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BUILDING AN EFFECTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT FOR
CHINESE LANGUAGE LEARNERS

by

Wen-Yu Chang

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

of

MASTER OF SECOND LANGUAGE TEACHING

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2019

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ABSTRACT

Building an Effective Learning Environment for Chinese Language Learners

by

Wen-Yu Chang, Master of Second Language Teaching
Utah State University, 2019

Major Professor: Dr. Sarah Gordon

Department: Languages, Philosophy, and Communication Studies

This portfolio is a compilation of papers that the author originally wrote during her study in the program of Master of Second Language Teaching at Utah State University. While pursuing the Master's degree, the author also served as an instructor, teaching assistant, and research assistant in the Chinese program. Thus, this work is framed by the author's personal reflection accumulated from her day-to-day teaching experiences and class observations.

The portfolio consists of three major sections: (1) teaching perspectives, (2) research perspectives, and (3) an annotated bibliography. With the aim to identify the elements of an effective and communicative learning environment for Chinese language learners in a foreign setting, the author analyzes both the facilitating parameters in an at-home learning environment and the study abroad context. The author also explores the topics of Digital Story Telling and teaching pragmatics.

This portfolio is intended to benefit teachers of the Chinese language and culture that seek to build a fruitful learning environment in their classrooms around the world.

(113 pages)

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CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vii
LIST OF ACRONYMS.....	viii
LIST OF TABLES.....	x
LIST OF FIGURES.....	xi
INTRODUCTION.....	1
TEACHING PERSPECTIVES.....	2
Professional Environment.....	3
Teaching Philosophy Statement.....	5
Professional Development through Teaching Observations.....	20
RESEARCH PERSPECTIVES.....	27
LANGUAGE PAPER.....	28
Introduction & Reflection.....	29
Living in a Dorm versus with a Family: A Literature Review of the Influence of Study Abroad Contexts on Chinese Language Learners' Oral Proficiency.....	31
CULTURE PAPER.....	45
Introduction & Reflection.....	46
Teaching Chinese Invitation Refusal Strategies.....	48
ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY	73
Incorporating Digital Story Telling in L2 Learning and Teaching.....	74
LOOKING FORWARD.....	90
REFERENCES.....	92

LIST OF ACRONYMS

ACTFL = American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages

AH = At-Home

ALM = Audiolingualism

CALL = Computer-Assisted Language Learning

CARLA = Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition

CDSs = Can-Do Statements

CFL = Chinese as a Foreign Language

CFL/SL = Chinese as a Foreign Language or Second Language

CLLs = Chinese Language Learners

CLT = Communicative Language Teaching

DCT = Discourse Completion Task

DLI = Dual Language Immersion

DST = Digital Story Telling

EFL = English as a Foreign Language

FTA = Face-Threatening Act

IL = Interlanguage

ISI = Intensive Summer Immersion

L1CL2Es = Native Chinese Speakers who are also Second/Foreign Language
English Learners

L1Cs = Native Chinese Speakers

L1EL2Cs = Native English speakers who are also Second/Foreign Language
Chinese Learners

L1Es = Native English Speakers in the United States

L2 = Second Language

MSLT = Master of Second Language Teaching

MSP = Multimedia Storytelling Prototype

NCSSFL = National Council of State Supervisors for Languages

NL1Cs = Non-native Chinese Speakers

NSLI = National Security Language Initiative

OPI = Oral Proficiency Interview

P21 = The Partnership for 21st Century Skills

SA = Study Abroad

SCT = Sociocultural Theory

SLA = Second Language Acquisition

SOPI = Simulated Oral Proficiency Interview

SRQ = Scaled Response Questionnaire

TL = Target Language

TPRS = Teaching Proficiency through Reading and Storytelling

TTLO = Transitioning to Teaching Language Online

USU = Utah State University

WTC = Willingness to Communicate

ZPD = Zone of Proximal Development

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Common Refusal Strategy Patterns.....	58

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
1. 4 Essential Elements of Communicative Language Teaching.....	8

INTRODUCTION

This Master of Second Language Teaching (MSLT) portfolio is concrete evidence that demonstrates my understanding of teaching a second language in completing this master's degree at Utah State University (USU). My portfolio is composed of three sections, including papers initially written for course assignments, that were substantially refined over time to transform the materials into this coherent collection.

The first section is **“teaching perspectives,”** including the most important part of my portfolio, the teaching philosophy. In this document, I outline what I believe is essential to building an effective learning environment for Chinese language learners (CLLs) from my own learning and teaching experiences. The second section is **“research perspectives,”** one focused on language and the other on pragmatics. In the language paper, I examine how living with second language (L2) native speakers in a student dormitory versus with a home stay family influences CLLs' oral competence during the study abroad immersion experience. In the pragmatics paper, I examine invitation refusal strategies of Chinese L1 speakers and American English L1 speakers, and further propose a lesson plan to teach CLLs invitation refusal strategies and highlight cross-cultural pragmatic awareness. The third section is an **annotated bibliography**, in which I define Digital Story Telling (DST) and discuss both the theory and practice of integrating DST in L2 learning. All three sections share common themes, such as: motivation among second language learners, communicative language teaching, teaching culture, and other elements. Together, the topics I have chosen for these three sections provide an overview of some essential aspects of my teaching.

TEACHING PERSPECTIVES

PROFESSIONAL ENVIRONMENT

Before enrolling in the Master of Second Language Teaching (MSLT) program at Utah State University (USU), I taught English as a foreign language to young learners in Taiwan for three years. I volunteered as a Chinese teacher in a summer camp for adult learners in Thailand, and another summer camp at a Dual Language Immersion elementary school for first graders in Logan, Utah. I also assisted in diverse Chinese classes at the same elementary school and at USU. When I was in the MSLT program, I served as an instructor, teaching assistant, and research assistant in Chinese.

My studies and experiences throughout my program of study equipped me with a strong theoretical and practical foundation to be an effective language teacher of Chinese. First of all, the multidimensional working experiences I gained when I was serving as a graduate Chinese instructor, class assistant, and research assistant refined my curriculum designing, teaching, and communication skills. Second, the professional knowledge accumulated from the different courses provided an in-depth, hands-on introduction to the field of second language pedagogy. My more recent teaching experiences have led me to see the contrast of my previous teacher-centered, authoritative learning background and become more observant and productive in the student-centered American learning and teaching culture. Third, my professional development, such as enrolling in the CARLA and University of Nebraska–Lincoln STARTALK Chinese teaching programs, attending and presenting at academic conferences in Utah, and observing numerous language classes, have all immensely inspired me and empowered my teaching perspectives and practices.

As a result of these fruitful and rewarding teaching and learning experiences with young learners and adults of different levels and in different contexts, I view myself as an effective and competent Chinese language teacher for K-16 students in the United States and various teaching contexts abroad.

TEACHING PHILOSOPHY STATEMENT

Introduction

If you are a language teacher, the following scenario might sound familiar to you. If not, it is very familiar to me, as I have encountered it more than once when I was teaching Novice and Intermediate-Low levels of Chinese classes as a Graduate Instructor at Utah State University (USU) in the past two years of studying in the Master of Second Language Teaching (MSLT) program.

In the beginning of the semester, after meeting with the new students in the first class hour, some ambitious students may linger after class, and even walk back to the office talking. They appear joyful and excited about the new semester and learning with you, the teacher, the fluent speaker of the target language (TL). They tell you about their previous learning or travel experiences. They also tell you how passionate they are about learning the TL and ask you the advice to improve their language proficiency. Then, three months later, you may bump into these students, and you ask how they feel about the course so far. They seem timid and alienated when they are talking to you. They start to complain that learning is too hard and they do not have enough time to study Chinese.

This kind of scenario makes me contemplate what I can change and should do to relight or maybe extend the sparks in students' eyes. Chinese Language Learners (CLLs) often have a hard time improving language competences, and gradually lose the confidence and motivation that drive them to continue learning mentally and physically. I value reflective teaching and often reflect on how to better motivate students.

