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BREAKING TRADITION: MY JOURNEY OF BECOMING A TEACHER OF CHINESE AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

by

Wenrui Chen

A portfolio submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

of

MASTER OF SECOND LANUAGE TEACHING

Approved:

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UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY

Logan, Utah

2013

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Abstract

Breaking Tradition: My Journey of Becoming a Teacher of Chinese as a Foreign Language

By

Wenrui Chen

Master of Second Language Teaching

Utah State University, 2013

Major Professor: Dr. Li Guo

Department: Language, Philosophy, and Communication Studies

This portfolio is a completion of the author's work through the Master of Second Language Teaching program. The portfolio contains the author's teaching philosophy, reflection on the author's teaching and that of others, three artifacts, and an annotated bibliography. The teaching philosophy discusses what the author believes constitutes effective language teaching, such as a learned-centered classroom, communicative language teaching, and effective assessment. The artifacts are papers wrote for the MSLT courses to support the author's teaching philosophy. The literacy artifact emphasizes the importance of reading and writing in teaching Chinese as a foreign language. The culture artifact explores lesson plans that raise learners' culture awareness. The language artifact investigates the impact of living in the country where people speak the target language. At the end, the annotated bibliography includes books and articles that influenced the author's teaching beliefs and practices. (132 pages)

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Next, I want to thank my wife, Haitao, for being here with me to witness this significant happening in my life. She always trusts me and sees the best in myself.

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INTRODUCTION

This portfolio is a reflection of my work and experience over the past two years in the MSLT program. Its cornerstone is my teaching philosophy, which I developed gradually during my time at USU. The artifacts are from my coursework in the MSLT program which enable me to conduct research to support my teaching philosophy.

There are three main components in my teaching philosophy, which shows how I became who I am today as a Chinese teacher. First, the apprenticeship of observation describes my experience as a student, which affected my conceptions of language learning and teaching. Then, the professional environment delineates on my future professional expectations. Finally, in the personal teaching philosophy I describe my beliefs in effective language teaching and learning.

In my personal teaching philosophy, I discuss the roles of teachers and students, emphasizing a student-centered classroom. Students need opportunities to practice meaningful communication in the classroom, and the teacher should take on the role of a facilitator who assists students in learning. Also, I discuss the importance of communication. Language instruction should foster students' communication skills in the target language. Last but not the least, I address assessment as an important part of language instruction, specifically, Dynamic Assessment as way to promote students' development in the target language.

As a Chinese instructor, I intend to use various methods in teaching, to prepare students for real life communication, and to use effective assessment to develop their potential.

Teaching Philosophy

Apprenticeship of Observation

My desire to become a language teacher comes from my experience as a student. Before the second year of university, I never seriously thought about being a teacher as a lifelong career. It took me a long time to decide what to do for a living. I find the prospect of becoming a second language teacher really exciting.

My memory goes back to 2000, the year I entered junior high school and met the teacher who changed my life. Mrs. Yu, my English teacher, was a very strict teacher but a very kind lady. It was she who made me become so interested in English that I am now using it every day of my life. The first year was challenging: while at the beginning I felt learning English was very interesting, because English was new to me, the amount of homework and my poor performance in tests diminished my interests. I became negative in learning English.

Things began to change in the second year. Mrs. Yu realized that something was wrong with me, and she knew that I could do better. She invited me to her office for a talk, but I remained rebellious and did not care what she said. However, she was patient and wanted me to do well. Gradually, I felt she paid more attention to me both in class and out of class. In class, she asked me to answer questions more, and only asked me questions that I could handle. I felt I was becoming more popular in class, and felt accomplishment by answering those questions right. As she paid more attention to me, I paid more attention to her class and I cared more. I became a frequent visitor to her office since she talked to me more often.

I became more and more interested in the subject but still did not perform well on tests, so my parents decided I had to go to her home every weekend for extra classes. It was not just me, there were several other students. In this small group, she could see our every move, which was good for my learning. First she presented what we would learn, gave instructions, and then we did some exercises. I was amazed to find I could do most of them; I was the best in that class. For the first time in my life I felt that I was a good student and the joy of accomplishment. Mrs. Yu kept encouraging me to do better. My confidence rose dramatically and I regained an interest in English. From then on, my English improved a great deal as I felt I was not so bad at studying. I took more initiative in learning.

In high school, I had a lot of good teachers. For example, my math teacher was very humorous and had an engaging way of interacting and encouraging us. My philosophy teacher was also great. He made everything so easy to understand that I can still remember his voice today. The most important one was my English teacher, Mrs. Sun. There is an entering test for high school, I did average on other subjects but did a very good job in English. Thus, she knew my name and paid much attention to me in class. In her class, with her encouragement, I always wanted to be the first student to answer questions, and she liked my answers, making me very confident in English. She enlightened students not only in knowledge but also in life, teaching us how to be a good person. I got a strong foundation of English, which helped me choose English as my major when entering University.

In the third year of college, I met another important person in my life. John Park was a foreign teacher at my university. He was not only my teacher, but also a friend. I

learned a lot from him, especially speaking English. When I decided to pursue a master's degree in language teaching in the United States, he helped me immensely by teaching me about academic writing, TOEFL, and GRE. I was impressed with how he organized his classes, and how he made his points clear. Since John taught English speaking classes, his classes were conducted with goal-oriented activities. It was new and challenging to the students, but they loved John's classes. John was a patient and supportive person. He was nice to his students; always stating clear goals for each class and encouraging students to communicate more in class.

After a one-month internship teaching English at a local high school, I decided to be a teacher. Not only because I found my passion in teaching, in the students' face of wanting to know, but also because when I was teaching in the classroom I could see myself in my students. I believe that education can change people's lives. A good teacher can help students understand that sooner. Teacher should help students find out what they can do rather than what they cannot. I want to be a teacher like Mrs. Yu, someone who helps students come to know how good they can be.

Professional Environment

After completing the MSLT program, there are several options for my professional environment. I expect that my career will be to teach Chinese or English at college level. I enjoy teaching that age group because college students have more time and motivation to learn a language and most of them know why they want to learn it. In addition, I like to work at a university because I had good experiences and memories about my university life, thus making me want to pursue a career in that environment.

More specifically, my first goal is to teach Chinese as a foreign language in an American language institute or university. When teaching Chinese at Utah State University, I realized that more and more people are interested in Chinese culture and language, increasing the need for Chinese teachers accordingly. With the knowledge, experience, and methodology I acquire in the MSLT program, I am confident that I will be a competitive candidate for a Chinese teaching position in the USA. Secondly, I would like to return to China to teach English as a foreign language in a university setting. The problem with learning English in China is not about the teaching methodology, it is really the educational policy. Many students in university have to learn English even though they do not want to. I cannot change the policy, but I can change their view about learning English.

Therefore, this portfolio will mainly address my points of view on teaching Chinese as a foreign language and teaching English as a foreign language.

Personal Teaching Philosophy

In this Teaching Philosophy, I present my perspective on being an effective second language teacher, which is based on my experience as a language student and language teacher, the one-year experience of teaching Chinese at Utah State University, the courses I have taken in the Master of Second Language Teaching program, the language classes I have observed taught by other teachers, and the internship of teaching English in China when I was in my undergraduate. Thus, communication is what I believe to be the core of language teaching according to Communicative Language Teaching (Lee & VanPatten, 2003).

"If you can't use a language, you don't know a language," Liskin-Gasparro (1987, p. 26) states. Ironically, many students, like me, have been taught with traditional methodologies and only "know" the language but cannot use it. According to Lee and VanPatten (2003), Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is a new approach to teach languages which focus not only on interaction between the teacher and students, but also on student-student interaction. Thus, I use the CLT approach in my Chinese class and provide comprehensible input, authentic contexts, and opportunities for students to communicate. I want to enable students to use the TL not only in class but also in real-life situations. My experience of teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language at Utah State University shows me that CLT is effective and popular among language students, because they really learn Chinese and are able to use it outside the classroom. Students are easily engaged when working with authentic texts, video or songs because authentic materials intend to communicate a message rather than highlight target language features (Gilmore, 2007). Authentic materials are "the language produced by native speakers for

native speakers in a particular language community" (Gilmore, 2007, p. 98). I will provide lessons that are as authentic as possible; I believe showing students that they can cope with authentic materials is a strong motivation for them.

My identity as a language learner of English serves as a relevant background for the development of my language teaching philosophy. After learning English for eight years in teacher-centered classes focused on word repetition, grammar learning, and translation, I was unsuccessful in making a conversation with an American teacher whom I met in my freshman year in China. However, I became somewhat fluent after talking to her for just one semester, because the conversation was meaningful and spontaneous. I knew countless grammar rules and vocabulary items but rarely had a chance to use them in meaningful and real-life situations. Afterwards, I tried to use English for communication as much as I could, which turned out to be very effective in improving my English ability. Since coming to the U.S. to pursue a Master of Second Language Teaching degree, I have been introduced to communicative language teaching or CLT (Lee & VanPatten, 2003), which is a learner-centered method characterized by meaningful communication and real-life interaction. Through my teaching practice, I have found CLT as one of the most effective methodologies in the field of second language acquisition (SLA). It teaches students to use the language in a meaningful way so that they are able to interpret and express in the classroom and beyond. The main focus of CLT is communication, which coincides with the goal of learning a language - being able to communicate in the target language (TL), not just learning the grammar rules and sentence structures.

Next, I would like to explain what I believe to be an effective language teacher, and what are important for teachers and students, based on my experiences as a language teacher as well as a learner.

Roles of teachers and students

The past fifty years have seen a great change in the roles of language teachers and students in the United States (Lee & VanPatten, 2003). Traditionally, teachers were pictured as the center of class, the authority of knowledge, and the leader. Conversely, the students' position was more passive. As Lee and VanPatten (2003) hold, the students' role, in this traditional conception, was to watch, listen, write down, and understand. In other words, they were followers, receivers, and containers in this typical teacher-centered class. However, language teachers have seen that the traditional approach is not maximally effective, because students need to use the TL for meaningful communicative purposes if they wish to become proficient (Lee & VanPatten, 2003). A student-centered class, in my view, can provide many more opportunities for meaningful interactions that help students grow into a proficient language user.

According to CLT, the teacher's role should be that of facilitator, co-constructor, and activity designer (Ballman, Liskin-Gasparro & Mandell, 2001; Lee & VanPatten, 2003). Teachers must ensure that students get maximum opportunity to communicate meaningfully in class. In a traditional classroom, teachers act as the center, instructing, explaining, and summarizing everything, while students only repeat and memorize (Lee & VanPatten, 2003). In this kind of class setting, students are not communicating, and thus acquisition can hardly happen. I my personal teaching practice, I aim to design

authentic, meaningful, and engaging activities, which I model for the students, who then interact with each other to carry out certain communicative tasks. For example, in one of the Chinese activities, the goal should be "describe your best birthday" instead of "learn the past tense". Only with the communicative goal can students learn the language for real-life purposes.

My goal is to help students build their proficiency to the level where they can use the TL for critical thinking (Bloom, 1956, as cited in Shrum & Glisan, 2010). Bloom suggests that there are six levels of human thought, which are, from low to high, knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. The taxonomy was revised to reflect current understanding of learning. The six levels of Bloom's new Taxonomy are remember, understand, apply, analyze, evaluate, and create (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001). Shrum and Glisan explain that, "Bloom's Taxonomy helps teachers to understand the level of thinking required by their classroom objectives and activities" (p. 80). Created by Richard C. Overbaugh and Lynn Schultz[1], an online version of the new Bloom's Taxonomy and the verbs applied to different level is helpful for teachers to create activities. This is important because, according to Shrum and Glisan (2010), Bloom's Taxonomy helps teachers understand different levels of cognitive involvement on the part of students. Teachers can design activities that can use students' higher levels of thinking such as analyze, evaluate, and create. Learning should not consist of only memorizing and/or understanding. Different levels of activities should be developed to train all levels of students' thinking abilities. For example, students can match pictures with words for lower levels of thinking such as remember. They can do

[1] Retrieved from http://ww2.odu.edu/educ/roverbau/Bloom/blooms_taxonomy.htm.

role-plays to use multiple thinking levels. Mostly, I want to work on the higher levels of evaluate and create (Shrum & Glisan, 2010). Teachers need to prepare higher-order questions beforehand, because otherwise class tends to revolve too much around yes-no questions. Students cannot get enough opportunities to talk meaningfully in the TL if they are asked only yes-no questions.

It is the teacher's job to design a meaningful class. I like to use the building project metaphor by Lee and VanPatten (2003). It refers to the teacher as the architect and resource person in a large and complex building project. The role of the teacher is not to do the actual construction but rather to design carefully the blueprints and plans, which guide students to do the construction work. The students' role is to participate in activities, keep positive attitudes in class, and try to use other strategies such as background knowledge to comprehend and participate. The responsibility of the students "includes being aware of the goals and objectives that underlie each activity and actively trying to learn as much as possible while engaging in the activities" (Ballman et al., 2001, p. 8).

The teacher's job also includes providing feedback, which should go beyond indicating whether a student's utterance was correct or not, such as "very good," or "no, that's not right". Teachers should monitor themselves so they can move away from the traditional IRE sequence (initiation, response, and evaluation). Studies show that the IRE pattern limits teacher-student interaction (Ballman et al., 2001; Hall, 1999). Instead of IRE, I will try to use more IRF (initiation, response, and feedback/follow-up). I believe that in a language class, the teacher should follow up with students as much as possible to encourage students to communicate on a broader and deeper level. According to Wells

(1993), IRF is a great way to extend students' discourse as the follow-up part could "initiate new cycles of learning" (p. 35). In this way, the teacher provides reasonable challenges. Follow-ups such as "Tell me more! Are you saying that…?" can "encourage students to think and to perform at higher levels" (Shrum & Glisan, 2010, p. 82). This kind of feedback is meaningful because it fosters interaction between the teacher and students. The teacher needs to be aware and well-prepared for potential class discourse; as Thoms (2012) points out, it is the teacher who mostly determines what types of activities or questions to pose to students. As teachers make real conversation with students, they also help students develop interactional strategies for real-world communication.

In recent decades, the teacher's role has shifted to that of facilitator of interaction in the classroom. As a Chinese teacher, my goal is to design communicative activities, to provide help when needed, and to provide opportunities for interaction. Interaction is very important, because it provides opportunities for students to use the TL for communication. In the traditional point of view, the teacher's role was to ask questions and students were to provide answers, which is not communication. Students do not need boring drill practices; they need meaningful, open-ended questions, and real interaction between teacher and students, as well as among students (Ballman et al., 2001; Lee & VanPatten, 2003).

Communication

The practical experience of teaching Chinese has made me realize how important communication is to language learning. Three modes of communication are outlined in

the Standards for Foreign Language Learning (SFLL, 2006): interpretive, interpersonal, and presentational. In order to make communication happen, teachers need to incorporate all three modes into the foreign language curriculum. I believe making this happen requires good input, negotiation of meaning, and task-based activities (Lee & VanPatten, 2003).

