

Selected Daily Reflections

The first day of practicum—Daily Reflection on July 6, 2009

Topic: First day in Practicum—“Weather”

[A right activity at right time; too many objectives in my 3rd period teaching today]

Students were tired after some fun activities in the second period. They looked tired when the class started in the beginning of the third period. I think I should not teach writing at the last period. It would be better to put in the second period.

I prepared a very interactive Power Point to use for the 3rd period teaching today, but I was running out of time. I was notified that students need to learn some basic characters. So, I showed students three mini video clip to give them ideas how these characters invented. The time was taken from the writing session, so I did not have time to teach what I was supposed to teach in a communicative way and have students to work in a group for activities, like comparing weather between Beijing and Richmond and use the sentences structure to practice their own dialogue. .

I think it would be better if I could get advices for my lesson plan before going to teach. I did not prepare it well in the rehearsal, so I missed the chance to get comments and advice for my lesson. I also added something more a night before the teaching. That is why I could not accomplish the objectives I set.

The second day of the practicum--Daily Reflection on Tuesday, July 7, 2009

Topic: Observation--Group 5 (Lee, Xu, Lee Laoshi)

[clear flow; comprehensible input; cheerful teaching attitude]

[it seems too much for students to learn; should we have more time to learn how to make good lesson plan before go to teach in practicum?]

There was lots of information to learn in the first period. Students needed to learn Time; Days in a week; Dates and Months; five different names for a day before yesterday; a day after tomorrow; today; tomorrow; yesterday. Teacher at the first period did a great job to introduce these and the songs she taught help students to be familiar with sound for each work. Very good!

At the second period, the teacher uses a paper clock to help students learn time. Another great activity was to post your birthday on the board. I would suggest after each student posted their birthday on the board. Not only just telling the teacher her birthday, the rest of the class needed to pay attention to remember what each student said. Therefore, everyone will be all on the task. It was a great idea that every student makes

her own paper with foam plate. Students use the clock to learn the concept and the language.

These students are very intelligent compared to the students in a real class. It is not easy to remember Chinese words for the sequence of days of the weeks. Teachers were great in teaching today in this class. I am thinking if the lesson plan and objectives are realistic to apply in our classroom. I try to believe the purpose of this practicum is to learn teaching techniques more than designing lesson plan because we start teaching before getting comments or critiques on our lesson plan. We could not depend on rehearsal to fix our lesson plan because that was one afternoon before the teaching and plus, the resource is so limited. (such as printer....)

My conclusion is that “the objectives of the lesson cannot be designed properly by us” because the syllabus is too vague and we tend to limit our freedom to create our own. We have to think about other groups next to our lesson. This is how I feel.

But, I am sure the practicum provides a great opportunity for everyone to teach to see how we can apply what we learn from Dr. Tseng and Dr. Zhao.

The third day of the first week: Daily Reflection, Day 3, July 1st:

Another beautiful day to me!! I am learning new things everyday, although I might know some of topics before. Students always learn different stuff from different teachers!! I finished my breakfast at 8:25....so food was still in my stomach when I arrived in the classroom. Thanks to the **warm-up** in Dr. Zhao's class. Dr. Zhao did not start class right away. She told us some useful information about safety of using plastic and glass bottle. My stomach was much better after that... good tips!!

The **Collab** is a great place to share feedback or ideas from daily lesson with others. I think almost everyone is running out of time to reply the posting after done the homework.

We learned **Brain Basic SLA Teaching CFL** this morning. Dr. Zhao covers—(1)Brain development (2)Gardner’s multiple intelligence (3)How to apply these knowledge to our teaching?

Pictures in the slides helps me learn clearly with this complex topic. It reminded me of a controversial issue about “if parents need to send young kids before age of 6 to learn second language” in Taiwan.

I like how Dr. Zhao models her teaching to remind us to remember teaching techniques. I now learned how to do repetition in different ways to help students review what they learned. Xiaoqing shared information with us: it is effective to do repetition to review what people learned because the curve of short term memory is about 24 to 48 hours. (see below)

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia“ A typical representation of the forgetting curve. The forgetting curve illustrates the decline of memory retention in time. A related concept is the strength of memory that refers to the durability that memory traces in the brain. The stronger the memory, the longer period of time that a person is able to recall it. A typical graph of the forgetting curve shows that humans tend to halve their memory of newly learned knowledge in a matter of days or weeks unless they consciously review the learned material.”

The **repetition** is important and necessary in learning.

I hope I can find information like what **activities go with certain MI (multiple-intelligence)**. Sometimes I made common mistakes that the activities I designed often go with my own learning style. It is so important that teachers should be aware of other MI besides of her owns. I realized that I rarely design activities which require analytical skills or math skills. How can I improve this weakness? I might need to know what activities involved math skills... I need to bear in mind that teachers need to accommodate different learner's needs to help them learn well with their special talents. That really makes teaching job stay away being dull and challenging!!

I finally know what **TPRS** about. Very interesting!! Although it might be not always good to apply in teaching CFL, I think about my own foreign language learning.... I wish my teachers had taught me in TPRS when I was young....Notes: The purpose of using TPRS is to help students be familiar with vocabulary. Ms. Small said that her students learned about 200 words in 6 weeks. wow.....It is a productive way to learn new vocabulary using TPR.

She also used TPRS to teach students to learn how to narrate a story by using the 1st person or the third person. In the article we read yesterday, I found **French** teacher intentionally did not provide vocabulary he taught in writing before students knew how to sound them out in his first week of lessons for novices. But, Ms. Small provided new **German** vocabulary in writing to us today. After she explained, we learned teachers teaching different languages may present different ways while using TPR/TPRS. Most of us all wonder how much it benefits to teaching Chinese.