Albert Einstein once said, "The more I learn, the more I realize how much I don't know." Before coming to the MSLT program, I was teaching English in a private

language school for three years, where I thought methodology was everything. I was an apprentice mimicking the ways of teaching lessons from other experienced teachers. I used to think, the more I copied their methodology, the more I could use in my own class. I once thought articulating their games and activities well and copying the models exactly equaled success. Not until studying in the MSLT program, have I learned how to conduct a class scientifically and to engage in reflective teaching. Therefore, in this teaching philosophy, I am going to articulate my beliefs and practices of building an effective learning environment for CLLs. These beliefs and practices have grown out of what I have learned from taking courses in and out of the MSLT program and teaching and assisting in USU Chinese 1000- to 3000-level (novice through intermediate high) classes.

Using Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

The first thing I learned in the MSLT program is a very basic difference between two major approaches in the L2 teaching world. The first is Audiolingualism (ALM), which is also referred to as the “Atlas Complex” (Lee & VanPatten, 2003, p.6). The second is Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) (Ballman, Liskin-Gasparro, Mandell, 2001; Lee & VanPatten, 2003; VanPatten, 2017). ALM represents the traditional teaching approach, while CLT represents a more contemporary teaching approach. They demonstrate two opposite types of roles of teacher and students. ALM views the teacher as the center of the classroom, an authority figure that claims all the responsibility of learning in the classroom. To draw an analogy, the teacher is like a drill sergeant in the army. Learners should obey and follow. Errors are not permitted. Recasting, accuracy, and using the correct form (grammar) are considered essential for learning to happen. On the other hand, CLT sees students as the center of the classroom,

and they are in charge of their own learning. For students to achieve success in learning a language, CLT requires negotiation and communication with one and another, including with other students and the teacher. Errors should not be forbidden, as they represent the processes of learning. In one helpful possible teaching persona, the teacher acts as the team coach, that aids from the sidelines and does everything to help the players to win, yet the teacher will never be the player as the learning responsibility lies on the students in CLT. With respect to Second Language Acquisition (SLA), ALM teachers claim that language can be attained by correcting habits through repetition and reinforcement, while in contrast CLT teachers argue that learning happens through interpreting, expressing, and negotiating meaning, and errors are part of acquisition (Lee & VanPatten, 2003).

Compared to ALM, CLT is a more effective L2 learning approach. Yet not until I took my first class in the MSLT program had I heard of or experienced CLT. I was overwhelmed at first by discovering that the way I had learned in my prior education and how I used to teach my previous ESL classes was far from communicative. I was used to the older model, the ALM. When a teacher teaches in ALM, students can only know how to pass language exams, instead of being able to use the L2 to communicate well with other people. Due to my own personal experiences, it now makes sense to me why, even though I have spent over ten years learning English, there are still moments when I try to convey my thoughts and language breakdowns occur, as I fail to call on my communication strategies (such as rephrasing sentences) because I had not learned a language in a communicative way before (Ballman et al., 2001; Ellis, 2012).

I have learned from my own experiences as both an L2 learner and teacher that the traditional language learning style of ALM is at odds with what we now know about

SLA, while CLT is effective. Since then, I have become an advocate for the communicative learning environment. Below I will outline 4 essential elements of CLT.



Table 1: 4 Essential Elements of Communicative Language Teaching

a. Making input comprehensible

Krashen's input hypothesis (1987) emphasizes that language acquisition is a subconscious process, where "we acquire by understanding language that contains structure a bit beyond our current level of competence ($i+1$). This is done with the help of context or extra-linguistic information" (Krashen, 1987, p. 21). In addition, only when providing as much TL as possible, can input be sufficient. That is to say, the use of TL in the classroom needs to be as much as possible, and a successful lesson implies that $i+1$ will come naturally, as long as there is sufficient and understandable communication in TL (Krashen, 1987). It is like playing basketball: one needs to know the rules and movements, and how to play, before the game begins. Students need to comprehend in the first place, so they may proceed learning in a communicative way. Part of the challenge is that second language acquisition (SLA) is implicit, complex, and dynamic, but slow (Lee & VanPatten, 2013; VanPatten, 2017). Even though I cannot change the

stage-like phase of SLA, as a communicative teacher, I can surely attempt to stimulate students' cognition by providing input that is easy to understand, because comprehension is a gateway to second language acquisition (VanPatten, 2017).

Before knowing about the importance of comprehensible input, I mistakenly often thought explicitly explaining character by character, word by word, was the right way for students to increase comprehension, as that is how I was taught at school. However, VanPatten (2017) pointed out that our heads do not acquire language by repetitive drilling, by being exposed to explicit explanations, or through input to which we do not have to pay attention to for communication. Instead, our heads can only operate in some kind of language embedded in a communicative message. Teachers should consider students' proficiency level and avoid overloading information (Lee & VanPatten, 2013; VanPatten, 2017). Otherwise, it is a waste of class time and results in a rising affective filter (Krashen, 1982), where students feel anxious, self-conscious, and reluctant to participate. Again, it is important to consider both motivation and the nature of L2 input.

Thus, in addition to the appropriate amount of meaning-bearing and level-appropriate input, simplified input can also make comprehension happen. Simplified input refers to using shorter sentences, slowing down speech pace, using pauses between longer sentences, rephrasing, using repetition, and engaging students' participation when teaching new concept (Lee & VanPatten, 2013; VanPatten, 2017). Body language, gestures, visual aids, and multimedia texts are helpful to deepen comprehension as well. Accessing students' funds of existing knowledge to connect students' personal experiences to the topic has been successful in enhancing their understanding and interest

in my Chinese classes. The personal connection, drawing on background knowledge or interests, is important for learner motivation, as I have observed in my own teaching.

Take one lesson in my Chinese class for example, when teaching the topic of the post office, as a warm-up that would make a personal connection and cultural comparison in a comprehensible way, I would first ask students about the things they do in the post office in the United States. After students discussed what they do in the post office in the United States in groups, they would write down these things on the board. By doing so, they would easily reach the understanding of the language and content. Then, students would read along a modified text about the post office in China with me and then with a peer. Next, the whole class would watch a relevant video clip, so students would comprehend the linguistic knowledge with a visual aid. Later, I would teach the new vocabulary with PowerPoint slides full of authentic pictures, reinforced with my gestures and body language. When I introduced the things that students can do in the post office in China, I would familiarize them with the following sentence frame: I can _____ in the post office in China, but I cannot _____ in the United States. I can _____ in the post office in China, and I can also _____ in the United States. Meanwhile, I would use comprehension checks and review the content after I teach five new words. The teaching slides would provide a graphic organizer, and be composed of photos, different color-coding, highlighting, and in a consistent visual format. Later, students would collaborate in pairs to compare and talk about the difference they found between the post office in the United States and China with a Venn-Diagram and the sentence frame mentioned earlier. Finally, they work together in two groups (communicating, drawing, and writing) to make a poster promoting and contrasting post offices in China and the United States.

Yet this is just one small example of delivering a lesson with sufficient comprehensible input and enhancing cultural understanding and language use at the same time. There is absolutely not just one or specific way to make input comprehensible. As in my example above that uses several skills and tools, integrating different and multiple tools into a lesson is the key to maximize the comprehensibility of input (Polat, 2016).

b. Establishing clear and accountable learning objectives

When I was in the Chinese Summer Institute at University of Nebraska-Lincoln, I learned how to use the NCSSFL-ACTFL Can-Do Statements (CDSs), elaborated by the National Council of State Supervisors for Languages (NCSSFL) and the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL), to communicate clear learning objectives with my students and promote in-class learning motivation, reflection, and self-regulation (Moeller & Yu, 2017). CDSs provide comprehensible examples along with clear descriptions of the benchmarks and performance indicators of what learners can do in four modes of communication (interpretive, interpersonal, presentational, and intercultural) and skills (reading, listening, writing, speaking, or singing) in each Proficiency sub-level from the Novice, Intermediate, Advanced, Superior, and Distinguished (ACTFL, 2017).