Input is to language acquisition what gas is to a car. Without input, language acquisition will not happen (Krashen, 1982; Lee & VanPatten, 2003). Krashen's Input Hypothesis shows that in order to learn a language, students need input that is not only comprehensible but also a little beyond their current ability, which is known as "i +1" (Krashen, 1982). Input alone is not enough; the most important characteristic of input from the learner's point of view is that it has to be comprehensible. "The learner (student) must be able to understand most of what the speaker (teacher) is saying if acquisition is to happen" (Lee & VanPatten, 2003, p. 26). I make input comprehensible by using a slower rate of speech, common words and structures, body language, gestures, pictures, and so on. These same features are found in caretaker speech that fosters children's first language acquisition (Lee & VanPatten, 2003). Input should come not only from the teacher; interaction between students is also valuable. Several researchers have shown that if not neglected, the student-student interaction can be powerful (Blumberg, 2008; Johnson, 1981; Thoms, 2012; Webb, 1989). In my personal teaching practice, I seek to build a student-centered class where students are afforded ample time to talk meaningfully in the TL. Students work in pairs or small groups, and the teacher as a facilitator can walk around and monitor students' conversations and interact with them.

As students talk to each other or to the teacher, they have the opportunity to engage in the negotiation of meaning (Long, 1996). Negotiation of meaning happens when speakers interact with each other, seeking clarification, checking comprehension, and requesting confirmation (Savignon, 1991; Shrum & Glisan, 2010). This is mostly associated with the interpersonal mode. The more students engage in negotiation and interaction, the more acquisition will happen in the language classroom. Shrum and Glisan (2010) state that "through negotiation of meaning, interactions are changed and redirected, leading to greater comprehensibility, further, these negotiations can lead to language development by the learner" (p. 21). Therefore, I encourage my students to use negotiation of meaning as much as possible. For example, if students are talking about what they did last night, one student might say "I slept". If the other student does not understand, s/he could ask "slept?" The first student might respond with a gesture and add "bed". By engaging in this kind of meaning negotiation, students have opportunities to practice using the TL in class. Students will develop their proficiency through negotiation, not from the teacher telling them grammar rules.

A teacher should also tools and assistance that students need, also known as scaffolding (Shrum & Glisan, 2010). Through collaboration with the teacher or other students, language learners will develop their zone of proximal development (ZPD). Vygotsky (1986) claims the ZPD is the potential developmental level which will develop under assistance of others, and eventually become the actual developmental level. I will offer scaffolding to help students within their ZPD, assisting them to build their language proficiency. Shrum and Glisan (2010) define scaffolding as "the interaction between the expert and novice in a problem-solving task" (p. 26). In a language class, the teacher is

the expert and students are the novice. In order to provide scaffolding, the teacher needs to know the students' current level of proficiency. The learning process is constructed by both the teacher and the students by working together on certain tasks, in which the expert (teachers) scaffolds the novice (learners) in achieving the goal. With this idea, as Kinginger (2002) points out, scaffolding within students' ZPD can boost not only students' language proficiency, but also their understanding of target culture.

Drawing from these theoretical resources, I apply Task-Based instruction in my teaching. When the goal for students is "using the TL to carry out a particular task", the most suitable way to accomplish this goal is by using task-based activities (TBA) (Ballman et al., 2003, p. 76). There are three characteristics of TBA, which are (1) task-based activities are learned-centered and promote student-student interaction; (2) focus on meaningful exchange of information; (3) TBA is a series activities that leads to a concrete representation of the information. Students are working together towards a certain communicative task. In order to achieve it students need the vocabulary, sentences, and knowledge of pragmatics. For example, in a lesson on asking for directions on a university campus in Chinese, students not only need the directions vocabulary but also the knowledge of how a native speaker would do it, how people address others on the street, and so on. Without all this knowledge, students are not communicating with authentic language, nor making real-life conversation. I follow task-based instruction because Ballman et al. (2003) explain that TBA works in a learner-centered class, which offers maximum opportunities for students to practice using the TL. In addition, "TBA focuses on a meaningful exchange of information" (p. 76), such as interview and information gap. More importantly, "task-based instruction guides participants through a

series of predetermined steps" (p. 77) leading them to the communicative goals. I will have my students working out the tasks with authentic contexts and real-life conversation, through which they will develop their language proficiency and communication strategies.

Assessments

Students should be assessed to find out what they can do, rather than what they cannot (Poehner, 2008). The purpose of each assessment has to be clear. For an instructor, the purpose of assessments should be diagnosing learners' struggles, proving progress, providing feedback, and evaluating his own teaching (Shrum & Glisan, 2010).

Both summative and formative assessments are included in my lessons. Shrum and Glisan (2010) explain that "summative assessments often occur at the end of a course". On the other hand, "formative assessments are designed to help form or shape learners' ongoing understanding or skills while the teacher and learners still have opportunities to interact for the purpose of repair and improvement within the instructional setting" (p. 401). I will, as Shohamy (1990) suggests, "make extensive use of formative testing that is integrated into the teaching and learning process" (cited in Shrum & Glisan, 2010, p. 401). Formative assessments are used frequently in my classes. In order to help students "revisit and review the materials in a variety of ways formative feedback must enable the learner to improve without penalty" (Shrum & Glisan, 2010, p. 401). There are negotiations of meaning, scaffolding, and mediation through assessment, because helping students develop their language skills is the ultimate goal of assessment. It never should be just to give students a grade.

Dynamic Assessment (DA) provides students with scaffolding and mediation with the goal of student development, not the assigning of a grade (Golombek, 2011; Poehner, 2008). Poehner states that DA is a way to assess students' achievement under mediation. The score can be recorded either as the improvement between the initial assessment and the assessment after mediation, or just simply the performance after mediation. Mediation is the assistance provided by the instructor through the assessment; it can be formal or informal. Students are supported by the mediator, and the goal is to help students improve. Instruction and assessment need to be integrated. Thus, instead of just providing a grade to my students, I aim to serve as a mediator and ensure my students' improvement.

The goal of assessments in my class is set according to the Standards for Foreign Language Learning (SFLL), which states that teachers should help students to "know how, when and why to say what to whom" (SFLL, 2006). To test what we learned in class, I use formative assessments such as short quizzes and interaction activities every day (Shrum & Glisan, 2010). I assess my students both during and after the activity, and provide mediation within their ZPD. For example, during an oral quiz if a student does not know what to say, that is not the end of the story. I talk to the student providing visual or verbal cues, co-constructing a dialogue as the final product. At the end of the semester, I ask students to perform a final presentation or role-play as a summative assessment to assess their "oral proficiency and ability to perform global linguistic tasks" (Shrum & Glisan, 2010, p. 402).

In order to achieve the communicative goal, I use authentic assessments, which prepare students for tasks and challenges they will face in the real world. As Wiggins (1994) claims, authentic tasks "may be used for either formative or summative purposes,

engage learners in nonroutine and multistage tasks, real problems, or problems that require a repertoire of knowledge" (p. 75). I believe that teachers should "assess what we value so that we value what we assess" (Center on Learning, Assessment, and School Structure [CLASS], 1998, as cited in Shrum & Glisan, 2010, p. 411). Having practiced with authentic texts and tests, students will be ready for communication in the real world.

Conclusion

As the heart of second language learning, to promote communicative language teaching is my goal in practice. I shall provide a learner-centered, communicative, and engaging class, and design meaningful task-based activities, which require students to use the target language to accomplish real-life tasks (Ballman et al., 2001).

Teaching is also a process of life-long learning. It is exciting to see students make progress and advance in language learning. One of the SFLL goals is "communities", stated as standard 5.2 "Students show evidence of becoming lifelong learners by using the language for personal enjoyment and enrichment" (SFLL, p. 7). As a teacher, I endeavor to apply the most effective methodologies, create a comfortable environment, motivate students to learn Chinese, and help them to realize how they can use the TL in their lives.

Being both student and teacher, I find myself learning right alongside my students and am constantly immersed in second language teaching. From the MSLT program, I have not only obtained theoretical training in teaching Chinese but also gained insight into language teaching in general. In addition to keeping up to date with the newest

research in this field, I will strive to achieve my primary goal of helping students learn the TL, in order to use the language for real-world purposes.

REFLECTION ON TEACHING OBSERVATIONS

To observe other language teachers and compare to my own teaching is the best way of learning about teaching. I appreciate that we are in a program with opportunities to observe amazing language teachers of Arabic, Chinese, Portuguese, and Spanish. Learning from other teachers makes me realize that no matter which language I teach, or what teaching style I adopt, the most important thing is to gain students' interests and to address learners' needs. I observed classes in Arabic, Chinese, and Spanish, from which I learned a lot. Reflecting on my own teaching, I found how I could do some things differently.

All classes I observed are student-centered, which I believe is critical for language learning. When I first began teaching I did not know how to teach in a student-centered way. The theory and practices we covered in the MSLT program proved that students benefit greatly from a student-centered class. Students need to use the language for communication, not the teachers. However, I noticed that teacher-talk in beginner-level classes still dominates the class time, especially for languages that are very different from English, such as Arabic and Chinese. I believe that because it is more difficult, students should get more time in class interacting in the target language. After reflecting on my own teaching of Chinese, I have been able to achieve a significant reduction of teacher talk in my classes. Having become more aware of the purpose of teacher talk, I now intentionally give more time to my students to speak the language. Also, I encourage students to learn by themselves about what they are interested in.

The target language should be used as much as possible. According to ACTFL (2010) standards, language teachers should use at least 90% of the target language. In some classes I observed, the instructor used too much English to explain. I believe that if

the teacher can connect the target language and concept directly, it would actually reduce students' learning load. If the teacher shows a picture and its label in the target language, students do not have to depend on the English translation. The other advantage of using the target language is that the teacher can create an environment in which students need to speak the target language, and they will try hard to figure out how to communicate with each other. I believe that this can be done even with non-alphabetical language such as Chinese. It will be hard to do, but the effort is worth it. Students will improve dramatically if the teacher speaks only the target language with them. When I first taught Chinese, I used a lot of English. However, when I realized that students do not need me to speak English to them I reduced my English talk in class. All the Spanish classes I observed are taught entirely in Spanish, I believe that the Chinese and Arabic instructors could work harder to find a way to use only the target language in teaching.

Most of the classes I observed were based on communication activities. I believe that grammar should play a role in language learning, but only when it involves content and communication (Ballman et al., 2001). Grammar should not be separated from the content, because without content grammar is meaningless. All the teachers I observed integrated grammar into their content, which I believe is important for language learning. For example, in one of the Spanish classes, the instructor had students write a paragraph for which they needed to use different grammar skills learned that day, and it was all about the content instead of isolated grammar rules.

Reflecting on myself teaching Chinese, the part I need to work on is trying to use the target language more. All the Spanish classes I observed, the instructors used Spanish 100 percent of the time, some use at least 99 percent. Even though Chinese does not have

an alphabetic writing system, I agree that teachers should use Chinese 100 percent because if students rely on English too much, they will never learn the language. The best way to learn a language is being immersed in the language.

One Spanish class I observed is memorable because the instructor did a great job in teaching communicatively and stayed in the target language all the time. It was the first week of the semester, students were learning some basic words, greetings, asking names, etc. Even though I don't know Spanish, I understand most of the instruction and was able to follow the class. One thing I never thought about was that the instructor taught students how to ask "what does X mean?" and "How do I say X in Spanish?" in Spanish. I thought it was brilliant because students can use the target language to ask for more information.

Another observation influenced me greatly was the ones I did with Dr. Sung during my first semester at USU. As a new Chinese instructor, I had the honor to observe Dr. Sung's first-year Chinese classes for the whole semester. I am very lucky because with my limit teaching experience I was worried about the class that I was going to teach, but with her model I could gradually grasp how to teach Chinese to beginners. I liked the way she taught vocabulary. When teaching students new vocabulary, she always asks them to make sentences that are meaningful to themselves. It is important to make connections between the language and the students so that they can learn better.

Also, I learned to structure the class with meaningful activities. For example, there was one class she asked students to do a role play; they had a review activity before preparing for the dialogue so that students have the vocabulary to make the conversation. I learned numerous good things about teaching for Dr. Sung, such as activity design, the

use of the target language and time management. Another activity I learned from her teaching is information gap. One class, Dr. Sung handout students with two different kinds of information, half of the students got sheet A which is a chart that has some information missing, and the other half of the class got sheet B which has the information that group A needs. This activity is great for information gathering, students need to talk to multiple students to get all the information they need. Thus, students get lots of opportunities to practice using the target language, learning the vocabulary, and negotiating the meaning.

The MSLT program changed my view of teaching and learning. Being able to observe Dr. Sung's class, it was rewarding for me as a novice language teacher. Also, observing other teachers made me a better teacher because I found that even with different languages the goals are the same – communication. Thus, our methodology should work towards making all our students successful in communicating with the target language.

TEACHING VIDEO REFLECTION

Based on a video recording of my teaching, I am going to compare my own teaching practice with what I claim is good language teaching in my teaching philosophy. The lesson was recorded when I substituted for the regular instructor a Chinese 1020 class. There were eight students in the class. The class was fifty minutes long and started at 7:30 in the morning. Some might think that it was too early for students to learn Chinese, but the lesson was actually quite good. From watching the recording, I found even though I was trying, it was hard to keep the lesson completely in the target language. I already knew most of the students from previous semesters. Even though their levels were good enough to understand me, I did too much unnecessary explanation in English, which should be improved in the future. Despite the shortcomings, the class was overall engaged and responsive.

While I tried to use one-hundred percent target language as I believed language teachers should do, there were several times I had to use English. As I reviewed the recording I found most of the explanations were unnecessary. I noticed that when I taught completely in Chinese, students paid more attention than when I used English. Even though I tried to avoid using English, sometimes students asked me questions that I had to answer with some English. Part of the reason was that students' levels vary significantly, some of them stayed in Chinese the whole class period, but some could not. Also, I did a vocabulary review activity that was a little uncommunicative. We were learning clothing names and verbs. I gave out a handout with pictures of all the clothes we learned, but the way I did it was more audio-lingual than communicative. I found there was too much repetition. When we were learning the two different verbs for wearing different clothes students showed interested, but I spent too much time on

teaching vocabulary, which also caused less time for role play. As I was explaining the scenario for the role play activity, I spent too much time on it even though I used mostly Chinese. These are the things I could improve for future lessons.

There are always things I can improve in my teaching, but I want to mention a few things in the lesson that were matching my teaching philosophy. First, the lesson was conducted as it was planned. We did a warm-up activity at the beginning, which was a speaking activity. Students were asked to use the structure "I everyday …" to describe their daily routine. The activity was communicative because students can talk about themselves, which is connected to their everyday life. Also, during the speaking time, there were a lot of opportunities for students to negotiate meaning with each other. After five minutes, I asked two students to share their daily routine with the whole class as assessment. Instead of only evaluation, I commented and followed up with students to encourage them to speak more. Then, we did a review activity about clothing names with picture handout. In my lessons, I always like to use pictures and videos to illustrate new words or concepts. Students are more engaged with visual scaffolds versus just me talking. After the review, we learned two different verbs for different clothes. The pictures illustrate the words very well, but we also did it with gestures and objects. For example, when I said "put on a hat", I had a hat to put on and let students practice saying it. In this way, there is a direct connection between words and meaning without English explanation. The vocabulary review was also a pre-activity for the role play that came next.

