way through the entire period of the class. The difference is I am clear now after the first pilot, that I need to set up a clear pattern, guideline or standard operation procedure:

1. Keep in mind that using 100% of Chinese.
2. Plan with the students at the center of the learning, the teacher is just a guide, mentor and manager.
3. Set up a standard operation procedure:
  - 1) Start the lesson with the learning objectives shown on the first slide
  - 2) Unfold the lesson beginning with reviewing the vocab. in a communicative mode, follow with recapping of the main sentence structures. It is always a good way if can relate the review in a context, so it will not be just an isolated mechanic drill, thus the students will be more engaged and motivated, try to find and utilize the authentic materials like the student's photo, things in the classroom, daily schedules and activities, etc. And, try to control the review time to less than 5 minutes to leave enough time for introducing the new contents.
  - 3) Design the whole class like a story, with background and plots, to connect the different parts smoothly. If the last lesson is hobbies and this lesson is drink, then you can naturally review the hobbies and then use it to connect to the beginning of the new lesson. For example, I like to play basketball and thus I get hot, so I am thirsty for some drink...
  - 4) Once you started the new lesson, try to introduce the new vocab. in the context of the contents learned before, instead of just simply go through the words POWERPOINT. The practical way can be like:
    - A. Lead reading the word for at least 3 times.
    - B. Ask each student to say the word, recast if needed directly to prevent the improper pronunciation.
    - C. Reinforce with one more lead reading.
    - D. Modeling two times: Need to present the modeling clearly and effectively to deliver the new contents for the students to follow without doubts. Repeat if the students still didn't get it.

- E. A to B and B to A interpersonal after the scaffolding: The teacher needs to walk around and listen, provide needed guidance or feedback.
- F. Then ask 2 groups to present as a way of formative assessment.
- G. A to F make a complete cycle 1, when you finish cycle 2, you need to recycle the cycles of 1+2, and the same routine will be for later cycles.
- H. The last section of each class should be an activity/task as the summative assessment, with rubrics or checklist, clear grouping, instructions and modeling.

Thanks to Dr. Tseng's thorough theory input flood, plus Ms. Zhong and Ms. Hsu's sitting down with me to go through each single slide, and provided concrete suggestions to fix my shortcomings. Even though I am getting clear with the step by step procedure, I still had some moments when I didn't stick to it. For example, I didn't do enough modeling, and needed to give clear group instructions. Also, I need to read enough vocab. so that the students can grasp enough to proceed to later communicative mode practices.

I will definitely refine the two practicum experiences and put it again into preparation for my third, and sad to mention, the last opportunity to learn from Dr. Tseng, Ms. Zhong and Ms. Hsu. It will be another opportunity to conclude what I learned here into my final performance. I will try all I can, as I have been to make my learning with more pushed output!