Taking the class of TEAL 5560: ESOL Strategies in the Content Areas with Dr. Sarah Braden, on another level taught me to utilize standards to set up clear content, language, and social objectives to develop content understanding, facilitate literacy, and collaboration. The content objective states how students can work with the knowledge through the demonstration of the corresponding level of Bloom's Taxonomy (Bloom, Engelhart, Furst, & Krathwohl, 1956), such as rewriting, explaining, operating,

comparing, and so on. The language objective states the academic language or the sentence frames that students can apply with. The social objective states the collaborative styles of learning, such as individually, in pair, in groups, or with the whole class. Moreover, I learned about the very helpful concept of backward design performance assessment (Sandrock, 2015) from taking LING 6400: Second Language Teaching: Theory and Practice with Dr. Maria Luisa Spicer-Escalante. With clear and measurable project guidelines and rubrics, I can establish the learning targets, spur students' motivation, and provide feedback for improvement.

Learners need a specific purpose: "A clear purpose lets the students know what they will be held accountable for and helps us as teachers maintain the focus of our instruction" (Fisher, Frey, & Rothenberg, 2008, p. 44). Take one of my classes as an example, when students knew that they will role play a skit at the end of the lesson where they were required to describe the flavors of food, order food, and talk about food in a restaurant, they would pay more attention to the content when I delivered the lesson because they knew what they would/could do with the knowledge. Furthermore, a clear learning objective can serve as a self-regulated summative assessment. Revisiting the same CDSs mentioned earlier at the end of the class time is an informal way to gauge that students know how to use the language in context while helping students to evaluate their own learning. For instance, students would use cards with different colors or make numbers 1 to 5 with hand gestures to indicate their degree of understanding or familiarity. If most students show that they are confident in using the TL to order food, it means that the lesson was delivered successfully. If not, I will spend time practicing what students

need for the next food lesson. In one sense, when students are clear with the learning objectives in the beginning, they can be engaging in the learning more attentively.

c. Designing communicative tasks

Again, purpose is the key. “Communication is the expression, interpretation, and are sometimes negotiation of meaning in a given context. What is more, communication is also purposeful” (VanPatten, 2017, p. 3). Communicative language teaching and learning must be meaning-bearing. If the activity is not meaning-bearing for learners, it cannot be called as communicative. Long’s interaction hypothesis (1983, 1996) addresses why L2 learners must have opportunities to interact with other interlocutors. Long (1983, 1996) demonstrates that when the interlocutors try to keep a conversation going, both parties call on their communication strategies to work together through negotiation of meaning to reach mutual understanding. When learners are engaging in negotiation of meaning interactively, language development happens (Ballman et al., 2001; Brandl, 2008; Ellis, 2012; Lightbown & Spada, 2013; Long, 1983, 1996; Nunan, 1989; Shrum & Glisan, 2015; VanPatten, 2017).

The primary focus of CLT is not practicing using the correct form of grammar structures, but rather engaging in the actual language exchange and emphasizing the effectiveness of communication (Brandl, 2008; Nunan, 1988). In other words, students do not learn a language merely through repetition and passing fill-in-the-blank exams, but through exchanging opinions with others, expressing themselves, and consistently improving their communication strategies. Communicative tasks especially facilitate these practices. Brandl (2008) define the characteristics of communicative tasks’ as:

1. The learner has to do something with the target information (e.g., list, rank, compare, or share it with somebody else in writing or orally).
2. There is an outcome or product that learners have to achieve.
3. A task involves multiple communicative language acts.
4. A task engages cognitive processes. (p. 190)

Nunan (1989) describes communicative task as “a piece of classroom work which involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing or interacting in the target language while their attention is principally focused on meaning rather than form” (p. 10; see also, Sung, 2010). Nunan (1989) carefully discusses the features of the six key elements of a communicative task: goals, input, activities, teacher role, learner role, and setting. Typical communicative activities are: group discussion, interview, and role play.

One communicative role-play activity used in my Chinese classes is information gap activities. For example, student A and B role play a scenario where student A inquires about the hotel room’s information for his or her family, and student B is the front desk clerk. They are assigned their partial script. After student A inquires about the information of three different types of rooms with student B, student A and student B discuss and decide which room is the best for the family, considering the stated trip budget and everyone’s needs. On another level, information gap activities similar in some ways to jigsaw reading, where participants are provided different but complementary texts that must be disclosed with one and other to effectively communicate and achieve the purpose of the activity (Ballman et al., 2001; Lightbown & Spada, 2013).

The other popular approach I find effective is task-based learning, where activities “require the listeners to do something with the information that they just gained and then complete a task” (Brandl, 2008, p. 190). For example, the scenario given is a freshman

gets lost and wants to find the way back to the dorm, and students in pairs work on the clear direction in oral with prompts and their drawing of maps to help the lost person. Each group then shares their ideas and shares the map orally with the whole class.

Project-based learning is also often used in my class. For example, students in my Chinese class made a microfilm based on the message they wanted to convey by utilizing what they learned in class (see my Annotated Bibliography below for further discussion of the theory and practice of Digital Story Telling). This project had specific objectives listed in the rubric. The three teams used the microfilm to talk about the class situation and introduce our school, as well as create a modified version of the text in one of the lessons they learned. The final presentation was a premiere screening of the film project. Students interviewed each other and interacted with the audience. Through the combination of making the movie and the interview, students were able to engage in interpersonal, interpretive, presentational communication and negotiation of meaning (Ballman et al., 2001) to accomplish the task. It was demonstrated from the course evaluation feedback that most students found that while this project was difficult, they also enjoyed the process, learned from it, and felt a sense of accomplishment.

Through task-based and project-based communicative activities, I aim to increase motivation and meaning. Making learning meaningful to students can be realized by making the content relevant to the learners and giving them a purpose. When I plan communicative activities, I try to connect topics with students' real-life experience and focus on especially the presentational mode of communication. Not only when students work in pairs or groups does it facilitate SLA, but when they are provided a chance to demonstrate their proficiency, it motivates them to engage in meaningful use of language.

d. Creating a collaborative and interactive learning environment

Creating a collaborative and interactive learning environment facilitates communicative language learning and motivates learners in many different ways. For instance, conducting literature review papers related to my chosen topics of study abroad and pragmatics made me realize that language proficiency and cross-cultural awareness can develop through students interacting with one another, and with appropriate language assistance from peers or other advanced speakers, such as the L2 native speakers, the zone of proximal development (ZPD) of learners will be achieved and increase cognition (Ahnagari & Zamanian, 2014; Lightbown & Spada, 2013). Second, positive social interactions lead to positive learning experience, and positive learning experience can provide motivation, which is important, as even the most passionate learners need sufficient motivation to keep persevering (Dörnyei, 2010).

Thus, in my teaching I would pair students whose proficiency levels are different and have students work on projects in groups in and out of classroom. I would also bring different Chinese native speakers to classroom, and design language exchange meetings for my students to have meaningful interactions and authentic language use with Chinese speakers. In my classroom, I have noticed that through completing tasks with explicit guidance, students learned to compare and contrast the differences of multiple resources (such as me, the textbook, the video clips I shared, other Chinese speakers) with their own beliefs and constructed their own cross-cultural awareness.

On the other hand, with the help of technology, collaborative learning can take place outside of classroom to supplement the insufficient practice time in the classroom. For example, Canvas is an accessible online platform (similar to Blackboard or other

learning management systems) for the instructor and students to communicate outside the classroom. When I took the Transitioning to Teaching Language Online (TTLO) online course at the STARTALK program at CARLA at University of Minnesota, in 2018, I learned how to make Canvas more collaborative and user-friendly through step-by-step instruction and demonstration. I shared and discussed language, culture, and class matters interactively with my Chinese class on Canvas. In addition, students learned to work on language projects collaboratively through free online software platforms, such as: Google Forms, Zoom, VoiceThread, Quizlet, Kahoot, Quizizz, etc. With the help of technology, the pressure of arranging the time and location for cooperation can be reduced.

Conclusion

Even in an effective communicative classroom using task-based activities, teaching Chinese always presents its own unique challenges, and learning strategies can help learners overcome these strategies. To begin with the first hurdle for Chinese learner is, contrary to the alphabetic language system, Chinese written language follows a logographic language system, which implies that each symbol has its definition, and which has not much to do with its pronunciation (Sung & Wu, 2011). Each word of Chinese is composed of one or more characters. Each character is formed either by a single radical component or more than one radical components. The former described characters are called simple characters; the latter described characters are called as compound characters (Wong, Perfetti, & Liu, 2005). Radicals are formed in particular positional order and are combinations of the 24 smallest units of a character, strokes. (Sung & Wu, 2011).