The next part of the lesson, I had students in two groups to do a role play activity. Students received another handout with a picture of two people in a shopping mall; below

the picture was the scenario for the activity. I designed this role play since we are learning clothing and buying things. In this activity, students worked together to create their own dialogue, in which they talked about going shopping for clothes. I believe it is authentic because every student in the class has experienced this scenario. Students found this activity interesting as well because they could talk about what they like and dislike. As they were preparing the conversation, I was able to walk around in their groups and provide help if needed.

The textbook we used for our class was not very communicative, but I heard that it is the best we could get in the United States. It would be beneficial to the profession if more Chinese teaching materials have been published. In my class, we do not use the textbook very often, but it is great to have materials that I could refer to. For example, for this class, the activity we did is not from the book. However, we are following the theme of the units and are learning and practicing the language points from the book. I wish that in the future there will be more Chinese textbooks and learning materials on the market, so that teachers and students can have more choices. It would also be easier for teachers if the textbook could provide more ideas of communicative activities.

Overall, I was able to provide a lesson matching mostly what I claim to believe in my teaching philosophy. I provided communicative activities in which students have ample opportunities to negotiate meaning. Students were learning the vocabulary meaningfully instead of a translation word list. As a result of a series of connected activities, students also had a chance to practice using the vocabulary in context in the role play activity. However, there is always room for improvement in my teaching. Using one-hundred percent target language in the future is what I need to work on first. In order

to accomplish this goal, I need to plan my lesson accordingly to make it comprehensible. I could be more creative in designing activities, especially for vocabulary and grammar. Time management is another aspect I need to work on. We did not have time to have every group present in the end since too much time was spent on the vocabulary activity. I would pay more attention to things I could improve, and continue to provide effective communicative instruction.

ARTIFACTS

LITERACY ARTIFACT

Dynamic Assessment and Second Language Literacy Development

INTRODUCTION

In this artifact, I investigate the approach of Dynamic Assessment in second language teaching, especially in CFL practices. From studying Dynamic Assessment, I believe that language assessment should be blended into language instruction. Focusing on social interaction, I propose that it is a great way to instruct and assess Chinese literacy trough an online discussion platform such as Canvas and Blackboard. First, students can interact on the platform with each other. Second, with computer technology, pinyin input system for Chinese writing is a great tool to assist learners' writing development. The most important thing I have learned from writing this artifact is that assessment should not be a tool for assigning grades; instead, it should be a tool to improve students' performance. This paper demonstrates what I found out about assessment and how I can apply my specific findings to teaching practices.

Assessment should not be the end of instruction (Poehner, 2008). In terms of second/foreign language education, the purpose of instruction is to enable students to develop language proficiency in the broadest sense, including listening, speaking, reading, and writing. This paper reviews the studies of Dynamic Assessment and Chinese literacy development. The purpose of this paper is to discuss the application of Dynamic Assessment in literacy instruction in Chinese as a foreign language in the United States.

This paper takes a sociocultural perspective in second language education. Sociocultural Theory (SCT) was developed by Vygotsky's (1978). SCT takes a social perspective on language learning, arguing that language development occurs within the context of social activities, with interaction between learners and mediators. A mediator refers to a more capable person with more knowledge in the subject than the learner. They co-construct within the learner's zone of proximal development (ZPD). The mediator can be the teacher as well as peers who assist the learners within their ZPDs. The assistance provided by the mediator is called mediation which helps learners develop to their potential levels. It is sometimes referred to as scaffolding as well, which is "the interaction between the expert and novice in a problem-solving task" (Shrum & Glisan, 2010, p. 26). Usually, the teacher serves in the role as expert, and the student as novice. However, during student-student interaction, they can negotiate meaning and serve as each other's "more capable peers". Students also feel more comfortable and less inhibited about asking questions in pairs or small groups than in teacher-student interaction (Ballman, Liskin-Gasparro, & Mandell, 2001). Therefore, in order to help learners develop their proficiency in the target language, these interactions should be promoted.

Based on Vygotsky's theory, Poehner (2008) introduces Dynamic Assessment (DA). Different from traditional assessment, DA is a way to assess and promote individual learner development through intervention. Poehner (2008) argues that traditional assessment cannot reflect accurately what learners can do, because when provided with assistance learners can usually do much more than by themselves. This is their potential for development. One important part of language assessment is literacy which primarily refers to reading and writing. Literacy skills are critical in education fields across subjects, because being able to read and write forms the foundation of academic development. It is important to teach students to read and write in the target language, because these skills empower students with more language tools that they can use on their own, moving them to be independent learners.

According to Modern Language Association (MLA), there were total 51,582 students enrolled in Chinese among 661 two-year and four-year institutions (MLA, 2006). Since learning Chinese is becoming increasingly popular in the United States, and also since the Chinese language is so different from English, especially in written forms, more literacy research in Chinese learning needs to be done (Sung & Wu, 2011). This paper introduces foundational concepts of assessments under a SCT perspective, reviews literacy studies in second language education, and explores the possibilities of integrating Dynamic Assessment and literacy development with computer technology in Chinese as a foreign language.

Background: Vygotsky and ZPD

Vygotsky was a psychologist and an educator in Russia. His work was not recognized by western educators until the second half of the twentieth century. Sociocultural Theory is based on Vygotsky's work about human learning and development, which has begun to exert a strong influence in the field of second language education in recent decades (Dixon-Krauss, 1996; Lantolf & Poehner, 2008; Lantolf & Thorne, 2007; Nassaji & Swain, 2000; Vygotsky, 1978).

The zone of proximal development (ZPD) is one of Vygotsky's (1978) most famous concepts, which means: "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (p. 86). To illustrate this, I can describe my experience of learning how to ride a bike. With the small support wheels on each side of the bike, I could ride it on my own. First I practiced with those training wheels. Later, when the training wheels were no longer needed, I still needed my father to hold the back of my bike seat to help me keep my balance. Gradually, I acquired the skill of riding a bike without assistance. I had the potential of riding my bike, but at the beginning I needed someone to do it along with me to help me develop this skill that was new to me. There are two levels of development, the level of actual development determined by independent performance on problem solving, and the level of potential development determined by assisted performance (Vygotsky, 1978). This development process is also referred to as internalization, and the assistance is sometimes termed scaffolding (Lantolf & Poehner, 2008).

Second language learning, however, is a social skill that requires much more than riding a bike. From Vygotsky's point of view, learning is the process in which an adult interacts with a child in the zone of the child's proximal development, which connects strongly with the social context of the particular culture. Language cannot be viewed separately from cultural factors; it is important for learners to know what to say and how to say it under certain circumstances in the target language. When learning their first language, it is through interactions with other speakers that children internalize what the words mean; they are immersed in an environment full of the target language (Gillen & Hall, 2003; Vygotsky, 1978). Thus, effective second language instruction should include these factors in class, and provide assistance in students' ZPD so that they can develop towards their potential. Dynamic Assessment is a way to find out what learners know, and their potential, which will be introduced in the next section.

Dynamic Assessment for Second Language Development

Dynamic Assessment (DA) is grounded in the concept of ZPD. DA challenges "conventional views" by arguing that instruction and assessment should not be viewed as two separate activities, instead, they ought to be fully integrated (Lantolf & Poehner, 2008; Poehner, 2008; Vygotsky, 1978). In order to integrate instruction and assessment, DA allows teachers to provide support for a student's future development. The amount of support is decided by teachers during instruction and assessment. Assessment can happen anytime during instruction, formal and informal. This process is called intervention, which is conducted by teachers in the process of DA, in which teachers aim to help the student's future development. Poehner (2008) points out that DA constructs students'

future development through the understanding of the present, whereas traditional assessments only find out students' present levels and stop.

Traditionally, at the end of each semester students get a grade which is a reflection of the work of the semester. However, getting an "A" in a second language class does not necessarily mean they have internalized the knowledge, because scores only indicate how well students did on the test, and how well they were trained to take the test. Often, under the pressure of the test, teachers will teach to the test. This phenomenon is known as the *washback* effect, which refers teaching and learning are driven by testing (Ballman et al., 2001; Cheng, 2005). Cheng (2005) in a thorough study on *washback* effect in Hong Kong found that teachers in Hong Kong plan and conduct their lessons "with an eye fixed firmly on the requirements of the examinations" (p. 3). I agree that assessment should not be separated from instruction. In language learning, we want our students to be able to use the language meaningfully, not just to pass a test.

Vygotsky (1978) emphasizes that "developmental processes do not coincide with learning processes. Rather, the developmental process lags behind the learning process; this sequence then results in zones of proximal development" (p. 90). In SCT, learning happens before development, assessments with no intervention only reflect abilities that learners have already developed or internalized. However, there is no evidence for learners' abilities that are still developing. With DA intervention, teachers will be able to find out which skills students are still developing and provide mediation (Lidz & Gindis, 2003). I believe the problem with traditional tests is that the test stops where the learners find out failure, whereas DA locates learners' potential and helps them develop to their potential. For example, in our Chinese class, students struggle with writing characters.

Doing the quiz at the end of a lesson only helps students realize how much they do not know, and results in a poor grade. Nevertheless, if teachers can do intervention after the quiz or even during the quiz, it will help students remember writing characters much better. Teachers can assign grades by their improvement after intervention.

In DA the teacher interacts with students during any time of the instruction to gain insights into learners' understanding and promote their learning (Poehner, 2008). Mediation is the process of using physical and psychological tools to mediate the relationship between the individual and the social-material world (Lantolf & Thorne, 2007). It is dynamic because it may change depending on learners' current level and understanding of instruction. Mediation can sometimes change from very implicit hints to very explicit explanation or instruction (e.g., Ableeva, 2008; Aljaafreh & Lantolf, 1994; Anton, 2002; Golombek, 2011). Ableeva (2008) conducted research in French listening comprehension. In the study, all the participants had difficulties understanding the audio of a French restaurant advertisement. The author found out every student had a different ZPD thus requiring different amount of mediation. The teacher gradually increased the amount of mediation so that students received enough assistance yet not more than what they needed.

Even though Vygotsky's theory was originally applied to adult-child[2] interaction, we can still apply it to second language teacher-student interaction. The ZPD provides a way to locate the learner's future potential. In a language class room, the teacher creates

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[2] It is interesting to consider age difference as a factor in the context of DLI classrooms. In DLI programs, students are usually very young while teachers are adult, it would be an interesting topic to research in the future.

and leads the class, and students engage in class activities. The teacher provides assistance while monitoring students solving the problem. The teacher-student interaction is on the interpersonal facet. The students are in other-regulation (Vygotsky, 1978), because the knowledge is still outside of the student's mind. However, if the student can apply it in activity with the teacher's assistance, the knowledge is in the student's potential. When the student can do it independently, the knowledge has moved inward, in other words, has been internalized. As the student can solve the problem without help, the knowledge move to intrapersonal level, which is what Vygotsky refers to as self-regulation. The knowledge has become a psychological tool in the student's mind, and now the student can use this tool to mediate other activities (Vygotsky, 1978). The challenge of DA for teachers is that internalization takes a long time. "The transformation of an interpersonal process into an intrapersonal one is the result of a long series of developmental events" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 57). It will take a long time before the knowledge turns inward. The teacher needs to keep interacting with students until they internalize the new knowledge.

Assessing literacy of Chinese as a foreign language

Literacy is an important component to assess, especially at the beginning stages of learning, because with literacy skills in the target language students will be able to become self-regulated or independent learners much faster. Dixon-Krauss (1996) defines literacy as "a form of communication in which printed signs (words) are used to build shared meanings between the reader and the author" (p. 20). Since language is a tool for social communication, the teachers' role in literacy is to provide intervention, which means interacting and assisting students to develop their skills in reading and writing in a

social context (Combs, 1996). Dixon-Krauss (1996) argues that "teacher mediation is more than modeling or demonstrating how to do something" (p. 20). Instead, teachers should collaboratively work together with students to help them build bridges of understanding through social interactions and interventions. Teachers need to analyze the students' performance and make decisions on what type and how much mediation to provide. Dixon-Krauss explains that in literacy instruction, the teacher makes decisions according to the social interaction with students. It is a dynamic and continued system, rather than a fixed, structured assessment (see Figure 1).

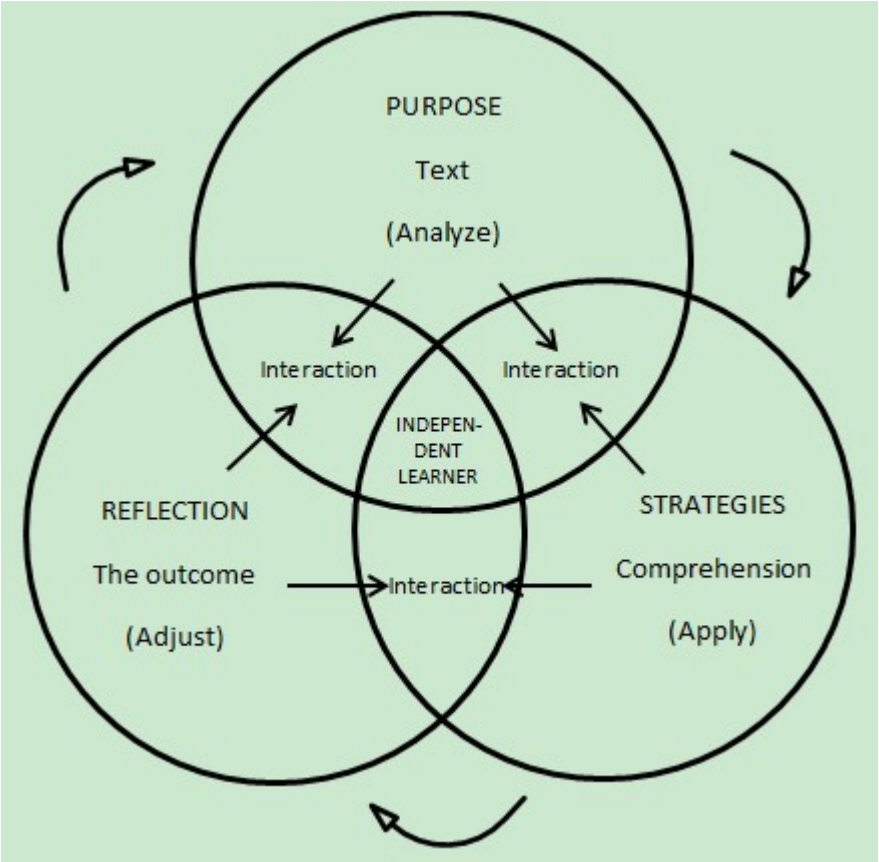

Figure 1. An adaptation of Dixon-Krauss's (1996) depiction of mediation model for literacy instruction.

This model describes the process of decision-making of the teacher during instruction and assessment. As the teacher interacts with students for social communication purpose, he/she modifies the mediation to fulfill the needs for students' potential development. For example, in my Chinese 1020 class I used e-mail as a way to assess students' writing abilities. Dependent on learners' level I would pick a topic and post several leading questions. As beginners, they need to read the text first and comprehend it, and then write their responses in three to five sentences. Once I received the email I would reply individually based on their responses, providing feedback and follow-up questions (see Appendix A). Each student exhibited different problems in writing, and the potential of their ZPDs was different. By replying to them individually, I addressed individual needs and fostered individual growth in their potential. In addition, using email helped students with informal writing and reading and enabled them to practice using email in Chinese in the future (Peters, 1996).