Another point: **PQA** (personal questions Answers).... I will need to study this more later...because I haven't really got this one. I only remember that teachers could relate to student's experience....

Dr. Tseng and Dr. Zhao shared their experiences using TPR in teaching Chinese. And, there are few things we need to concern while using TPR approach: (1)avoid using only one or two teaching techniques (2)use different teaching strategies for different learning objectives (BACKWARD design) (3) teaching words and sentence structures using **meaningful, comprehensible, and authentic contextualized material....** (yes, that is what I first time heard from Dr. Tseng's speech in a workshop in 2005. I almost forget it...) (4)TPR is good to teach—action verbs; tangible vocabulary; for novice level...it's used less in advanced level when learners are learning more abstract words and developing

more critical thinking skills. (5)TPRS uses dramatic story material. (6)be aware of learner's individual differences: some "thinkers" and "audio learner" might not enjoy TPR too much. *I feel thankful for learning new stuff!!!*

The forth day of the practicum-- Daily Reflection on Thursday July 9. 2009

Topic: Second day of practicum—"Shopping--Color & Fruit"

[Let go, teacher !!]

I prepared lots of material to teach.....I tried my best to "teach"...then, I forgot the benefit of providing "students-centered" activity. I thought the less I talked the less work I did for my students. Today, I found that has been my teaching style for a long time. Yes, I was doing "meaningful drills". But, I should provide more "communicative drills". Less "display questions"; more "genuine questions" would help students to learn in a meaningful and communicative learning. I might under-estimate students' ability. Dr. Zhao told me that I should let go. She told me that I missed the moment which was the best time to let students work in a pair, so I could go to help students who needed more explanation. I could also let students who already got the idea and the language to practice their speaking more. After a clear modeling, I should shift teacher-fronted to students-centered. Students with different levels could be all taken care well. I could walk around to examine how they each learned while they were in a group. I could help with students who need more explanation and modeling. I will bear that in mind next time when I am teaching.

The fifth day of the practicum: Daily Reflection on Friday, July 10, 2009

Topic: Third day of practicum—"Clothes & Sightseeing"

[The purpose of the activity and the game]

Today students were able to use the words and sentences we taught today to complete a performance-based task. After learning the topic of clothes and sightseeing, we asked students to use words they learned in this unit to combine the words and sentences we learned today to create a skit to perform a dialogue that they are going to visit one of the five attractions in Beijing. They were able to present their skit, although it still needed to be corrected. I was so proud of them. I did change my teaching to be aware of giving more students-centered activities.

Before I started thinking about how to teach, I remembered to think about "outcome" I expected from students first. It helps me design right activity for my lessons. Another thing I should improve is how I knew that students get what I expected from them. We needed to give students opportunity to present after group work or pair-work , so I was able to assess what and how students learned. I knew that game is fun, sometimes it is helpful to conduct a game when the right timing comes. But, I need to know what the purpose of the game. Not just having fun only. Is the game for

“mechanical drills” or “meaningful drills” or for an opportunity to use the language to communicate with others?

The sixth day of the practicum--Daily Reflection on Saturday, July 11, 2009

Topic: Forth day of practicum—“Review of Time/Weather/Shopping/Sightseeing”

[students-centered activity, elicitation techniques, right amount of objectives; well-designed procedures]

I feel that I finally got what professors taught me about using “communicative approach” to teach Chinese. I also found that students were happy if they are able to speak with something the teacher just taught. These novice learners in this camp are high school students. Their cognitive skills have been developed to be prepared to process new knowledge faster than children at young age. They needed chances to practice to speak what they just learned from teacher’s modeling.

I learned how to do a good modeling by using communicative teaching with effective teaching technique--comprehensible input, clear instruction, and elicitation technique. After effective teacher-fronted teaching, I arranged students-centered activities for students to work as pairs to practice the speaking and listening. During the pair-work, I walked around to see how students doing and give extra help and explanation to students who have questions. I found advanced students get the chance to present their ability, meanwhile, I can see if I need to explain or model more. Almost every student is engaged. I found I did good modeling today. Before I had students to work as pairs to practice the sentence and vocabulary I just taught, I used slides and body language in a meaningful communicative modeling. So, students understand what they are practicing. Using life experienced related material in the sample sentence is also important. So they were willing to ask and create a meaningful answer. For example, after I taught “I want to go to visit Great Wall....because it is magnificent.....” “Where do you want to visit?” things like that.

I also had a clear purpose for this pair-work. Students will be able to tell the class what her partner wants to go and why. It is very easy to ignore for teachers that we forgot the purpose of the activity.

I appreciated that I learned to use “Backward Design” to plan my teaching. I set up objectives—what my students are able to say after this unit? So everything I did is to help my students to be able to present what they can say before the end of the class.

I also noticed that it is important to explain the rule clearly before play any game to help students engaged and present their skills. Otherwise, it will become a chaos or bring up unnecessary conflict between students.

I am glad that I made improvement to give effective modeling and provide more students-centered activities. Designing a well flow of activities is another key to make a successful lesson. I think that is something I need to improve as well as elicitation techniques. Otherwise, I will always run out of time. Students lost the chances to present

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2009 STARTALK Chinese Teacher Academy
Wei-Li Huang (Winnie)

what they learned in class through fun activities before they walked out the classroom.