Thus, just the complexity of Chinese characters and written language makes learning Chinese characters a laborious and time-consuming work for CLLs. To be specific, first of all, learners will need to acquire the most commonly used 3000 characters to be literal in Chinese as Wong, Li, Xu, and Zhang (2010) explains that the 3000 characters out of totally 87,019 modern Chinese characters form 99% of the written texts. Second, learners must be keen to apply their knowledge of radicals and other orthographic features to facilitate reading because the pronunciation rarely corresponds exactly to the characters (Sung & Wu, 2011). Third, recognizing or producing the accurate characters is very difficult, since there are a great number of homophones in Chinese characters that have unrelated meanings (Sung & Wu, 2011).

Hence, Chinese is a challenging language for English or other language speakers whose mother tongues can be pronounced through reading out the words. Besides providing an effective communicative learning environment, teaching language learning strategies helps to stimulate learners who study Chinese as a second or a foreign language. Learners who are capable of utilizing language learning strategies autonomously can function even without the presence of the teacher and can have higher proficiency and self-confidence than those who do not use language learning strategies (Oxford, 1990; Sung & Wu, 2011). For example, learners may simplify and first categorize the common used words in which share the same radicals, such as: 花 (flower / huā), 草 (grass / cǎo), 茶 (tea / chá), 蓝 (blue / lán), or words that are formed with the same character, such as: 电视 (television / diànshì), 电话 (telephone / diànhuà), 电灯 (electric lamp / diàndēng), 电扇 (electric fan / diànshàn). The strategy of grouping or

mapping—coupled with examples and pictures as visual aids—were also effective to require grammar, theme words, and those characters that are easily confused, in my class.

To sum up, my learning and teaching experiences in the MSLT program have made me see that expanding real-life, applicable, and meaningful Chinese has to be realized in an interactive and collaborative environment. In this ideal learning environment, there are cultural- and communicative- based language tasks, projects, or activities that enable CLLs to boost confidence, motivation, and cross-cultural awareness. Most importantly yet implicitly, gaining a positive learning attitude and experience toward Chinese people and cultures is a saturating process that can be conducive to the life-long learning of Chinese.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT THROUGH TEACHING OBSERVATIONS

On a personal note, I remember years ago that my heart was full of joy and gratitude reading the official offer letter of Graduate Instructor position at USU when I was admitted to the MSLT program. The opportunity to apply the theory I was learning to teaching my own Chinese class was the best thing I could imagine. Even though I had taught elementary English in Taiwan, when I arrived, little was I equipped with the skill curriculum planning. The language school where I worked previously has its own textbooks and a fixed curriculum for every teacher to follow. The textbooks are constructed in a spiral approach, where students coherently learn phonics, reading, patterns, conversation, and do exercises in each class meeting. I used to prepare my lessons from following the teacher's guide, and observing other teachers' classes. These observation opportunities offered by my former cordial coworkers later on boosted my teaching skills immensely. Indeed, since my first teaching job, reflecting on my teaching beliefs through observing experienced and passionate teachers teaching in class has been a fruitful and valuable learning process. I am grateful that one assignment requirement in the MSLT program was to write reflective reports of class observations. I chose three different foreign language classes. They were two Spanish 1010 and one Japanese 1020 classes taught at USU. In addition, I observed elementary school Dual Language Immersion classes, where one was third-grade French and the other one was first-grade Chinese. In this artifact, I am going to talk about how my teaching practices and beliefs have been sculpted through these very diverse teaching observations in the MSLT program. Throughout my career, I will continue learning by observing other teachers and intend to continue with the reflective teaching practices I have learned.

The three language courses I observed at USU made communicative language classrooms come alive to me. They helped me deepen my belief that a communicative language classroom is effective and workable. They also demonstrated that an effective communicative language classroom is one that cannot live without comprehensible input, communicative activities, and staying in the target language at least 90 percent of the time. In addition, I learned through observations and through my own teaching that an effective communicative instructor must use more than one strategy to address the goals of engaging learning, improving literacy, increasing comprehension, and enhancing motivation. What the teachers I observed did was to help accumulate students' overall language proficiency to improve communicative competence, in ways that resonated with me. I will explain their practices more explicitly in the following paragraphs.

In the first Spanish 1010 class that I observed, the students first worked on an information gap activity on weather vocabulary and country names in pairs. The instructor paired up students and prepared two handouts for student A and student B. When the handouts were combined together, the students would have all of the weather conditions of different countries listed on the handouts. In one sense, students were enjoying the collaborative nature of this jigsaw activity. Each took turns to ask the other student what the weather was like that his/her handout lacked, and intently listened and drew images of the weather based on what they heard. This kind of information gap activity gave students time and purpose to engage in different skills at the same time: reading, speaking, listening, and negotiation of meaning. What is more important, the students' learning process would have not been fully developed without the real-life-related follow-up task. The instructor then divided students to three groups. Each group

chose a picture of a country that had a designated month. Students discussed the likely weather conditions and suggestions for weather-appropriate clothing within their group. They were asked to use paper and markers to draw and write down the description of the country and report in to the whole class. This observation confirmed that making input comprehensible, facilitating intake, and pushing into meaningful output is an impartible sequence for a language class.

In the second Spanish 1010 class that I observed, the instructor started the class with a warm-up, handing out a small piece of paper and had students write out the verb tenses of a few words. The instructor told me that the students were struggling with the verb tenses, so writing out the verb tenses was the first practice in her class every time. I adopted this concept to familiarize students with Chinese characters. I used games to review five most common used words in the beginning of every meeting hour. Students were also encouraged to pass the mock Chinese language proficiency tests, Hanyu Shuiping Kaoshi Level 1 and Level 2, at the end of the semester. I believe that using a short amount of time on various formats of literacy practices can provide Chinese learning strategies in a communicative classroom strengthens students' literacy foundation and increase their learning confidence. For example, students work in pairs to find the corresponding definition, pinyin, and grammar labels of the words of the day; Students make sentences through utilizing the five words; students also discuss these words or characters that might look similar, but have different meanings. I am grateful the observation of the Spanish class led to the implementation of a similar approach in my own class. I also saw this approach in the Japanese 1020 class I observed later on.

After observing the two Spanish 1010 classes, I was wondering why my Chinese 2010 students did not speak Chinese spontaneously like the students of Spanish 1010 did. I thought perhaps the reason might be that native English speakers learn Spanish faster than Chinese, because there are a lot of cognates in Spanish and English. In addition, Spanish is a transparent language that students are able to pronounce by how the words are written, yet Chinese is more opaque in comparison, where pronunciation and tones cannot be identified from the characters themselves. My contemplation brought me to sit in on a Japanese 1020 class for the reason that the challenges inherent in learning Japanese are somewhat similar to those involved in learning Chinese for English native speakers. The Japanese instructor demonstrated ways to improve students' literacy. The instructor spent specific time teaching Japanese characters and had students practice writing them out individually in class. The instructor also showed some English translation on the PowerPoint slides while reading out loud the conversation in the textbook with students. These practices reinforced my perception that designing in-class activities to cement students' literacy and understanding of characters are essential to increase learners' communicative competence. Another aspect that inspired me was that the instructor explicitly taught grammar after first raising linguistic awareness. The instructor had students read a dialogue with her, and when it came to the grammar point, the instructor showed two possible sentences and had students discuss in pairs and choose the one they thought was correct. Last, the instructor revealed the answer with clear explanation. This activity was both practice for the students and assessment for the instructor. The strategy of giving multiple choices and having students discuss and work together to find a correct answer was also proven beneficial when I later used it in my

own class. For example, the definition of 又 (yòu) and 再 (zài) share the same meaning “again,” yet they are used in different given contexts. Therefore, after explaining the difference, I would pull out three sentences for students to find the correct one. Students would discuss and explain why the sentence they chose was correct, and why the other two were wrong. Through the process of explaining and discussing, students helped each other to understand the implicit grammar concepts with their own interpretation.