With other technological support, students will be able to read and write in an open on-line platform such as Blackboard and Canvas. Under the mediation model, the teacher can pose questions and/or topics in the "discussion" section where all the students can read and comment. When choosing the topic, the teacher considers the purpose of the text, and introduces strategies, and then reflects during the process (Dixon-Krauss, 1996). One advantage of open-discussion is that all students can see other's comments and can interact with each other on the platform, which is more cumbersome with emails. Students can comment not only on the teacher's question but also on each other's comments. Under this dynamic, the teacher can provide mediation to individuals as well as to the whole class. Topics such as a pleasant journey, favorite book, or best friend can

be great and interesting since students are sharing with the whole class not just the teacher. In addition, the burden on the teacher's shoulder of mediation can move partially onto students' shoulders. Students can interact with each other in written form, and the teacher can monitor their comments and provide more mediation. Since the ultimate goal is to help our students become independent learners, students will benefit from this open on-line discussion that fosters real-life social communication (Poehner, 2008).

Writing Chinese on a computer has great advantages for beginners. Rather than alphabetic system like English, Chinese uses a writing system which consists of characters composed of radicals and strokes (Sung & Wu, 2011). Due to this writing system, Chinese literacy learning is difficult for L2 learners. With limited clues to pronunciation in Chinese characters, a phonetic system was invented named pinyin, which uses English alphabets to help students learn how to pronounce characters (Hanley, 2008). With computer technology, students can type Chinese with pinyin and then choose characters of the same pronunciations. Computer technology reduces pressures associated with memorizing characters. Also, pinyin is a tool that students can use to look up characters, which enables them to do a lot more at the beginning stage, moving them towards self-regulation in learning. Elbow (2012) mentioned a lot of writing strategies, but his most important point is to make students become self-regulated writers, writing without teachers.

Students in Chinese classes still need to practice writing characters, but using a pinyin input system on a computer is a good way to engage students in learning reading and writing. As students type Chinese with pinyin, the computer offers them a serious of characters with the same pronunciation. They then select the character they want. There

are two types of characters: simple and compound characters. Simple characters cannot be further divided into other radicals, for example: 木(wood), 口(mouth), whereas the compound characters are composed of two or more radicals, one indicating the sound and the other indicating the meaning, for example, 材(material), 吃(eat) (Wang, Perfetti, & Liu 2003). When selecting the characters, students benefit from seeing all the characters that have the same pronunciation, which raises their awareness of radicals since characters with the same pronunciation tend to have the same or similar radicals. For example, if a student types *lin*, it will show 林(forest), 琳(jade), 淋(pour). As noticed these three characters all have the 林 radical, which reflects their pronunciation. As students build a strong relation between the pinyin and the characters, teachers can slowly begin removing the pinyin. Thus, pinyin serves as a scaffold for learning Chinese until students have internalized characters as the new language tool (Vygotsky, 1978). The radicals will get internalized as new phonological and morphological tools.

Being able to recognize the characters and remember the sounds does not mean the learner is literate. What learners need is the ability to understand the texts, and to write to convey messages. Meaning making is critical especially for beginners as they are still developing the literacy tools. Teachers need to understand how learners make meaning from texts and what kinds of strategies should be introduced (Martinez, Roser, & Dooley, 2003). Assessment should be integrated into literacy instruction, in which the teacher co-constructs the meaning of texts with students. As shown in Figure 1, teachers constantly provide mediation to students, introducing strategies and reflecting on their use. The ultimate goal is to move our students to be independent learners.

For strategies of Chinese literacy instruction, Shen and Ke (2007), in their study of radical awareness, suggest that radical instruction is critical for Chinese learning. As learners grasp more radical meanings and pronunciations, their comprehension and writing abilities increase dramatically. Teachers should explicitly teach radicals in class so that students are aware that these are powerful in learning Chinese. During reading and writing practice, teachers should point out the common radicals. Three thousands common characters need to be learned to be literate in Chinese (Sung & Wu, 2011). However, many characters share the same radicals or pronunciations. Thus, learning radicals is a shortcut to developing learners' literacy performance in Chinese.

With open discussion on-line, students can type in pinyin when writing which will help them learn the pronunciations and the radical components. With DA, the teacher can initiate a topic for discussion. When students comment on it, the teacher can provide mediation (Poehner, 2008). When the teacher provides mediation, he/she should focus on meaning, not the form, since it is a communicative task (Ballman et al., 2001). Teachers can provide vocabulary hints, follow-up questions, and so on. The effect of e-mail as an assessment application in literacy is limited, because it allows only teacher-student interaction. I have used email as a way to assess students' writing in Chinese; it worked well only on an individual level. In the future I want to explore literacy instruction and assessment on the open online discussion system, which is more dynamic and authentic.

According to Vygotsky (1978), writing should be meaningful to learners and taught naturally, in his words: "children should be taught written language, not just the writing of letters" (p. 119). The same applies to Chinese instruction; teachers want students to use the characters to communicate. Thus, using written communication forms

such as online discussion or email are great ways to develop and co-construct learners' literacy skills. With online discussion, teachers will know students' development level and provide mediation individually and/or to the whole class. The students also interact with each other and serve as one another's more capable peers.

Conclusion

The most important characteristic of DA is that the test is not the end of the story. Laing and Kamhi (2003) use the phrase "test-teach-retest" to describe DA, promoting that the one test is not the end. Their results show that most children who tested below the standard scored much higher after intervention. Thus, we should not give up on low-performing students, because their test score may not reflect their potential.

The purpose of Dynamic Assessment is not primarily for giving grades. Rather, it is a continuous circle of assessing learners' understanding of the language, which promotes learner development (Poehner, 2008). With traditional tests, giving grades is the end of story. DA, on the other hand, aims at discovering what knowledge and tools learners have already developed and the parts that are still to be developed. As the learners develop, the zone of development is constantly changing (Vygotsky, 1978). DA helps learners use the tools they already have, that are internalized in them, to develop new tools or a new use of already internalized tools.

McGinnis (1999) claims that rote repetition was the most frequently used strategy in Chinese instruction, and other strategies such as radical recognition have been neglected. Combining radical recognition and technology use in Chinese learning, students will learn faster and easier than through rote repetition. Online education

platforms such as Blackboard and Canvas can help teachers meet this goal. Open discussion online will enable interaction among teachers and students, it will also enable technological support such as pinyin input in Chinese learning.

To provide this tool to the student, the teacher can first model how to do it, then do it along with the student, and finally ask the student to do it alone. Teachers can repeat this procedure when the student still cannot perform independently. The process may take a long time, internalization may not happen in one day. It is important to make sure students focus on meaning and not on correction. According to Krashen's Monitor Hypothesis (1982), if the students' monitor is active all the time and it checks every sentence they make, students are tend to shut down instead of learning with the risk of making mistakes. For instance, when children learn their first language, they may have certain mistakes for a long time no matter how many times parents correct them. As language teachers, we need to create this kind of environment where students trying to make sentence regardless of the risk of making mistakes. Gradually, as the concept is internalized in the child's mind, he will correct it by himself (Vygotsky, 1978). In other words, as long as the tools outside goes inside of someone's mind, they will have it. Language as a tool will take a long time of interacting with the tool outside of students, and they can perform certain task with hints. If teachers and students keep working through this process, the language tools will develop inside students' minds and then they can use the tools to mediate future tasks independently.

CULTRUE ARTIFACT

Direction giving in another language: Lessons for the Chinese classroom

INTRODUCTION

In this artifact, I review research on direction-giving as a speech act in language teaching and learning. The literature shows that there is a gap between current textbooks and the actual conversation in asking/giving directions in real-life situations. Some textbooks and learning materials oversimplify direction-giving lessons. Every culture has its own way of asking and giving directions, and even in the same culture and the same language, there may be variations between different regions. Through doing this paper, I learned students not only need the language knowledge, but also need more than that, such as pragmatics. This paper takes Chinese learning as an example, and provides lessons that are intended to provide authentic context for direction-giving instruction which includes the pragmatics into instruction.

Giving directions is a common speech act that almost everyone has experienced. It can be as simple as "Go straight and turn left", or more complex. Instruction in direction-giving has been viewed as a "simple" theme in language learning. However, it is an important skill. Many researchers point out that we cannot just assume that we talk in the same way when giving directions in different languages and cultures (Brown & Levinson, 1993; Levinson, 1997, 2003; Taylor-Hamilton, 2004; Zee & Slack, 2003). There is a lack of direction-giving studies because of the "assumption that most cultures view, think, and talk about space in similar ways" (Taylor-Hamilton, 2004, p. 150). However, this assumption is not necessarily valid. For example, people in northern China tend to use cardinal directions more, whereas relational directions are more favored in southern China (Wang, 2006). This shows that even in the same language, people may have different preferences in terms of giving directions, not to mention in different languages and cultures. Therefore, language teachers should offer students opportunities to learn and practice direction-giving, not only to acquire the vocabulary needed, but also to become familiar with the pragmatic aspects of this speech act. In this paper, I review the research literature and present two lesson plans on direction-giving.

Systems of Direction-Giving

According to previous studies, the most commonly used direction-giving strategies include the use of relational directions (such as *left*, *right*, *front*, etc.), cardinal/absolute directions (*north*, *south*, etc.), street names, landmarks, and/or a mix of different strategies (Levinson, 2003). However, when it comes to direction-giving, personal speech type and local cultural influences should also be taken into account. Pearson and Lee (1992) state that gender also makes a difference in direction-giving acts

(also see Ewald, 2010; Sandstrom, Kaufman, & Huettel, 1998). All these factors could influence language learners on direction-giving in the target language. Educators and researchers should pay more attention to this issue.

Textbooks may be oversimplified or misleading in instruction of this theme because first they tend to neglect variation when asking and providing directions, and second, they provide very little pragmatic awareness regarding this speech act. The lessons I include in this paper provide a sample that addresses the need for different ways to ask/give directions, as well as the pragmatics in such conversations. Since the lessons are for Chinese learners, all the strategies and pragmatic aspects are focusing on the Chinese language and culture. For example, in Chinese there are different ways to address strangers to show politeness. Also, there are regional preferences in giving directions in China as mentioned above (Wang, 2006).

As not all languages talk about directions in the same way, the research literature focuses on analyzing different strategies in providing directions. No matter what language we speak, we all use some kind of direction systems or frames but may not do so in the same way. There are languages that use only one direction system, while most languages have both systems of cardinal and left-right relative directions such as English and Chinese. “People provide a variety of details when giving wayfinding directions, including landmarks, street names, distances, directions, turn descriptions, and commands” (Hund, Schmettow, & Noordzij, 2012, p. 327). However, people have different preferences when providing wayfinding directions. Levinson (2003) states that through two millennia of evolving ideas about place and space in Western philosophy, anthropology, and history, spatial thinking is still dominated by two main kinds - relative

and absolute. At the same time, because of cultural and linguistic diversity, different groups of people have their own preference of conceptualizing and describing place and space.

Hund et al. (2012) compared direction giving in the United States and the Netherlands, showing that English-speaking participants use more cardinal terms than Dutch speakers. The authors argue that this may be because the cities are built on a grid in the U.S. Highways in the U.S. are also named with cardinal terms. In my experience, people from Beijing mostly use cardinal references to describe directions because the city is built based on a cardinal grid, since the space is open and flat. In southern parts of China where the cities are built according to mountains and rivers, people are less inclined to use cardinal references. Lawton (2001) provides similar evidence of regional differences in spatial direction giving; her results show that people refer more often to cardinal directions if they are living in the Midwest/West where the roads are arranged in a gridlike pattern than in the Northeast/South in the United States. Thus, even when there are two main systems of describing directions, people may have preferences in choosing one over the other because of the reasons stated above.

There are two main strategies of giving directions; one is a first-person view, as people think of themselves as the center to describe directions. For example, *go straight and turn left*. The other one is a third-person view, which provides an overview of the entire environment usually including a map and cardinal directions (Shelton & Gabrieli, 2002). The “left” is relative because if the person turns 180 degrees, it will be the right. Sometimes the relative frames do not work well. For example, suppose there are four different entrances on each side of a building; it would be confusing to giving directions

in a relative fashion. Instead, a term like "the south entrance" would be precise. Some people may find it difficult to use strategies that they are not familiar with. Similarly, people may feel disoriented or lost if they are not used to cardinal directions. I believe it is important to raise language learners' awareness of the various wayfinding and direction-giving strategies. Levinson (1997) claims that people in Western cultures "are innately, or environmentally, predisposed to conceive of space relatively…" (p. 99). With a rich stock of expressions such as *in front of, across, beneath, on the side of, under*, and so on, English seems quite effective in this type of direction-giving. However, teachers need to understand students' background, because "Move a bit east" or "George is just north of the tree" may be common expressions for in languages or for some people but baffling to others. For example, in Finnish there are two systems of words meaning *in front of, behind* … One set of these words refers to stationary relations between objects, while the other set is used to describe relative locations of two moving objects (Nikanne, 2003). Other languages, such as Tzeltal, have a special system of describe space, using uphill and downhill to describe the relative space of two objects (Brown & Levison, 1993; Levison, 2003). Similarly, the Piraha langauge has no concept of *left* and *right*. The Piraha people orient themselves according to the rivers (Everett, 2008). I believe that giving directions is both important and difficult because of the complexity and diversity found in this speech act across languages and among different people. In instruction, teachers should introduce different concepts related to giving directions in order to make language learners aware of the variety.

As discussed above, because of its geographical features and the styles the cities were built according to culture and/or history, each place has its own way of describing

directions. Taylor-Hamilton (2004) investigated L1 Arabic speakers providing directions in their L2 English. The most commonly used frames were relative directions, landmarks, and street names. The results show that they experienced difficulty in giving directions in L2 because Abu Dhabi used to be small towns with only several permanent buildings. Thus, there has been little need for direction-giving. The subjects were found to use mostly relative directions as a result of instruction of their L2 English. Also, the author points out that the participants used fewer landmarks and street names. Taylor-Hamilton's study showed that historical and geographical features have a strong influence on people's spatial thinking.

Denis (1997) conducted a study with native French students in describing a university route in French. Her results show that the use of landmarks is the most critical in a university campus setting. The author claims that in an environment of a university campus, people tend to use building names to answer direction-questions. Another direction-giving study in English by Golding, Graesser, and Hauselt (1996) found similar results on a university campus with native English speakers in the United States. In their study, students tend to use buildings or apparent objects to build common ground with the asker. For example, students answer with "do you know where the library is?", "do you see that big tree?" and so on. Once the speakers build common ground, the direction provider will provide a detailed route using turns or estimated distance. I believe that building common ground is one important strategy in direction-giving activities. In language instruction, the teacher should include building common ground and let students practice using it.

In order to successfully provide directions, the provider and receiver must establish common ground (Tversky, 2003). Especially when the provider wants to use buildings or objects as a reference, e.g., *the shop is on the south side of the park*. This line of direction-giving is successful only when both provider and receiver agree on what *the shop* and *the park* are. In direction-giving acts, both interlocutors must follow the Cooperative Principle when they want to use reference (Grice, 1975). When I teach direction-giving, I first teach students how to establish common ground with the person who is seeking directions. A variety of strategies will help convey meaning when the "asker" is totally new to the place. For example, in environments such as universities, people tend to use more landmarks in providing directions. With people new to the environment, direction-providers tend to give more specific directions using a mixture of strategies, such as path specification, destination specification, more use of references, and descriptions of buildings (Golding et al. 1996).