From these three independent language classrooms at USU, I learned that communicative language teaching is the most important component in a 50-minute class. Moreover, the teacher needs to also design activities to meet the gap of learning, such as improving literacy, or raising both linguistic and cultural awareness. I also detected that an effective teacher can have various ways of connecting students to real life and drawing on students’ personal experiences to facilitate learning, which I believe to be essential in a language classroom. For example, one Spanish instructor used pictures of the campus and city to teach words about places, such as the café, library, movie theater, grocery stores, etc. Even though I do not speak and read Spanish, I could understand the meanings of these familiar landmarks. The other Spanish instructor did not dive in the topic of the lesson as soon as the class began. Instead, he asked first if the students had watched the football game played yesterday. The students appeared very familiar with this greeting ritual and talked back and forth with the instructor in Spanish naturally and confidently. Similarly, the Japanese instructor had students talk about what they did over the weekend in pairs in the beginning of the class. I reflected that language learning happens in the process of interacting with one another. When we make a connection with

students' real lives and background, it provides a comprehensible, meaningful, collaborative, motivating, and low-anxiety atmosphere for students to learn.

Besides teaching adult learners, I am also interested in teaching in a Chinese Dual Language Immersion school where students are immersed in a 100% target language. The third-grade French teacher I observed helped me realize that as long as the classroom management strategies were used consistently with young learners, it could become a useful framework to improve students' concentration and to help them stay on task. For example, every time the teacher hit the bell twice, students stopped writing and talking, and listened to her quietly. Moreover, when the teacher was teaching math, she made sure that students could solve the math question by the following steps: (1) demonstrating solving one question without writing out the answer, (2) having students write out the answer individually, (3) having students talk about the answer with a peer, and (4) having students share the answer with the whole class. As the teacher carefully demonstrated, I believe that integrating teacher modeling, individual activities, familiar lesson structure, and collaborative activities can guide students to comprehend the complex content, as well as help maintain students' learning stamina in the long term.

Finally, I want to turn to the first-year Chinese immersion teacher I observed, who constructed an effective learning environment through using fun games and engaging activities, and positive reinforcement. She used short and fun gamified activities, different collaborative tasks, various competition formats, multiple reward systems, moving students around, and class management to reinforce what students had learned in previous lessons to build a stronger linguistic foundation for the new materials. I reflected that a teacher should utilize different strategies and vary activities, in different classroom

settings, thereby adjusting oneself to teach in the ways that are most beneficial to the target students, based on their levels, learning styles, and backgrounds.

Confucius, the famous Chinese philosopher and educator once said, “In strolling in the company of just two other persons, I am bound to find a teacher. Identifying their strengths, I follow them, and identifying their weaknesses, I reform myself accordingly” (Confucius, 1999, p. 116). Writing reflective reports of teaching observations provides me such a valuable opportunity to think and reconsider my teaching practices. The observations summarized above have made me a more reflective teacher. I also now reflect on each lesson of my own and my own teaching in general, always striving to improve based on these reflections. Moreover, I appreciate that these teachers of Spanish, Japanese, French, and Chinese agreed to have me sit in on their classes, so I had this inestimable opportunity to learn from not only observing their professional teaching practices, but also from their patience, generosity, willingness to share, and love for educating.

RESEARCH PERSPECTIVES

LANGUAGE PAPER

**Living in a Dorm versus with a Family: A Literature Review of the Influence of
Study Abroad Contexts on Chinese Language Learners' Oral Proficiency**

INTRODUCTION AND REFLECTION

In my third semester in the MSLT program, I took LING 6500, Second Language Acquisition: Theory and Practice, with Dr. Joshua Thoms. In this course, we read and discussed published research on the theories and practices regarding to the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA). We were introduced to a wide range of SLA theories, from structuralism to behaviorism, and from sociocultural theory and to recent multiliteracies approaches. Building on the importance of SLA research and theories as well as synthesizing multiple perspectives and methodologies into my own curriculum have helped me establish focus and a balance in introducing different topics without neglecting reading and writing. For example, I mix videos, pictures, and students' own experience-related topics to construct comprehensible input and hands-on task-based activities. I also aid students' culture awareness via multiliteracies methodology.

My teaching philosophy is rooted in communicative language teaching methodology and also strongly informed by the Vygotskian sociocultural theory. In this approach, L2 learners build up language competence by using the language and interacting with other people. Language is meaningful for L2 learners because they desire to connect with other people. Language is a means of communication, not an end in itself.

The topic of how language is learned inspired me to investigate the effects of study abroad (SA). Being an international student—a foreign language learner of English, and also a graduate instructor of Chinese at USU—has made me more aware of this magical SA environment. The reason I call the SA environment magical is because it provides countless opportunities for the L2 learners to interact with highly proficient target language (TL) speakers. Living in a country where the TL is widely spoken can

provide lifelong motivation for learning a language (Ueki & Takeuchi, 2015). However, SA is not necessarily a positive experience for all participants, and anecdotally, I was surprised to read Hassall (2015), who documents a case of a SA participant developing quite negative attitudes to the target language, the culture, and the people.

This paper focuses on discussing the elements in a SA setting that promote or impede L2 Chinese learning, especially in oral competence. This section provides a useful overview of the topic, with a literature review on oral proficiency gains of Chinese language learners (CLLs) during SA with the effects of living with a family versus living in the student dormitory.

Abstract

Research studies have confirmed that language learners tend to achieve remarkable language outcomes in a study abroad (SA) environment (Davidson, 2015; Di Silvio, Donovan, & Malone, 2014; Du, 2013; Freed, Segalowitz, & Dewey, 2004; Kinginger, Wu, & Lee, 2018; Kim, Dewey, Baker–Smemoe, Ring, Westover, & Eggett, 2015; Mason, Powers, & Donnelly, 2015). Confirming Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory, findings have examined the L2 Chinese learners’ daily interactions or learning perspectives in the case of living in a dormitory or staying with homestay families, and findings show that either a homestay or a dorm environment can both facilitate L2 learning (Di Silvio et al., 2014; Hassall, 2015; Hernández, 2010a, 2010b; Kinginger & Wu, 2018; Kinginger et al., 2018; Yang & Kim, 2011).

This paper reviews the relationship of L2 Chinese learners’ oral proficiency gains during a SA setting and their living contexts, in a dorm or with a homestay family. It suggests that in addition to the living contexts, the length of the SA program, students’ initial language proficiency, the duration of the target language use, individual variables, learning attitude, the experience with the L2 environment, and the scaffolding received from other highly proficient TL speakers or peers should be borne in mind when measuring the oral proficiency gains in a SA setting.

Keywords: study abroad, L2 learners, Chinese, oral proficiency, oral fluency, homestay, dorm, sociocultural theory, individual variables

Introduction

Since the 1960s, linguistic researchers have been generating strong interest in empirical studies of study abroad (SA) for convincing evidence to support the claim of “that study abroad is a productive language learning context” (Kinginger, Wu, & Lee, 2018, p. 303). Contrary to at-home (AH) language learning environments, SA provides second language (L2) learners assorted opportunities to engage in authentic interaction with highly proficient TL speakers, such as ordering food in a restaurant, opening a bank account, asking direction for transportation, and so on. However, despite the fact that the SA setting creates an environment conducive to language input and communication, merely immersing oneself in the L2 culture/environment without ample L2 interaction does not necessarily accelerate second language acquisition (SLA).

Research has shown that L2 learners can achieve notable language outcomes with SA, especially in oral proficiency (Davidson, 2015; Di Silvio, Donovan, & Malone, 2014; Hernández, 2010a, 2010b; Kinginger et al., 2018; Mason, Powers, & Donnelly, 2015) and fluency (DeKeyser, 2014; Di Silvio, Diao, and Donovan, 2016; Du, 2013; Freed, Segalowitz, & Dewey, 2004; Kim, Dewey, Baker–Smemoe, Ring, Westover, & Eggett, 2015; Kinginger et al., 2018). Moreover, findings show that living with a homestay family or in a dorm during SA can both provide abundant and meaningful L2 interaction that facilitates language learning (Di Silvio et al., 2014; Hassall, 2015; Hernández, 2010a, 2010b; Kinginger & Wu, 2018; Kinginger et al., 2018; Yang & Kim, 2011). This paper reviews how L2 Chinese learners’ oral proficiency may develop and be affected during a SA setting and intentionally focuses on comparing the living contexts of staying in a dorm versus with a homestay family.