According to the above studies, giving directions is a complex pragmatic speech act. Ewald (2010) and Taylor-Hamilton (2004) argue that the complex nature of direction-giving acts should influence teachers and textbook publishers in terms of language teaching and learning. The need to develop pedagogical materials and allocate instructional time should not be underestimated. "Language students should be exposed to speech samples that are as authentic as possible and to the strategies used by native speakers of a given language to carry out certain functions" (Ewald, 2010, p. 2559). It is important for textbooks to include samples of real conversations in the target language, not a simplified version based on the text writer's assumptions. Thus, I include lesson plans on direction-giving for Chinese learners as the implication for this research (lesson

plans see Appendix B). The lessons are intended to prepare students with skills to successfully carry out asking and giving of directions. However, the lessons are far from prefect and I hope to develop those lessons into more authentic, communicative, and effective ones in the future.

Lesson Plans on Direction-giving for First-year Chinese Students

Asking and giving directions are important components in second/foreign language learning. The words for directions are different in languages but the gestures are mostly the same. People point to their left when they mean left. Thus, using TPR can enhance students' understanding of directions. With TPR, connections between actions and words are established, without unnecessary English explanation. Pair/group work can also help students to speak and remember with through with each other.

In Chinese, direction-giving speech is similar to the way it is given in the U.S. As mentioned in the introduction, people from northern China tend to use cardinal directions (*north*, *south*), while people from the south tend to use relative directions (*left*, *right*) (Wang, 2006). In the lesson plans included I will implement only relative directions in instruction, but I will be sure to expose students to other ways as well. After students become familiar with relative directions, I will have them practice cardinal ones.

Like English, there are a lot of phrases in Chinese that soften the tone of a request. In order to raise awareness of how to use polite phrases, an authentic video is introduced. In the video, there are examples of people asking for directions, and each time they use a different polite phrase. During the practice activity students will ask directions to three

different places of different persons. Thus they will have multiple opportunities to practice asking for directions appropriately.

The second lesson focuses on giving directions while using appropriate forms of address. A review of vocabulary with TPR will be the warm-up activity for the lesson. Using a map game, the students have opportunities to practice providing directions to each other with visuals and actions. There will be negotiation of meaning through these activities, with the instructor serving as mediator throughout the lesson. The instructor models the activities and provides feedback while the students do the talking. Interaction is the key to this lesson. Since authenticity is important in direction-giving instruction (Ewald, 2010), I include an authentic video, which shows how native speakers interact in asking and giving directions and how people address each other in such conversations.

In Chinese, people often use titles to indicate respect in relations when talking to someone. This is mostly dependent on age. For example, when asking direction from a senior person, one should use 'laorenjia' to refer to the person. To raise students' awareness of this, each students will have a 'status card' when talking to others. Role play activity can help students to imitate the actual conversation with gestures and body language. The process of preparing the activity provides negotiation of meaning. Performing in front of others also helps the students feel more comfortable speaking Chinese with others as they practice more.

Conclusion

This study shows that direction-giving acts in foreign language teaching are complex and should gain more attention. As discussed in this paper, direction giving

speech various with different languages, also sometimes various within the same language. Students need to pay attention to the pragmatic aspects in this speech act. For example, in Chinese, when asking directions on the street, one should be careful with addressing people. Otherwise, it could lead to failure in direction requests, people may get offended. Current language materials and textbooks often neglect such variation and pragmatic factors (Ewald, 2010; Taylor-Hamilton, 2004).

Reflecting on current CFL classrooms, in my opinion, Chinese textbooks and materials overall lack of communicative components. The lessons I developed here intend to raise students' awareness of the variations in direction-giving acts in Chinese, as well as the pragmatics that helps students communicate successfully in direction-giving acts. The ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines (2012) has provided clear communication goals for language instruction in the United States. These lessons are reflection of Communicative Language Teaching and following the guidelines; they are focusing on college level since students are asking directions on a college campus. However, with some modifications, these lessons are also good for any levels of students. I propose these lesson plans also wanting to raise the awareness of teaching culture in the profession. Culture as an important part of language should be taught in any language classes.

LANGUAGE ARTIFACT

A Case Study: A Chinese Student's English Learning Experience

INTRODUCTION

This artifact is a case study of a Chinese student's English learning experience. The goal of doing this research is to find out what kind of learning characteristics do English language learners have. The learner is a Chinese student who has been studying English since middle school (i.e., since he was 13 years old). He recently came to the United States to study. Through interviews the data was first analyzed from a linguistic perspective, in order to find out what kind of grammatical morphemes the learner has acquired. Second, the content of the interviews was explored from a sociolinguistic perspective. Results show that before he came to the United States he cannot really communicate in English; his experience of living in the United States for three months strongly influenced his English language ability. In all, the subject is ideal for this study because he learned the language from a traditional setting and improved for being immersed in the target language community. In the following I shall study his language learning process from the following aspects: grammatical morphemes acquisition, social environment influences, and learning background.

As the world's most widely used language, English has been taught as a second or foreign language in many countries. In China, English is the most important foreign language to learn. Students are required to take English classes from middle school, with students taking English classes as early as kindergarten nowadays. The Chinese Ministry of Education recommends launching Chinese-English bilingual education in tertiary institutions as a critical means to (1) respond to the needs of economic globalization and technical revolution, (2) train competent and multi-talented candidates for the new century, and (3) enhance the overall quality of higher education in China (MOE, 2007). English is viewed as a critical skill in the job market in China. There are around 300 million people learning English in China according to an article on the Economist 2011[3]. However, the English education outcomes do not meet the goals. Despite being able to read and write in English, most young people in China cannot speak English as expected. According to AsianScientist (2011), China ranked 29th out of 44 countries and territories total in Asia and scored "low proficiency" on an English Proficiency Index conducted by Education First during 2007 to 2009.

Because of the nature of English education in China, when students arrive in countries where English is the main language, such as the United States, most of them have difficulties in communicating with fluent speakers in English. I found a student from China who came to the university to study business. When I met him at the university, he could not speak English very well. However, when I interviewed him after he studied in the United States for three months, his English ability had improved

[3] Retrieved from http://www.economist.com/blogs/johnson/2011/09/english-china.

dramatically. Thus, this paper will explore his learning experiences that affected his language proficiency both in China and the United States.

Literature Review

To investigate an English learner's ability, we need to analyze samples of his/her language. We need to analyze his/her sentences, words, and grammar. Murray and Christison (2011) define grammar as "all of the rules that govern a language" (p. 105). Looking at the gammar of the samples, we can identify if a sentence is organized in not necessarily "correct" ways but communicative ways.

There are many morpheme studies in the field of second language acquisition. The foundation for many of these studies is Krashen's (1977) natural order hypothesis, which predicts that people acquire grammatical morphemes in a certain order (also see Goldschneider & DeKeyser, 2005). According to Krashen (1977), certain morphemes, such as *-ing* and plural, tend to be acquired relatively early, while others, such as the third person singular /s/ on verbs in the present tense or the possessive *-'s* marker tend to be acquired late. There is some variation among adult learners. However, the majority of them will acquire the various morphemes in the order described by Krashen.

Luk and Shirai's (2009) research on the acquisition order of grammatical morphemes from learners with different first languages shows that students with different L1 have different orders of acquisition of grammatical morphemes. The students' L1s in their study were Japanese, Chinese, Korean, and Spanish. Luk and Shirai state that "Chinese does not have plural markers or an article system, but it has a structure of denoting possession that is similar to that of English (Ken de bi = Ken's pen)" (p. 733).

The *de* in the example is equivalent to -*'s* in English. The results show that the Japanese, Korean, and Chinese learners deviate from Krashen's natural order, acquiring the possessive morpheme earlier, and plurals and articles later than the natural order.

Goldschneider and DeKeyser (2007) examined 14 morpheme studies for the occurrence of common functors. In their study, the term 'functors' means the functional morphemes, such as present progressive -*ing*, plural, and so forth. In the end, they found that six functors (present progressive -*ing*; plural -*s*; possessive -*'s*; articles *a, an, the*; 3rd person singular present -*s*; regular past -*ed*) were largely in common across 12 out of 14 studies. This meta-analysis was based on many studies, making it an important contribution.

While the acquisition of morphemes may vary individually, age is an important factor to morphemes acquisition. Jia and Fuse (2007) claim that the older the learners are when they arrive in the target country, the more they will be influenced by their first language. In their study, older English learners whose first language was Chinese tended to drop the third person singular -*s* in *She like(s) to go to school* (omission errors), but they rarely add -*s* as in *They like(s) to go to school* (commission errors) (p. 1283). This tendency will be investigated in my study.

Social factors also influence language learners. To understand learners' language more completely, we need to look at the learners' background and/or learning history. According to Vygotsky (1978), learning is a social activity that we cannot really understand without investigating the social factors. Also, the learning process is not linear, and differs between individuals, so we need to study learners' learning history as well.

Yang and Kim (2011) used a sociocultural analysis of second language learner beliefs. It indicates that individual learners' beliefs of learning vary and change as the social conditions change. Jang and Jimenez (2011) emphasize the impact of the social context, stating that "the emergence, use, and distribution of L2 strategies cannot be fully understood without examining the specific social relationships and power relations in the language classroom" (p. 141).

Research Questions

Focusing on morpheme acquisition order and the social context influencing English learners, I investigate two questions in my research:

1. What kind of linguistic features has the participant acquired or not acquired?

2. How has the participant's social experience affected his English ability?

Methods

Two semi-structured interviews were conducted 3 weeks apart. The first interview was designed to obtain general background information from the participant. The second interview was carried out three weeks after the first, and investigated the learner's experience of learning English in China and in the United States. Both interviews were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed. The data analysis contains two parts, one is the linguistic analysis, and the other is the sociocultural analysis.

For the linguistic analysis, I started with the six common functors from Goldschneider and DeKeyser (2005): present progressive -*ing*; plural -*s*; possessive -*'s*;

articles *a, an, the*; 3rd person singular present *-s*; regular past *-ed*. Upon inspection of the data, I decided to add a seventh category - irregular verb past (e.g., *came*).

For the social influence part, I investigated the learner's background of learning and his life in the United States. Vygotsky (1978) claims that we need to know the history of the learner in order to fully understand the learner. Thus, a historical view of an individual's learning and development is critical to understanding why the learner has certain characteristics. My analysis will focus on how the learner perceived his learning experience in China and the learning environment in the United States, and what kind of social factors have influenced his language ability.

Results

1. Linguistic analysis

Firstly, I want to address my findings in linguistic analysis, that is grammatical morphemes acquisition. From the transcription of the interviews, I found that the learner is still acquiring most of the morphemes listed in Table 1. His rate of correct use of articles is relatively high (78%), compared to present progressive (45%), plural (32%), regular past (22%), possessive (57%) 3rd person singular (34%), and irregular past (44%). Despite relatively low correct usage of most of the seven features, Qian communicates clearly, and he does not pause or hesitate much. Overall, he can communicate successfully in English, even though his utterances still contain many grammatical mistakes, in the areas of plural, past tense, and so on.

In the interviews he seldom used the progressive *–ing*: instead of saying "I am living …" or "I am surfing on the internet", he says "I live…" and "I surfing…"

Sometimes, he over generalizes the use of "*-ing*", for example, he says "I can writing … I can speaking …" when he intended to say "I can write and I can speak." And most of his mistakes were forgetting to put "be" before the "*-ing*" forms, for instance, "when you writing". However, there were several times that he was correct.

Qian has only 32% correct use of plurals. Common mistakes are "native speaker, student, and class." However, he used the word "roommates" correctly, perhaps because he uses that word frequently. Interestingly, although plurals are less complicated than progressives, Qian has a higher correct rate in progressives. This may be due to the influence of Chinese. There are no plurals in Chinese, and Chinese uses adjectives to identify numbers. For example, people will say "several book," "five book," or "some student" in Chinese to express plurals. In the transcription there are several times Qian says "some weekend," "some picture" and "a lot of thing."

	Total usage	**Correct usage**	**Rate of correctness**
present progressive -ing	11	5	45%
plural -s	92	29	32%
articles a, an, the	91	71	78%
regular past -ed	51	11	22%
possessive -'s	7	4	57%
3rd person singular present -*s*	29	10	34%
irregular verb past	68	30	44%

Table 1. The learner's English morpheme acquisition analysis.

He performs relatively well in using articles. There is evidence that he has understood the differences between *a*, *an* and *the*. He says "there is a TV show," and "the NBA … the NFL." Most mistakes of articles are omission, such as "it's good word."

For regular past –*ed*, Qian correctly used that morpheme 22% of the time. During the interviews, he described many things that happened before, for example, his roommate told him some stories, or he watched a funny TV show. In most cases, Qian omits the -*ed* with regular verbs to express past. There are many examples such as "my roommate tell me and explain to me", "When I arrive San Francisco" and so forth.

Surprisingly, Qian got 44% correct of irregular verb past, which is double the rate of correct use when compared to the regular past tense. It is still not very high, but it is unexpected because I assumed that irregular verbs would involve more errors. This result reflects the Chinese language which does not have past tense expressed in verbs. Irregular past tense is remembered more/acquired first due to it being a 'marked' form thereby making it easier to remember vs. a standard past-tense maker/rule. Regular past tense is much easier to apply, but easier to omit as well.

According to Krashen's (1977) natural order theory and more recent research on this topic (Goldschneider & DeKeyser, 2005), the possessive -*'s* is the last morpheme to be acquired. However, the data shows that Qian has acquired the possessive more than 50 percent. "I think the teacher's job should be teach …" and in another example, he says "… NFL's …" After interviewing him, I was impressed by his uses of possessives. There were still many times he omitted it, but I think he already has the idea of the possessive and is well on his way to acquiring it.

Qian correctly used the 3rd person singular present 34% of the time in his responses. For some verbs, he added the *–s* when needed: "it looks …," "it has …," and "it means …." However, for other verbs, he tends to omit the *-s* when it should be used, such as "he speak," "she don't care," etc.

The data is very interesting because it varies from the literature of morpheme studies. Because every learner's acquisition order varies, we need to look at individual's learning history.

2. Social Factors

Qian came to the United States three months before the case study interviews were conducted. Before he came to the USA, he never really used English to communicate. Now he uses English every day. The data shows that the language environment affects his learning, and I found his learning experience to be quite unique. Vygotsky (1978) states that if a learner works with more capable peers, in this case the native speakers, he/she will perform better. I argue that social interactions contribute a great deal to his language acquisition process.

2.1. Experience in China

As mentioned in the introduction, the Chinese government is emphasizing the importance of learning English. However, the emphasis in China's education system remains on tests. This leads to the result that, despite their "knowledge" of English, most students are not able to communicate well in English. Qian thinks English classes he took in China were useless.