Literature Review

(a) The theoretical perspective: Vygotsky's sociocultural theory

Under the sociocultural theory (SCT) (Vygotsky, 1978), learning constructs from the process of socializing with other individuals of a given culture or society. Social interaction plays an essential role in the development of cognitive capacity. Language is a “a tool for thought” (Mitchell, Myles, & Marsden, 2013, p. 248) that interlocutors use collaboratively to mediate and regulate minds to produce and interpret meaning to reach mutual understanding (Lantolf, 2000). Human beings mold and construct thoughts and ideas by communicating with other individuals. Through describing what is in our minds in detail, whether orally or in writing, we are able to “direct our own attention (or that of others) to significant features in the environment, rehearse information to be learned, formulate a plan or articulate the steps to be taken in solving a problem” (Mitchell et al., 2013, p. 221). According to SCT, L2 development is the outcome of mediation. Skilled language learners are capable of comprehend new knowledge through the processes of self-regulation, while unskilled learners can still manage new knowledge through other-regulation, which is the guidance of other more skilled individuals. That is to say, collaboration, purpose, and meaningful interaction are important. Moreover, language learning happens more rapidly when L2 learners and the teacher, peers, or other experts engage in a face-to-face communication embedded a meaningful intention, such as working together to solve a problem or engaging in a discussion (Mitchell et al., 2013).

In a SA setting, the living context provides abundant opportunities for L2 learners to socialize with other individuals in the target language. For example, some L2 learners have an opportunity to choose staying with solely other L2 learners who share the same

L1 in a dorm, with other L2 learners who share the same L1 as well as highly proficient TL speakers in a dorm, with solely highly proficient TL speakers in a dorm, with a homestay family, or in off-campus lodging by themselves. Interacting with highly proficient TL speakers during a SA program is fundamental because the highly proficient TL speakers at a dorm or in a homestay family are serving as the language experts for L2 learners to consult with. L2 learners can also monitor and modify their language production when interacting with the highly proficient TL speakers. During day-to-day interactions, the level and content appropriate assistance offered by a highly proficient TL speaker or a more capable peer can help L2 learners to activate their potential development, “Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD),” which Vygotsky (1978) defined as:

the distance between the actual development 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)

(b) Oral proficiency and fluency

To generalize, the SA environment has been shown to accelerate oral proficiency and fluency (Davidson, 2015; DeKeyser, 2014; Di Silvio, et al., 2016; Du, 2013; Freed, et al., 2004; Hernández, 2010a, 2010b; Kim, et al., 2015; Kinginger et al., 2018; Mason, et al., 2015). US-based researchers often use the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Language’s (ACTFL) Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) and Simulated Oral Proficiency Interview (SOPI) as pre- and post-test instruments to measure L2 learners’ oral proficiency and fluency improvement. Given the dynamic nature of the SA environment, an array of quantitative instruments is frequently employed to examine

relevant variation in each independent variable and how they might influence the language outcomes (DeKeyser, 2014). Examples of such variables include participant and non-participant observations, pre- and post-questionnaires, and participants' self-reported "time-on-task" (Freed et al., 2004, p. 294) elicited from a Language Contact Profile (LCP), in which time-on-task was defined as the amount of time a L2 learner used the target language to interact with different interlocutors outside of class, especially with respect to speaking (Freed et al., 2004).

Davidson (2015) examined the L2 proficiency of 1457 students who studied in an intensive summer program or a year-long study abroad immersion program funded by The National Security Initiative (NSLI). The NSLI is a federal program that offers scholarships to high school and university-level students who study critical foreign languages, such as Russian, Arabic, Chinese (Mandarin), and Hindi. The participants of Davidson's study were from three main programs: the National Security Language Initiative for Youths, the Critical Language Scholarship Summer Institutes, and the Language Flagship Overseas Capstone Programs (Davidson, 2015). The findings reveal that most participants advanced at least one sub-level of proficiency during a six-week or longer sojourn overseas (Davidson, 2015). Moreover, elasticity proved important, as participants with lower initial proficiency achieved more threshold progress than students with higher initial proficiency, and 77% of Intermediate proficiency-level L2 learners of Chinese either achieved magnificent proficiency and literacy gains after the overseas immersion program (Davidson, 2015).

Similarly, Mason et al. (2015) examined the oral proficiency improvement with pre- and post- OPI examination over a large-scale study of 2466 Boren Awards recipients

from 1996 to 2011. Boren Awards, funded by the US National Security Education Program, provide scholarships and fellowships to undergraduate and graduate students who are interested in studying less commonly taught languages, including Arabic, Chinese, and Korean. Mason et al. (2015) report that the L2 Chinese learners mostly made a remarkable oral progress, even with only 16 weeks of SA. Learners whose initial level are Novice-Mid or the Intermediate-Mid were very likely to achieve the Advanced Low level (65% vs. 96%) within 52 weeks (a calendar year), and -- compared to the L2 learners of Arabic or Russian—L2 learners of Chinese with Intermediate Mid proficiency tended to spend less time to achieve Advanced-level proficiency via a six-month stay (76%) or a year-long experience (96%).

The findings suggest that the variables of the length of the SA experience and the learners' initial language proficiency both have a strong relationship to language gains in all languages, which means a longer stay and a lower initial proficiency tends to yield higher proficiency gains (Mason et al., 2015). The authors discuss other personal factors that might affect language gains, such as “education level, previous language knowledge, and academic major on language learning overseas” (Mason et al., 2015, p. 12).

In another finer-grained study, Kim et al. (2015) adopted pre- and post- SOPI testing to investigate the change of discourse fluency, including the pace of speech, filled and unfilled pauses, and the length of mean pause, tonal accuracy, the use of vocabulary, and task fulfillment of twenty-two American college students over a SA program in China. Prior to departure, the participants completed the second-year Chinese course and a pre-SOPI test, on which their scores ranged from Intermediate-Low to Advanced-Mid. The result shows that despite the fact that the participants' initial language proficiency

was not the same, most participants gained a holistic fluency improvement, exhibiting increased speech fluency, tonal accuracy, quantity of unique vocabulary, and the skill to accomplish language tasks.

To investigate the cross-language oral fluency progress, Di Silvio et al. (2016) applied a quantitatively-based pre- and post- SOPI study to 75 American college students who studied Mandarin, Russian, and Spanish over a semester-long SA program. They also found that only two groups of students increased their speaking rate and fluidity. Mandarin and Spanish learners were found to make significant progress on speech rate, the length of run, and the frequency of repair, while Russian learners made no significant progress. Although the researchers cannot identify the relationship of the language use and the SA experience of these three groups from the research data, the L2 learners of Russian in this research expressed less satisfaction with their SA experience than the other two groups. This indicates that affective factors related to the SA experience may have a major influence in language gains.

Furthermore, Du (2013) found American L2 learners of Chinese improved their oral fluency remarkably, especially during their first month of stay in China. Du (2013) conducted a three-year longitudinal quantitative and qualitative study that involved fifty-three college students to analyze fluency as measured by: the total number of characters used, speech rate per minute spoken, and the longest turn of a single utterance in randomly selected two-minute segments. They also examined the L2 learners' language use through participant and non-participant observations of their language violation and observance under a Chinese only policy, pre- and post- questionnaires, and time on task. This kind of meta-analysis proved that SA "enhance[s] students' development of fluency;

in particular, it can improve their speech rate, volume of speech during a set period of time, and the ability to hold the floor during a conversation” (Du, 2013, p. 141). In particular, students who consistently used Chinese inside and outside the classroom “made more progress in speech rate than those who did not” (Du, 2013, p. 141). That is to say, staying in the target language both in class and in the real-life immersion situations SA provides is one of the keys to facilitate language acquisition.

As a result, Du (2013) claims that while implementing a language “pledge” seems a good strategy to enhance oral fluency, the amount of time that students use the target language to communicate with other TL users is considered the foremost variable to boost overall fluency. The finding echoes to Freed et al. (2004), in which the authors analyzed the corpus of the French learners’ pre- and post- OPI recordings and time-on-task reports. Three L2 French learning dimensions were examined, where one is SA program, one is at-home (AH) institution, and one is an intensive summer immersion (ISI) program (Freed et al., 2004). Freed et al. (2004) found that ISI students reported significantly more French use in out-of-class time, and thus their progress of oral fluency was the most prominent among the three groups, followed by the SA group, and then the AH group.