> Qian: "… a lot of Chinese student, they just, they can get a very good grade but they cannot learn true ability. So we just, you know, the class in China is just for prepare for tests, is not prepare for life, prepare for your job, but so…"

He realizes the importance of communication, mentioning that learning English should have "prepared for life and job." Qian's desire or motivation of learning English has changed to what Gardner (1985) refers as integrative motivation, which is learning the language in order to communicate with native speakers. He states that many students get high grades but do not have "true ability." Qian defines the "true ability" as follows:

> "True ability, you know, for example, if I take the English class, actually I can writing, I can listening, I can speak English with, to the native language speaker, but in China, we just know the meaning of the word, just know the grammar, just can pass the test. That's not true ability."

As Ballman, Liskin-Gasparro, and Mandell (2001) state, the majority of language learners believe that the goal of learning a language is to be able to communicate. Qian thinks the "true ability" is speaking English with a native speaker, not just knowing the words and grammar. Asked his reason for this, Qian explains that it is because of China's education policy and system. However, the policy supports English communication. The more important reason I believe is the social views in China about "good students." What makes the teachers and students focus so much on grades is people's perceptions about grades. The number one criterion for a good student is good grades. By the end of the semester, students get good grades on their English test. Parents, students, and teachers, are happy and no one cares about the "true ability."

According to ACTFL (2010), language instruction should use 90% of the target language. However, talking about his college education in China, Qian thinks the environment of learning English in his college is not good because most of the time the classes were in Chinese. He almost never practices English after class. He says, “If you speak English for practice, students will think you are weird.” This is another cultural aspect that affects English learning. In China, students do not practice speaking English to each other after class because of their identities. Qian explains that if you talk to your friend in English, they will think you are showing off. Outside of class, students tend to use their L1 with each other. This may be due to sociocultural pressures that compel speakers to signal identity and belonging to the L1 group (Joseph, 2004).

The experience of learning English in China for him seemed unpleasant. He says “nobody likes it (the classes) … We use a lot of Chinese, so nobody feel English very very important”. This may explain why Qian could not communicate in English freely when he arrived in the United States after studying English for 10 years. However, he improved greatly after living in the U.S. for only three months.

2.2. Experience in the United States

After having been in the United States for three months, Qian was able to communicate in English with no problem as we can see from the interviews. He is living in an apartment with five native English speakers, and taking English classes from the “Intensive English Language Institute” at the university. However, he still perceives English classes as “honestly just still for the test, just for the test.” Interestingly, Qian is learning what he views as the “true ability” outside of his classes as he mentions:

> "I live in the United States now but I have to speak English every day, I have to speak English to native language speaker, to my roommates, I cannot use Chinese right? So I think the true ability is very important, you know, if I just for the test, when I go to super market, I want to buy some vegetables, and I don't know how to describe it, so I will nothing for my dinner … Yeah, like, cauliflower, you know, when I first arrive here I don't know how to say cauliflower in English, but I know broccoli, so I [saw?] it looks like a broccoli but the color is white. Oh, so that waiter said it's cauliflower".

Qian has to use English every day, and he understands that he must express himself in English to survive in the United States, otherwise, as he says "… nothing for my dinner." As Masgoret and Gardner (2003) demonstrate, motivation has the highest correlation with achievement in learning a new language. In contrast to his experience in China, he has a strong motivation for learning English – to survive in the USA. Obviously, if students in China cannot say something in English, they will just say it in Chinese and everyone will understand.

Even though there are still some mistakes in his utterances, he is able to use the knowledge he has to negotiate meaning with a native speaker. However, he does mention that in the beginning he needed to repeat many times what he said to be understood by others, and now he is getting better. Comprehensible input plays an important role; his roommates modify their utterances by repeating, using slow rate of speech, and/or paraphrasing in order to communicate (Lee & VanPatten, 2003).

In my opinion what makes Qian successful in communicating in English in such a short time is, first, his English education in China was not totally useless, because he can recall many words even though he has trouble pronouncing and using them properly. Second, his communication ability is critical for him to be able to negotiate meaning with others when the meaning is not clear. He asks for repetition and clarification, and he uses familiar words to describe things that he does not know.

2.3. Formal education

About his English classes in the United States, Qian says he really likes them. When I asked him to compare the classes he took in China and the classes he is taking in the United States, he refused to do so. Qian said "you know, I don't want to compare to China, you know 'wow, China is sucks.'" I think the reason he strongly dislikes the classes in China is due to the pressure of tests and that he did not focus on English communication. He told me that he never thought about going abroad.

Qian really likes the structure of the classes in the United States, because he can actively participate in the classes. He told me that he likes the projects he does for his classes. The reason that he participates more in class is that all the students in his class are from different countries. They do not share a common first language, so they have to communicate in English. I think this leads to more motivation in learning English. Unlike the environment in China, the demands of speaking English are more genuine when students do not share the same first language (Yang & Kim, 2011).

2.4. Community and other social factors

From interviewing Qian I found that most of his learning occurred outside of traditional classes. In other words, he is learning more from interacting with local people he meets every day. Qian is living with five native speakers of English. Many times he said "my roommates are really nice."

Qian's motivation for talking to his roommates is really high. This is due to his "nice" roommate who is willing to explain when Qian feels puzzled. When his roommates talk about some TV shows or sports, they talk fast and they laugh. Qian wants to be involved in their conversation, so his roommates will slow down and explain to him what is funny.

He views watching TV shows as an important strategy of learning English and the American culture. He likes watching TV with his roommates, so they can explain to him when Qian does not understand. I think his roommates contribute to his progress in learning English. They will also help Qian with his school papers and presentations.

In addition, one of his roommates often asks Qian to his family's house for weekends and holidays. Qian is learning the culture from these interactions as well. There are several things that he learned about culture. Qian says "you know, there are a lot of kind of people, like African American people, like Latin American people, so they have different situation … they all use English but use different slang." This shows his understanding of the diverse American cultures.

Another thing he learned is the winning and losing culture. He told me a story about him and his roommate playing pool. It was kind of late, but his roommate, who

kept losing, wanted to keep playing. Qian asked “are you sleepy,” and the roommate said “yeah, but I don't want to be a loser.” Qian was shocked by his roommate’s reaction about losing and at last let him win, so that he could go to bed.

Discussion and Conclusion

It is interesting that this particular English learner has a different morpheme acquisition order than those found in the literature. The data shows that he has not acquired any of those functors, but his communication ability nevertheless makes him successful in speaking English. This shows that negotiation of meaning can be accomplished even when the grammar is not perfect (Long, 1996). Certain grammatical features are attributable to his Chinese background, for example, the rate of correctness of irregular verb past outnumbers the rate of regular verb past. His lack of correctly using plurals is also evidence of the influence of Chinese.

Qian has been in the United States for only three months. His English is not very good according to the data. However, his ability to communicate in English is impressive. He does not realize his mistakes most of the time, but he can make meaning across. Most of his English learning experiences are from talking to his roommates. Other people and his roommates will not correct every mistake he makes. Because the purpose of language is to convey meaning, if they understand what Qian means, they will not correct him.

Jang and Jimenez (2011) emphasize that to understand a learner’s learning style we must include the impact of social contexts. Before Qian came to the United States, he never practiced speaking outside class in college. He never learned English communication in that environment. When he came to the United States, he used English

every day. Qian watches news and other TV shows, such as comedy and sports, to practice his listening. He talks to his roommates to practice speaking. There is a dramatic change in his learning attitude – from negative to positive; and a change to his learning strategy – from no practice to daily and continuous practice.

In Yang and Kim (2011) mention that learners' learning beliefs can be shaped by their social context. Before coming to the United States, Qian thought English was useless, he did not have a purpose for learning English, other than to pass tests. Qian started to realize that English is a basic skill for survival in his current social context. His purpose is to be able to communicate with native speakers. I think he already achieved this goal, and the next goal will be acquiring more linguistic details (vocabulary, grammar) in order to be more successful academically.

It is interesting to know that Qian acquired most of his English in social interaction. Thus, learning environment is important for students who want to interact in the target language. Studying abroad where the target language is spoken does not mean the students will learn the language automatically. Learners must participate in actively interacting with the target language and culture. This study implies that it helps greatly for language learning if students are immersed in the target language. Also, it shows that language learning will not happen unless the students initiate in learning and interaction with native speakers. For students who want to study aboard and just wait for language to come automatically, it will not happen.

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

INTRODUCTION

This section of the portfolio contains annotations of books and articles that influenced me the most while I composed my teaching philosophy and artifacts. In accordance with the themes of my teaching philosophy, I have divided the annotations into three parts, which also coincide with my artifacts. The first part contains sources that shaped my views about the roles of teachers and students in language teaching and learning. In the second part, I include sources on the importance of communication in language teaching. In the last part, there are sources dedicated to the notion of authentic assessment which includes the collections helped me understand assessment.

Roles of teachers and students

In order to teach more efficiently, one needs to understand the roles of both teachers and students. In a language class, teachers need to take on the role of a coach who directs the athletes (students) but lets them do all the work. Traditionally, however, teachers are usually seen as the authority figure in the classroom, and as the knowledge provider who does most of the talking, thus passing on knowledge. The students, according to the traditional view, listen to lectures and take notes, receiving all the knowledge that they are supposed to then learn.

This traditional view of teachers and students is described as the *Atlas Complex* by Lee and VanPatten (2003), who characterized this situation as one "in which teachers assume the role of transmitter and verifier of information while learners assume the role of knowledge recipient" (p. 22). Lee and VanPatten point out that this situation persists in many places; there are still many teachers who take on Atlas-like roles. A new era in language teaching certainly began with communicative language teaching, but what makes the classroom student-centered and interaction-focused? The sources annotated in this section shaped my thinking about the roles of teachers and students.

First of all, the ACTFL (2010) *Standards for foreign language learning*, also mentioned in Shrum and Glisan (2010), illustrate what goals language teachers should have for students. ACTFL introduces the standards as the *Five C's*: Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities. The focus of the ACTFL standards is communication. "The United States must educate students who are linguistically and culturally equipped to communicate successfully in a pluralistic American society and abroad" (p. 1).

In order to enable students to communicate successfully in foreign languages, teachers should take on roles as a language coaches who help students become proficient in the target language. Standard 1.1: Students engage in conversations, provide and obtain information, express feelings and emotions, and exchange opinions. To achieve this goal, teachers need to provide communicative language instruction. The ACTFL standards are important to me as a language teacher, because the communication goals has been driven me to prepare my students for real-life situation. The following sources provide instruction on how to conduct communicative language teaching.

Lee and VanPatten (2003) explain the changes in the roles of teachers and students from mid-twentieth-century Audiolingualism (ALM) to the 1970s with the advent of communicative language teaching (CLT). In a traditional ALM classroom, the teacher provides drills and students practice them. Students simply repeat and memorize. The *Atlas Complex* refers to the dynamic in which teachers are responsible for everything that is happening in the classroom. When CLT was proposed and promoted, teachers started to change. However, classroom activities went from rote repetition to question-answer conversations that were initiated by the teacher. The roles did not change much. Teachers were still fully in charge of everything.

What students need to develop proficiency is open-ended conversations rather than controlled ones. According to research in the field of second language acquisition (SLA), students do not learn by grammar or pronunciation corrections. Lee and VanPatten argue that teachers cannot force students to gain language proficiency. The book provides models and examples of the roles of teachers and students as they should have become. Key chapters focus on what input, communication, and grammar

instruction should look like in communicative language classroom. This book opened my mind to the new roles of teachers and students.

The topic of teacher and student roles is also the focus of Ballman, Liskin-Gasparro, and Mandell (2001), who center their discussion on classroom communication. Similar to Lee and VanPatten, they show that in a traditional teacher-centered class, the teacher's task is to explain, instruct, and demonstrate. The students are expected to watch, listen, write down, and understand. To illustrate the new roles of teachers and students, Ballman et al. describe language instruction as a large, complex building project. The role of the teacher is that of architect and resource person who designs, plans, and guides the construction. The students should take on the role of workers who do the actual work under the architect's guidance. "The responsibility of the students is to participate fully in the activities" (p. 8).

This dynamic shifts the work to the students, and moves the *Atlas Complex* burden off the teacher's shoulder. Ballman et al.'s explanations of the roles of teachers and students are based on the *Standards for Foreign Language Learning's* (2010) definition of communication in the context of language instruction. There are three modes of language use in these standards: *interpersonal, interpretive, and presentational*. The new definition for communication in language instruction calls for afundamental change in the roles of teachers and students. My favorite chapter of Ballman et al. is the one on *activity design and lesson planning in the communicative classroom*, which illustrates how to design and conduct communicative language classes to fulfill this call for new roles.

While the two books highlighted above focus on communicative language teaching, Thoms (2012) reviews recent work on classroom discourse in foreign language classrooms from a sociocultural perspective on language learning. Specifically, he examines reports on the initiation-response-evaluation (IRE) pattern and initiation-response-feedback (IRF) sequence (also in Ballman et al., 2010). In the IRE pattern, the teacher initiates the conversation, a student responds, and then the teacher evaluates the student's response with words such as, *Good, Right,* or *No, that's not right*. The roles of teachers and students follow traditional patterns even though it was a conversation. In the IRF sequence, on the other hand, the teacher turns the last step into feedback, which is to ask the student to explain more about what he/she said previously instead of judging the accuracy of the student's response.

Thus, IRF requires the roles of teachers to be the co-constructor or mediator, which comes from the term mediation in sociocultural theory, meaning to provide "nonjudgmental assistance to less experienced learners" (p. 15). Thoms also reviews student-student interaction, in which students need to take more responsibility to carry out communicative tasks. From a sociocultural perspective, language use is not only about the linguistic parts, but crucially also about their function in a social context. Students can benefit more from student-student spontaneous discussion, than from a planned interview. IRF gives the teacher opportunities to challenge students and promote their understanding of the target language and culture. This article also leads to useful resources on this topic.

While Thoms reviews research on IRE and IRF from a sociocultural perspective, Cullen (2002) takes more of a pedagogical view of IRF. Again, instead of giving students

evaluative feedback such as, *yes* or *no*, the third move of the IRF provides discoursal 'follow-up', as the author prefers to term the F-move, in which the teacher 'picks up' students' contributions and weaves them into classroom discourse. By examining lesson transcripts from video recording of secondary school English classes in Tanzania, Cullen found that most of the F-moves from the teacher were evaluative follow-up. However, the few times when the teacher used discoursal follow-up, students were able to provide more utterances in the target language. The author argues that, instead of choosing one or the other, the teacher needs to find a balance in the classroom discourse. Evaluative follow-up does have a role in the classroom to help students know if they were right or wrong. More importantly, the discoursal follow-up builds on the students' performance and involves all the students in thinking along. The author identified five features of effective follow-up: reformulation, elaboration, comment, repetition, and responsiveness. He provides pedagogical suggestions to teachers who want to make classroom discourse more efficient. IRF is beneficial to students' language proficiency. However, IRF is typically initiated by the teacher, and I wish the author would provide insights on what IRF would look like in a student-centered classroom where the teacher is not the one always initiating.

A related article on IRF discourse that I read is by Wells (1993). The author investigates Grade 3 and 4 students of science in Toronto, Canada. The teacher's role in the study is that of activity designer and conversation leader. Transcripts of the classroom activities demonstrate that, when the teacher follows up students comments with more challenging questions, students sometimes take the initiative to ask more questions, which means that the students are thinking more. This is clear evidence that IRF gives

students more opportunities to think and use the knowledge they learned in class. The students are required to do more work when the teacher would asks more open-ended questions and leads students to discuss what they know or wish to know. Cullen (2002) and Wells (1993) both have real classroom discourse data to show how IRF works and how to be more effective. Wells's article is useful but contains much jargon, which is not reader-friendly.

As the teacher's role in the language classroom is important, the role of student-student interaction is also critical. Johnson (1981) claims that student-student interaction leads to maximal achievement among students. It is especially true with language teaching, because language classes need more interactions. With only teacher-student interaction, it is far from sufficient. However, Johnson states that the students' achievements do not automatically come from student-student interaction. It depends on the quality of the interaction and the communication goals. The teacher's role here is to guide students' discussions and keep students' on task during group activities. Johnson points out when students encounter controversies, conflicts in discussion can promote learning greatly if the teacher manages properly. In a language class, it is great that students can be engaged in discussion because they can practice the language as well as communication strategies.

As I have learned more about the roles of teachers and students, whether from the CLT or the SCT perspective, I have come to understand that the teacher needs to modify his/her utterances during instruction. It is critical that students have opportunities to practice what they learned in a communicative way. The teacher should also help students make connections with their previous knowledge. I agree with Ballman et al.

(2001) and Lee and VanPattan (2003) that teachers should let go of the *Atlas Complex*. Nevertheless, the teacher is still in charge of designing meaningful activities, in which students can have engaging interactions with the teacher as well as classmates.

Communication in Meaningful Contexts

The most important emphasis in my language classroom is communication, because communication is at the heart of the *Five C's* of the ACTFL standards. Through a long time of research, language instruction has evolved from grammar translation to ALM and then to today's communicative language teaching (CLT). CLT has already saved countless students from boring drills and rote memorization, providing instead meaningful activities with real-life connections. While it is true that language learners need to learn words, sentence structures, and grammar rules, what they really need is "Knowing how, when, and why to say what to whom" (ACTFL, 1996, p. 2). I believe that communication is one of the keys to successful language teaching and learning. The sources below have helped me develop my understanding of CLT. The book that first introduced me to CLT is the *Teacher's Handbook* by Shrum and Glisan (2010). The authors address the basic concepts of contextualized language instruction, arguing that language instruction should always be grounded in meaningful contexts. Thus, communication becomes the main component of language instruction instead of meaningless grammar memorizations, drills, and repetitive tasks. The first three chapters outline the fundamental theories of contextualized language instruction, including the core ideas of the CLT, such as meaningful input, negotiation of meaning, and output. This book focuses on communication in accordance with the ACTFL standards. In later chapters, Shrum and Glisan include specific applications for each of the Five C's of the ACTFL standards, explaining how language teachers could help students to develop their *interpretive, interpersonal, and presentational* skills, which are the three modes of communication. Shrum and Glisan provide practical applications for language teachers.

Personally, I found the studies on the story-based approach for grammar instruction very useful, because it allows the teacher to use stories and to work together with students to discover certain forms of the target language, such as tenses or modes. For example, when I taught past tense in Chinese, I do not have to teach my students the structure. Instead, I introduced a story that happened yesterday, and then work together with students to find out the past tense structure. The teacher and students "collaborate on and co-construct the grammar explanation" (p. 220). This book provides many fundamental concepts that focus on communication in the field of second language acquisition. Their references have led me to many useful sources as I am composing my portfolio.

One of the sources that Shrum and Glisan (2010) guided me to is Lee and VanPatten (2003). Though I mentioned their book in the section of roles of teachers and students, I have to include it again here for their insights on communicative language teaching. As language is a tool of communication, it makes sense to teach students how to communicate in the target language. In order for learners to communicate, they need comprehensible input from the teacher, classmates, and other sources. One important communication skill is to be able to negotiate meaning with one another. Negotiating meaning refers to interactions during which speakers talk back and forth to make an agreement, to conform, to verify, and so on. There are chapters on specific topics such as proficiency goals, grammar teaching, testing, and so on. All the topics are presented from a communicative perspective. The chapter on communicating in the classroom helps teachers understand why it is important to give students opportunity to communicate meaningfully in the classroom. The activities at the end of each chapter really help me to understand the theories in CLT and provide ideas for communicative language activities.

From this book, I learned many activities which demonstrate how to set up opportunities for students to negotiate meaning, such as information gap, role-play, etc.

While claiming the importance of communication in language teaching, teachers should know the components of communicative competence. Celce-Murcia, Dornyei, and Thurrell (1995) proposed a model of communicative competence. Celce-Murcia (2007) later published an article alone on this topic again, but the idea was based on the previous book. In their model, *discourse competence* is the center which refers to the ability to put language parts (words and phrases) to together to make meaning. *Discourse competence* is surrounded by three other competences that support it, which are *sociocultural competence*, *linguistic competence*, and *actional competence*. *Sociocultural competence* is the knowledge about context, appropriateness, and cultural background. *Linguistic competence* is the ability to use morphology, syntax, spelling, and so on. *Actional competence* refers to the ability to convey and understand the linguistic intention. All the components are sustained by *strategic competence*, which are the skills to communicate successfully and to cope with breakdowns in understanding. The implication of this article to language teachers is that students need all of these competences to communicate. With only the linguistic knowledge, students will not understand or be understood if the situation requires cultural background knowledge. Even with cultural background, students still need strategic competence in some situations to help them to get their message across. Language instruction should include all these components in communicative competence.

Even though students need various strategies, they still need basic language knowledge. The most controversial topic in second language instruction is surely the

teaching of grammar. As mentioned above, the story-based approach to grammar teaching is just one of the methods. By reading Nassaji and Fotos (2011), I gained a more complete view of grammar instruction that focuses on communication. The authors provide a brief overview of the changes over the years, which I found interesting because I experienced some of them. For example, a blend of Grammar Translation and Audio-Lingual Methods was the way I learned English in middle and high school. While in college as an English education major, the PPP (Presentation-Practice-Production) is the method I learned to teach English. After the overview, Nassaji and Fotos introduce three main approaches of the modern grammar instruction. First is the input-based approach to grammar teaching; second is the interaction- and output-perspective; and third is the focus on the role of the context. I am glad to read of the changing focus of grammar teaching, from the linguistic accuracy to a more and more communicative focus. My favorite chapter is on grammar through discourse, in which the authors emphasize the context and authenticity of grammar instruction, arguing that instead of dealing with isolated sentences, grammar teaching needs to be carried out with contextualized and continuing activities. For example, teachers need to ask in certain situations "what a native speaker would say", since many structures in the textbook are not necessarily applicable or practical in native speakers' conversations. Nassaji and Fotos make a good point at the end of this book: "teachers should be eclectic in their instructional approach" (p. 138). I agree that grammar is important for language learning only when it is for communicative purpose, and teachers need to decide what methods to use for different topics and situations.

While the above sources are all about communication, input and output, it seems that they ignore the larger social context in communication across languages. In this regard, two books that have changed my view even more about language teaching and learning. The first is *Sociocultural Theory and the Teaching of Second Languages* by Lantolf and Poehner (2008). The authors introduce the background of Sociocultural Theory (SCT) based on Vygotsky's work, in which language is viewed as a social tool that enables people to function in the society. Thus, language instruction should closely connect with social factors. According to Vygotsky's famous concept of ZPD (zone of proximal development), learning and development should happen in the zone where the learner can do certain tasks under the expert's assistance that the learner can do later by him/herself. The reason that this book is helpful is that each chapter consists of a study of a sociocultural application of language instruction. Chapters such as the effects of Dynamic Assessment of L2 listening, a dialogic approach to teaching writing, drama and language performance, and 3-D clay modeling are all applicable and practical to modern second language pedagogy. Lantolf and Poehner provide not only the theory but also the application examples to help me understand what SCT means to second language teaching.

Anton (2002) views communication from a different perspective. While CLT emphasize learner-centered classroom and student-student interaction, the author argues that teacher-student interaction can foster communication as well. In a communicative language classroom, students definitely get more opportunities to share and negotiate meaning with each other. However, it is more importantly to facilitate teacher-student interaction in a student-centered classroom. The analysis of teacher-student interactions

show that teachers, through communicative exchanges, can lead students highly involved in negotiation of meaning, language forms and class rules. This study shows that while the student-student interaction is important, teacher still need to take on the role of classroom facilitator who create and guide students to more opportunities of communication and negotiation of meaning. In a student-centered language classroom, teacher-student interactions definitely take an important role. This study inspired me that teachers prepare and modify their lessons to find a balanced approach to meet the goal of communication.

The other book that brought me a different perspective to communication is *Pragmatics for Language Educators* by LoCastro (2012). Connected with social speech acts, pragmatics is the study of meaning carried by linguistic pieces within a certain social and/or cultural context. Simply put, pragmatics is a study of meaning beyond the words. Pragmatics is interesting because it is true that sometimes we say things that we do not mean literally. Sometimes this is sarcasm, other times it is politeness. Each culture has a particular way of expressing things; pragmatics explains a lot of our daily actions. For example, if someone says *can you pass the salt?*, the other person might think: *What do you mean? Of course I can.* However, what we meant by saying that is not asking their ability to pass the salt, but requesting the other to pass it. LoCastro explains that there are two main subfields of pragmatics, one is cross-cultural pragmatics (CCP), which is the study of the speech acts of different groups of people, and the other is interlanguage pragmatics (ILP), which is the study of pragmatics development of learners of a second/foreign language. My favorite chapter is the one on politeness. It helps me understand how different cultures have different perspective on what you can say in

certain circumstances. The chapter helps me understand what we refer to as “face”, a big part of Asian culture, which actually exists in every culture but in different forms. It is important for language students to learn politeness to get things done in the target language.

While these two books focus on the social influences on language learning, the purpose of language learning is still to be able to communicate with the language and in the culture. As a graduate instructor of Chinese in the MSLT program, I found Everson and Xiao’s (2009) book to be a great guide for teaching Chinese as a foreign language communicatively. As the demand for Chinese as a foreign language is growing in the United States, schools are facing shortage of qualified teachers. This book provides guidance for Chinese teachers in the U.S. Following the *Five C’s* in the ACTFL standards. The first part of this book addresses the importance of following the national standards, bringing culture to the classrooms through contextualized instruction. Teachers need to create leaner-centered classrooms in which students can communicate meaningfully. The second part of the book emphasize on literacy, discourse, and technology in Chinese learning. The last part includes assessment, professional development, and understanding the culture of American schools. I found the first part of the book most helpful, because it shows how to interpret the ACTFL standards in terms of Chinese teaching in the U.S.

Since we want our students to be able to communicate meaningfully in the target language, teachers need to remind themselves that reaching native-like proficiency takes a long time. Alptekin (2002) argues that a new notion of communicative competence is needed. His article calls for a view of intercultural communicative competence in language teaching. He points out that the native speaker-based notion of communicative

competence is utopian "not only because native speakership is a linguistic myth, but also because it portrays a monolithic perception of the native speaker's language and culture, by referring chiefly to mainstream ways of thinking and behaving" (p. 57). His argument helped me realize that it may be important for students to speak "correctly", but what if everyone can understand learners' "not-so-correct" words? As a language teacher, I understand that language learning is a long and slow process. Teachers need to encourage students to try without worrying so much about "correction" and give them the communicative strategies to overcome communication breakdowns. Even though Alptekin's article is on English as and International Language (EIL), I can apply his perspective to instruction of all languages. Learners should be able to communicate effectively with others, but also be equipped with an awareness of difference and strategies for coping with such difference.

To teach communicative skills, authentic materials and authenticity in foreign language teaching are important. Gilmore (2007) provides a wide range of research on this topic, stating that there are still debates about authentic material and authenticity in foreign language teaching. The author points out that there are many definitions of 'authentic material'. The definition I like the most is "the language produced by native speakers for native speakers in a particular language community" (p. 98). Gilmore argues that authentic materials do not equal to good learning materials, because authentic material varies from a newspaper article to motherese. Due to these variations, it is important to choose materials that fit the learners' needs and purpose. Gilmore reviews research that shows the current language textbooks are inadequate in developing learners' communicative competence. As Gilmore points out that learners tend to have higher

motivation with authentic materials, but if the materials are too difficult with low support, learners become frustrated. As an important component, authentic materials are great for language learners with suitable levels and supports.

In a world of rapid information exchange and communication, knowing a language means to be able to understand and be understood by others in that language. In other words, learners must learn to function with the target language in the target culture. Language instruction should provide students with such skills. Thus, it is important for students to learn language in a way that focuses on communication. These sources provided me with theories and applications. With the communicative goal foremost in mind, I have firm belief that my students will be able to develop their communication competence through language learning.

Assessment for Second Language Development

Assessment is a critical tool not only to evaluate students' performance, but also to improve students' development. In second language education, assessment serves as a way to evaluate students' performance or proficiency in the target language. Traditional testing has evaluated students at the end of instruction, to assign them a grade and move on (Poehner, 2008). However, it is pointless to tell students how much they do not know. The goal of instruction is to enable students to use the target language meaningfully. If traditional tests only tell students how much they cannot do, it will just increase their frustration of learning.

However, Dynamic Assessment is a way to assess students' performance. It is also a dynamic process to help students develop their language skills and proficiency in the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) (Vygotsky, 1978). The dynamic process refers to the interaction between the teacher and the student or students, in which the teacher collaborates with students towards the goal of communication. The following sources guided me in my exploration of assessment in second language learning and teaching.

Mind in Society by Vygotsky (1978) greatly influenced my understanding of development in language learning. Vygostsky's theories have impacted the fields of education, psychology, and L2 teaching. Sociocultural Theory (SCT), developed by second language educators and researchers based on Vygotsky's work, claims that language learning occurs during social interaction. Vygotsky introduces the theory of childhood development, stating that the use of tool and symbol by children in the early years is how children interact and function in social activities. Children observe and learn

to use tools and symbols to get what they want. Speech or language as one special and important tool is learned by children the same way as other tools.

The process of learning or acquiring the new tools and symbols is what Vygotsky refers to as internalization. Internalization occurs in the zone of proximal development (ZPD). The ZPD is the distance between the actual development level where one solves problems independently and the potential development level where one solves problems under the help of a more capable peer or adult. Vygotsky explains that children develop their skills by solving problems under adults' or more capable peers' guidance. The adult does not do everything for the child, but carries the project together with the child. Through this collaborative activity, children can use the knowledge they have already internalized to develop new tools and learn new symbols. Vygotsky's theories are viewed as the foundation of SCT. This approach resonates with another important source which helped me understand the application of assessment in SCT.

Poehner (2008) introduces Dynamic Assessment (DA) in his book by the same title. The subtitle is the key to understanding DA, which reads: A Vygotskian approach to understanding and promoting L2 development. Poehner claims that assessment and instruction should not be seen as separate components as they have traditionally been viewed. DA is a way to integrate instruction and assessment in order to help students develop their second language proficiency instead of only receiving grades. The first part of his book introduces and explains basic theories within DA, such as introducing the rationale, sociocultural theory, the zone of proximal development, current models of DA, and issues of DA. The second part of the book is comprised of DA research. Included is on-going research that helps illustrate the different models of DA in second language

teaching (interventionist, interactionist). Also, chapter 7 shows the impact on development of mediator-learner interactions in the learner's ZPD with a French L2 learner. Evidence shows how DA helps learners develop their L2 proficiency over time and become independent learners. After reading this book, I have begun to incorporate DA in my teaching philosophy as well as in my role as a teacher.