From pre- and post- OPI and SOPI tests, we know that the duration of SA and the initial proficiency level have a strong connection to the improvement in proficiency (Davidson, 2015; Mason et al., 2015), and SA has a positive influence to enhance L2 learners’ speech fluency (Di Silvio et al., 2016; Du, 2013; Freed et al., 2004; Kim et al., 2015). Moreover, further findings indicate the duration of TL use both in and outside of the classroom is key to language gains, especially in fluency (Du, 2013; Freed et al.,

2004). Besides that, other variables, such as the learners' L1 literary level, major, gender, education level, should also be taken into account when considering the potential language progress during SA (Mason et al., 2015). Du (2013) posits that characteristics of individuals, such as personality, self-esteem, linguistic self-confidence, and "willingness to communicate (WTC)" (MacIntyre, Clément, Dörnyei, & Noels, 1998, p. 545) likely influence L2 learners' language choices in a SA context.

(c) Living with a homestay family vs. in a dorm

The majority of SA learners show a preference for living with highly proficient TL speakers during SA (Kinging & Wu, 2018). Questionnaire and survey findings have shown that students who live with a homestay family enjoy the extra opportunities of engaging in the high-quality interaction with their host families than those who chose to live in residence halls (Kinging & Wu, 2018). In addition, the living experience with a homestay family enriches SA participants' motivation and interaction with the L2 culture (Hernández, 2010a). For example, L2 learners studied by Hernández (2010a) who had a good relationship with their host family improved their oral proficiency more than those who didn't. Di Silvio et al. (2014) compared the L2 Spanish, Mandarin, and Russian SA students and their hosts' beliefs with the students' oral proficiency gain through a pre- and post- SOPI and a survey, in which they also found that there is a positive relationship between the improvement of learners' oral proficiency and their likeness with their host families (Di Silvio et al., 2014). Nonetheless, Allen & Dupuy (2013) reviews previous research findings and explains that homestay has been viewed as the most desirable living option for its possibility of providing SA participants constant linguistic and cultural stimulation and could be a gateway to the larger target community, yet the social

experience of the participants and their families are highly diverse from one to another. For this reason, however counterintuitively, the homestay experience cannot always ensure more linguistic benefits than other living settings (Di Silvio et al., 2014).

To investigate whether the dormitory, or student residences, can also be a good environment for improving proficiency, Kinginger and Wu (2018) examined the transcriptions of students' audio-recordings of their daily interaction in the dorm, carried out semi-structured interviews with other students and roommates, and observed just two American students who participated in an intensive SA program in Shanghai for one semester in 2015. The findings suggest that the day-to-day interaction between the L2 learners and the highly proficient TL speakers, such as conversational narrative and language play, gradually contextualized the obscure language concepts and made them accessible and relevant to L2 learners, thus activating their ZPDs (Kinging & Wu, 2018). Diao (2014) also reports that peer socialization "can entail norms that are very different from speaking with senior members in the host family" (p. 602).

Students who live with highly proficient TL speakers not only agree that this arrangement allows them to have more opportunities to use the target language, they also appreciate the experience of understanding and participating in the L2 culture. A good relationship with the fellow L2 learners, on the other hand, can activate a sense of motivation to L2 learners. Social and intellectual discourse provides students a chance for "contextualized language learning, problem solving, style and identity construction, and relationship building" (Kinging & Wu, 2018, p. 109). Though most researchers' findings support a home stay experience, with appropriate intervention, a dormitory arrangement with fellow L2 learners can be a fruitful environment as well.

(d) Individual variables and social experiences

As mentioned earlier, Du (2013) suggests that the L2 learners' language choices might be attributable to individual variables. To explore the complexity of individual variables, we can examine Hassall (2015), who investigated the SA experiences of two Australian L2 learners of Indonesian through a multi-method approach, including a written pre- and post- test, three individual interviews with each participant (one before the departure in their home university, one half-way through their four-week course, one after the end of the course when they were back to their home university), and regular diary-keeping tasks. The findings revealed that generalization is not possible, and that different backgrounds and learning attitudes cause diverse learning identities to emerge.

One of the participants, Ross, had a previous SA experience in Germany and had learned Japanese and Chinese before. Although he knew nothing about Indonesian before his departure, he fully immersed himself in the target language and culture, took any chances he could to interact with native speakers, and was willing to tolerate the initial unease to produce culturally appropriate language (Hassall, 2015). Since he had learned Japanese before, he employed his interlanguage (IL) knowledge of Japanese to Indonesian, and took advantage of the translation and observation from his SA fellow, who lived in the same home stay family, took the same SA courses, and spent time outside of classroom. While Ross reflected, he saw himself learning "largely through participation in everyday interactions" (Hassall, 2015, p. 9). Although the communication might make him lose face, he persistently used Indonesian instead of English with his host family. It is proven that Ross's homestay family provided sufficient L2 exposure and practice.

The other participant, Amy, on the other hand, had an entirely different learning experience and identity from Ross. Amy had taken a one-semester Indonesian course before departure. While she had language learning experiences with Italian and French, she had never studied abroad. Unlike Ross, who had a fellow learner living in the same home stay family with him, Amy requested to be the only guest in her home stay family and she was also the only foreign student in her Indonesian class. She didn't use Indonesian outside the classroom much as her home stay family spoke fluent English. When Amy had free time, instead of immersing herself in the L2 via using Indonesian to interact with the native speakers, she would contact her friends in Australia and browse the news or events in Australia online. Furthermore, Amy was by herself most of the time, and her low-level language proficiency reduced her ability to communicate with the local people, which caused her to feel "socially isolated" (Hassall, 2015, p. 20). Even worse, two encounters of money exploitation by the public minivan drivers made Amy feel frustrated with living in Indonesia and reluctant to use Indonesian outside the classroom. Contrary to Ross, who improved largely through the daily interaction with his host family, the cultural misunderstanding between Amy and her host family made Amy feel unpleasant and isolated. This is one example of a negative SA experience.

Afterwards, although Ross and Amy showed progress in the post-test, Amy stopped learning Indonesian, while Ross finished an Indonesian major and created a business in Indonesia. Hassall (2015) shows that the social experiences during SA affect the participants' learning choices over time, and the effect was pervasive. Gradually and unwittingly, the perception of one's learning experience will affect one's identity as a language learner, which can then influence the L2 learning motivation.

Over all, maneuvering the learning environment to ensure a positive learning experience is a big challenge for SA coordinators and teachers because the environment of SA is dynamic and hard to predict. Furthermore, individual variation, such as initial proficiency, learning attitude, motivation, participation, interaction, openness, willingness to communicate, living experience and so on, intertwine and interact with one another, influencing the potential for L2 proficiency development (DeKeyser, 2014; Du, 2013; Hassall, 2015; Kinginger et al., 2016; MacIntyre et al., 1998; Mason et al., 2015).

DeKeyser (2007) notes that besides aptitude and learning context, a learner's attitude toward L2 use often determines success. For L2 learners to achieve optimal language outcome in a SA context, they need to have the right learning behaviors, and strategies, which means that they are ready and willing to commit themselves in learning (DeKeyser, 2014). Pre-departure preparation, such as teaching explicit metalinguistic knowledge of the L2 culture, practical planning, and intensive training in particular in listening and speaking are some ways to prepare L2 learners and reinforce L2 learners' motivation and learning attitude (DeKeyser, 2014).

Conclusion

According to SCT, although the language learners' L2 proficiency is limited, with the assistance of peers or teachers who have higher language proficiency, the interaction will facilitate the internalization process of L2. Yet, the time that L2 learners use the target language purposefully outside the classroom may outweigh the influence of the living context in a SA setting.

This paper reviews the L2 Chinese learners' oral proficiency gains and two different SA living contexts, in a dorm or with a homestay family. It reveals that in

addition to the living contexts, the length of the SA program, students' initial language proficiency, the duration of using the target language, individual variables, learning attitude, the experience with the L2 environment, and the scaffolding received from other highly proficient TL speakers or peers over a SA setting should also be considered.