While similar to but different from Poehner's viewpoint, Dixon-Krauss's (1996) book *Vygotsky in the classroom* emphasizes literacy instruction and assessment. Dixon-Krauss argues that the teacher should provide support for students in their zone of proximal development as they build bridges of understanding through social interaction. Classroom instruction is the main topic of the book, with the focus on a mediation model as it applies to literacy instruction. Dixon-Krauss describes the mediation process as a dynamic, general framework that guides teachers to decide what type, how much, and how often students need mediation. The author discusses the importance of connecting the language with the content in education. The author also demonstrates how to integrate a book club program to develop students' reading skills by interacting with each other.

The second part of the book focuses on classroom assessment, including classroom activities. For example, the author shows how teachers can use portfolio assessment to keep track of students' progress and provide mediation to help them develop in their writing ability. The last chapter lists many technological tools that allow teachers to provide mediation, such as multi-media (audio, video) and the use of the internet. This book greatly expended my understanding of SCT in literacy instruction and assessment, and helped me develop a vision for assessment of Chinese literacy.

Sung and Wu's (2011) article addresses the factors that influence learning to write Chinese characters. The authors state that written Chinese uses an orthography that consists of three tiers: character, radical, and stroke. The characters contain radical(s) and strokes combine to make radicals. In addition, there are limited hints on how to pronounce the characters. Due to these differences, it makes learning to read and write Chinese characters difficult. The study uses a character learning strategy questionnaire on first-year US college students who enrolled in Chinese classes. Results showed that the most commonly used strategy is cognitive strategies, such as repeating, practicing with sounds, writing, skimming and scanning to get the idea quickly, and looking for language patterns. This study shows many other strategies that I agree they are useful in Chinese literacy instruction, such as recognize radical components. In literacy assessment, teachers can teach these strategies in order to help students develop their writing skills. According to Dixon-Krauss's (1996) mediation model of literacy instruction, teachers can employ useful strategies to enable students to become independent learners. Sung and Wu provide numerous good strategies for learning Chinese characters that I can implement in my Chinese classes[4].

Another article associate with Chinese study is Shen and Ke (2007). The authors investigated the trends of radical awareness development among nonnative learners of Chinese. In addition, they examined the relationship between radical awareness and written vocabulary acquisition. The study was conducted by four tests on 236 non-native learners of Chinese in colleges and universities in the United States. Their results show

[4] When type Chinese on a computer, students can choose *pinyin* (used in China) or *zhuyin* (currently still used in Taiwan), the latter being a more traditional pronunciation system applied to Chinese language.

that there is a strong relationship between radical knowledge and vocabulary acquisition among the Chinese learners. It is important for learners to be aware of different structures of Chinese characters. The learners with more radical knowledge have a high acquisition level of vocabulary, because the semantic radicals help learners recognize learned and new characters. This study implies that radical awareness as an important Chinese learning strategy should be introduced in Chinese instruction and assessment. I believe that by integrating radical awareness strategy into Chinese teaching, students will benefit greatly and have a maximal development in learning Chinese characters. There are two writing system of Chinese, known as traditional and simplified. Students enrolled in Chinese at USU can choose to learn either of them. It will be interesting topic for the future to find out the differences on radical learning between students who use traditional characters and who use simplified characters.

Other authors who have investigated L2 learning strategies are Jang and Jimenez (2001), who studied the reasons for L2 learners' strategy choices in various contexts. They carried out the study with a sociocultural perspective on second language learner strategies, focusing on the impact of social contexts. The data was collected from some newly immigrated Korean ESL students in the United States. Jang and Jimenez highlight the importance of the learning environment, because they want to find out why some students do well while others do not. Learning strategies and learning styles can determine a student's success. Thus, the authors claim that "learners' actions to facilitate or sometimes constrain their language learning cannot be fully understood without considering the situated contexts in which strategies emerge and develop" (p. 142). After analyzing the classroom discourse, the authors realized that interracial tensions could be a

factor in terms of learning strategy choice. Other factors, such as participation structures and the relations of power, also affect the choice of learning strategies. Cultural background can affect learner's expectations, so students from the same culture may behave in a similar way. In conclusion, the authors offer recommendations for teachers: engaging activities using projects to enrich the learning environment, encouraging students to become full members of their target learning communities, and taking L1 and L2 differences into consideration. Teachers need to keep in mind that students from different cultures may have their preferred learning strategies. When using Dynamic Assessment with students, teachers need to understand the cultural difference and adjust the strategies accordingly. With this in mind, I can better understand student's behavior in the classroom. Especially in a class with students from various cultural backgrounds, teachers could utilize students' varied learning strategies to maximize learning outcomes.

While Jang and Jimenez (2001) focus on social factors, Jia and Fuse (2007) investigated the English morphology acquisition by 10 Mandarin-speaking children and adolescents in the United States, who came to the US between the ages of 5 to 16. The goal of this study is to find out how age affects morphology acquisition, which helps me understand the relationship between age and the length of residence in the target language country and how it influences second langugae learning. The participants were measured on accuracy of use of 6 English grammatical morphemes (regular and irregular past tense, 3rd person singular, progressive aspect –ing, copula BE, and auxiliary DO) during spontaneous discourse. Considering the age of arrival (AoAr) as an important factor, the authors conducted this 5-year study to test the prediction that younger arrivals will have greater competence in terms of morpheme acquisition. The first goal was to "identify the

timing and context in which age-related differences in morphological proficiency occurred and to examine how much of the variance in performance among participants could be predicted by AoAr when language environment was taken into account" (p. 1284). The second goal was to find out specific forms that are affected by age-related factors. The results show that AoAr has no significant effect. Specifically, the data shows that language environment has a stronger influence on individual differences than AoAr. The authors conclude that language environment needs to be considered along with age differences. Acquisition of some morphemes by school-age students often takes several years. This study provides a basic model of morpheme acquisition research. Therefore, when assessing students, many factors need to be considered. However, to me the most important issue remains how to assess students, and how to provide feedback.

Under SCT, the most important factor of assessment is how it is presented, because students learn the target language through social interaction within their ZPD. Teachers need to identify students' ZPD and provide appropriate mediation. Takahashi-Breines (2002) studies the characteristics of teacher-talk in a third grade Spanish/English dual immersion classroom. The author argues that while the role of a teacher in a dual immersion program is complex and multifaceted, the way that the teacher talks has to be somewhat modified because the students are learning content through a language that they are not familiar with. Especially in the case of young children, who are still learning their first language, teacher-talk needs to be in a supportive and comprehensible form. Even through the author does not mention it, I believe that what the teacher in the research did was what Poehner referred to as Dynamic Assessment. The teacher interacted with her students and found out what they knew. Then she provided mediation

and collaborated with students on various tasks. Working together with her students, the teacher helped them develop their language skills that were about to emerge. The teacher provided four types of support: sociocultural, linguistic, cognitive, and academic. Analysis of the data shows that the teacher used various strategies and techniques to support her third graders' cultural awareness, development of both languages, critical thinking abilities, and academic achievement. This study guided me in researching teacher-talk in dual immersion programs. It is also a great example of the application of Dynamic Assessment.

In my view, it is useless for students if assessment only assigns them a grade. All the sources annotated here have been given me insight on how to assess language development in a meaningful way. I believe that Dynamic Assessment will truly help students develop their language proficiency. Instead of telling students what they do not know, we as teachers can do better. I believe in showing students what they did right, and collaborating with them on what they can do with a little help. I shall promote Dynamic Assessment in future teaching and research.

LOOKING FORWARD

The MSLT program has enabled me to serve as an effective language teacher. The experience of the past two years helped me to develop my beliefs in teaching foreign languages, especially in teaching Chinese as a foreign language. I look forward to work as a Chinese teacher in the Dual Immersion Language (DLI) program. It is the MSLT program that prepared me to fulfill my career goal. I will keep developing my teaching philosophy to meet the specific goals as I start to teach. I will continue to refer to current research to guide my teaching. The DLI programs are important because they are effective and the students benefit greatly from those programs. DLI programs were also based on current research and methodologies. Particularly, Mandarin Chinese plays an important role among current DLI schools in Utah. It is a prosperous phenomenon in the broader context of Second Language Acquisition throughout the United States. And I am glad that I myself can be part of this exciting cause to promote language learning.

As I finished the program, I realized that it is only a start at my teaching career. I want to keep learning new methodologies that enable students to learn languages in order to communicate meaningfully. I am always fascinated by learning about dual language immersion programs, because their philosophy is not teaching the language but teaching content knowledge through another language. This coincides with my own teaching philosophy: if the students were not using the language, what is the point to learn. This is my dream job that I am really passion about.

With more experiences in teaching, I would like to go back to universities and do more research in the field of second language teaching and learning. I want to share what I will learn from teaching dual language programs to contribute to this career that I love.

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APPENDIXES

Appendix A. Sample Emails

First email from the teacher:

同学们你们好！ (Hello Class!)

这个学期我好忙啊，我修了三个课。你修了什么课？ (I am so busy this semester, I have three classes. What classes are you taking?)

我觉得你们的中文说得很好，继续努力！(I think your Chinese speaking is very well, keep on working!)

这一周，我睡觉睡得不好，所以周末我要睡觉！！！你呢？你这个周末准备做什么？(This week I didn't sleep very well, so I need lots of sleep this weekend! What about you? What are you up to this weekend)

PS. 不好意思，我给你们写邮件太晚了，你们可以明天再给我回信，谢谢！(I am sorry, I wrote this email so late, you can reply me tomorrow, thank you!)

Student A's reply:

你好！(Hello!)

我学习也很忙。 我修了六个课。 我修中文课，和英文课，和 Shakespeare 课，和等等。(My study is also busy. I am taking six classes. I have Chinese class, English class, and Shakespeare class, and so on.)

这一周， 我也睡觉睡得不好，每晚上都很忙！这个周末我有 performance， 我没有空，我不会休息。(This week I didn't sleep well either, I am busy every night. I have a performance this week, I don't have time to rest.)

Teacher's reply to student A:

你修了很多课啊！希望你的演出(performance)顺利，也希望你能多休息一点！(You have so many classes! I hope your performance going well, I also hope you have more rest!)

Student B's reply:

老师，(teacher)
这是周末我准备做作业！我有很多作业。我也会去吃饭在 OliveGarden。 (This weekend I plan to do homework! I have lots of homework. I also will go to eat at OliveGarden.)

谢谢

Teacher's reply to student B:

那你这学期修了多少课呢？OliveGarden 有什么好吃的呢？(How many classes are you taking this semester? What are good to eat in OliveGarden?)

Appendix B. (Lesson Plans)

INTRODUCTION

The lesson plans included in this section are products from my pragmatics class in the MSLT program. They are reflections the importance of pragmatics and cultural differences in language instruction. These lessons are targeting college students. The topic is on asking and giving directions on a college campus. They are based on communicative goals and raising students' awareness of different use of language. Also, they are a demonstration of diversity in one language.

Lesson Plans

Level: Chinese 1020 (first year, second semester) at college level, students are college freshmen and sophomores in the US. Students have some basic Chinese, they can ask simple questions.

Students: 20 students

Communicative objective: Students ask and provide directions from the classroom to their favorite places (library, restaurant, shopping center, cafe, etc.).

Lesson 1

- Warm-up (5 minutes)
    - The instructor introduces new vocabulary (directions, left, right, up, down, front, and back) with a song (link http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BRwV_oPeQxo) to give students a general idea about direction words.
    - The instructor uses Total Physical Response (TPR) to demonstrate the direction words.
    - After practice for several rounds, the instructor shows the character for left and right, students will practice writing the two characters.
- Activity 1 (5 minutes)
    - Students get in pairs. One student says a direction and the other makes the corresponding gesture.

  - The student who says the directions needs to assess if the other student points to the right direction. If wrong, they need to change partner.
  - The instructor will walk around to help students carry out this activity.

- Instruction (10 minutes)
  - The instructor models writing the characters on board, and asks students to write on their worksheet.
  - The instructor asks the students if they know how to say "Where is A?" Then, the instructor teaches it to the class how to ask "where is A?" and "how to get to A?" (A 在哪里？ and A 怎么走？)
  - The instructor draws two objects (a book and a TV) on board and encourages students to figure out how to say object A is on the left of B.
  - The instructor introduces how to say A is on the left of B (or right, front etc…), with a picture map (a university campus map).
  - In pairs, one student says two objects and describes the spatial relation between them, the other student needs to draw it. Rotate after rounds.

- Activity 2 (15 minutes)
  - Watch a video (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CdBkAacBevY&feature=related) about asking directions.

  - Ask the students to pay attention to the polite words when they ask directions.
  - Provide a list of polite words or phrases for students to use when asking directions. (不好意思 excuse me/打扰一下 may I bother you for a moment/请问 may I ask/请问一下 may I ask for a bit)

- Activity 3 (10 minutes)
  - The students need to write three questions using polite phrases asking three different places on the map.
  - They give their paper to a classmate, the classmate writes the answer according to the map: “A is on the left of B”, or “B is on the right of A”, etc.

- Wrap-up activity (5 munities)
  - The instructor shows the map on the board, and asks several students about several locations.
  - The students ask questions about this lesson, the instructor clarifies any confusion.

Lesson 2

- Warm-up (10 minutes)
  - A quick review of the direction words using TPR.

  - The instructor first introducing the TPR activity. Then, he demonstrate the actions, when the instructor says left, he jumps and turns to his left, when the instructor says front, he jumps a small step ahead. Next, the whole class makes the actions together as the instructor gives the directions.
  - The instructor writes the characters for directions on board, and this time he only points to the character and asks students to do the action so that students get make connections between the written words and meanings.
  - A review of the place names using pictures on the map. The instructor points to a picture and asks students to say it.

- Activity 1 (10 minutes)
  - The instructor introduces commands such as “turn left, turn right, go straight” by modeling on the map.
  - Direction Game: The students will be divided into pairs, and each pair picks a house on the map.
  - In pairs, the instructor will assign three places they need to go to. Each time there will be one director and one walker. Only the director knows the destination.
  - The director directs the walker from the house to the destination.
  - The walker needs to draw an arrow as “walking”. Rotate after rounds.

- Instruction (10 minutes)

  - The instructor introduces expressions used when addressing various types of people (age, status).
  - With people older than the people who are asking for direction, they need to use more polite words such as Nin (formal you), and titles. With different relations different titles will be used.
  - List the most common titles: xiao pengyou (when addressing young kids), lao ren jia (when addressing old people), shushu (for people in one's father's age), a yi (for people one's mother's age).

- Activity 2 (10 minutes)
  - Role play: Students will be assigned a 'status card' indicating their age.
  - The students need to figure out what title is appropriate to use when asking for directions.
  - The students get in pairs, and work on a role play asking directions. They need to use appropriate titles to address each other.

- Presentation (10 minutes)
  - Ask volunteers to present their role play.
  - The instructor provides feedback and discusses students' performance with the class after each pair's presentation.