CULTURE PAPER

Teaching Chinese Invitation Refusal Strategies

INTRODUCTION AND REFLECTION

In the spring of 2018 at Utah State University, I took LING 6900: Culture Teaching and Learning with Dr. Karin deJonge-Kannan, focusing on culture and pragmatics. The class format invited students to be open-minded to discuss cultural differences through sharing our own observations of our life experiences. I realize that Pragmatics is implicit for non-native speakers, but also for native speakers. For example, as a native speaker of Chinese, I was too used to the language choices of Chinese I made every day without being able to explain why I said that way. Moreover, when responding to Dr. Karin deJonge-Kannan's questions and listening to the responses from my MSLT peers, I learned not only about Chinese, but also the speech acts and customs in some Middle Eastern and European countries, and global languages from Arabic to Spanish to French. Learning the inter-language pragmatic strategies through the course readings and from one peer to another is an inspiring, helpful, and enjoyable experience.

As the nature of a second language (L2) or a foreign language (FL) discourse interchange between two interlocutors lies not only in the attention of its linguistic knowledge, but also in the awareness of the target culture and social appropriateness, the best strategy of learning another language is not merely learning the vocabulary and grammar, but through studying the culture (Cutshall, 2010). It is helpful to examine a topic that is related to culture and pragmatics and I have chosen to look more in depth at invitation refusal strategies in particular.

The reason that I was interested in particular invitation refusal strategies stems from personal experience: the unspecified excuses that my American friends gave to reject my invitations, which often left me to think that they did not care enough about me.

Though I knew my perception was inaccurate, the anecdotes still made me wonder what caused the different language choices. Moreover, I believe if I can understand the cross-culture invitation refusal strategies better, I will be able to teach students to perform speech acts with an appropriate content.

Dr. Karin deJonge-Kannan gave us about two months to conduct the research for this paper. The time seemed plenty. However, all the ideas written into this paper did not come to me at once. I found that I spent a large amount of time exploring the details in each section. After submitting the final paper, I presented my research findings in the Lackstrom Linguistics Symposium at USU the following year. It was because of the presentation that I had a chance to revisit my paper and discreetly reconstruct my thoughts. I discovered that different cultures shared similar but also different pragmatics from the audience members, for example, some Arabic speakers also perform ritual refusals when responding to an invitation, while some Russian speakers may be more direct. I valued that people made connections from my presentation to their culture and life experiences. I hope the lesson plan I propose in this paper can also make meaningful connections with students and help students to learn Chinese refusal strategies from their real-life experiences. This is a vast topic and the scope of the portfolio does not permit an exhaustive study, but below I provide an over view of invitation refusal strategies and a useful approach to teaching them.

Abstract

Chinese language learners need to perform both language and pragmatic competence to successfully refuse an invitation without damaging the relationship with the interlocutor. One way to teach American Chinese learners how to perform a culturally appropriate invitation refusal in Chinese is through helping them understand how the cultural background of Chinese society influences Chinese pragmatics. Another way is through cultural comparison, teaching the differences of Chinese and American invitation strategies.

This paper is conducted to understand how Chinese invitation refusals are influenced by Chinese culture, and to explore the differences of Chinese and American invitation refusals in order to provide effective teaching methodology to teach Chinese refusal strategies in the US. First of all, I will talk about the universal pragmatics, refusals and face theory. Second, I will elaborate Chinese face theory and Chinese refusal strategies. Third, I will summarize some research findings of the Chinese and American refusal strategies. Last, a practical lesson plan of Chinese invitation refusal strategies will be proposed.

Key words: pragmatic competence, refusal, invitation refusals, excuses, Chinese, American

Introduction

Language teachers have been placing an emphasis on improving students' grammatical accuracy (Tatsuki & Houck, 2010). Many teachers have also gradually realized that simply uttering grammatically accurate sentences is not enough, on the other hand, pragmatic competence should also be taught in a language classroom. There are times require second language (L2) learners to accomplish a daily task involving interaction with native speakers, such as ordering food in a fast food restaurant, or discussing a collaborative project with classmates. If they were only paying attention to linguistic validity but not considering pragmatic appropriateness, they would likely confront a misunderstanding situation where they felt embarrassed or confused (LoCastro, 2010).

Teaching L2 pragmatic strategies has been a prevalent way for language educators to intensify students' pragmatic competence in the past few decades. L2 pragmatic strategies can be learned through (1) formulas or specific grammatical structures—to carry out the strategy; (2) modifiers—to intensify or soften the speech; and (3) the sequential manner of responding the speech act (Tatsuki & Houck, 2010). A speech act is referred to an intentional utterance used to complete the action of “apologizing, complaining, making requests, refusing things/ invitations, complimenting, or thanking” (Cohen, 2010, p. 6). When language teachers effectively intertwine L2 pragmatic knowledge of performing speech acts into in-class activities, they can help activate learners' pragmatic awareness, understanding, and performance (Tatsuki & Houck, 2010).

The other way to intensify students' pragmatic competence is to help them understand the socio-cultural values and beliefs in the given L2 community (Guo, 2012). Different age, gender, social distance, and power relationships between the speaker and the listener vary the degree of difficulty or imposition to perform the speech act with respect to the social norm of the target society (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Tatsuki & Houck, 2010). Chinese culture has its own social norms that are very distinct from American norms. One way to understand how to perform cultural appropriate invitation refusal strategies in Chinese is to understand the cultural background of the different social status and relationships in a Chinese society. Another way is to compare Chinese and American invitation strategies. Examining some of the similarities and differences in invitation refusal strategies used by Chinese and American native speakers may provide possible teaching strategies for teachers to develop instruction of teaching refusal strategies in a Chinese FL/SL classroom.

To fulfill the purpose of developing instruction of teaching Chinese invitation refusal strategies, I will first talk about the universal pragmatics, refusals, and face theory. Second, I will elaborate Chinese face theory and Chinese refusal strategies. Third, I will discuss the research findings of the Chinese refusal strategies and American refusal strategies. Last, a lesson plan of Chinese invitation refusal strategies will be proposed.

Pragmatics, refusals and face theory

Kasper & Blum-Kulka (1993) defined Pragmatics as “the study of people’s comprehension and production of linguistic action in context” (p. 3; see also, Yamashita, 2008). Even within the same language, refusals depend on context; for instance, the way we talk when we turn down an invitation from a friend would not be the same as when

turning down an invitation from a boss. L2 Pragmatic competence, or so called L2 pragmatic ability or interlanguage pragmatics, refers to the L2 learner's communicative ability to interpret and response to the verbal and nonverbal L2 discourse to achieve a certain purpose within a given cultural and social context (Ishihara & Cohen, 2010; Kecskes, 2013; Nguyen, 2011; Vellenga, 2004). L2 learners should be aware that speech acts vary cross-culturally, for instance, "in complimenting someone on her new dress, a positive acceptance of the compliment by appreciation (e.g., thank you) is common in some cultures (e.g., the United States), while rejecting the compliment (e.g., no, it is not new) is more appropriate in some other cultures (e.g., India)" (Farnia & Wu, 2012, pp. 162-163).

Refusing is a responding speech act, which is defined as the act of denying an invitation, an offer, a request, or a suggestion. It is often tied to an element of Brown and Levinson's politeness theory (1978) for the reason that inappropriately performing a refusal speech act is considered as an impolite face-threatening act (FTA), which causes damage to the listener's face. Face is coined as "the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself" (Brown and Levinson, 1987, p. 61). One is positive face, which is referred to "the speaker's desire to be accepted and appreciated by others" (Jiang, 2015, p. 97), and the other is negative face, which is defined as "one's free choice of actions and his desire not to be imposed on by others" (Jiang, 2015, p. 97).

Performing an invitation refusal strategy is considered a high FTA as a pragmatic failure can damage the listener's positive face, and the speaker's negative face at the same time. The seriousness of an FTA is associated with the following factors in probably all cultures regardless of the language difference: "(1) the social distance of the

speaker and the hearer, (2) the relative power relation, and (3) the absolute ranking of imposition in the particular culture” (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 74; see also, Hong, 2011).

Chinese face theory: Liǎn (脸) and miànzi (面子)

Both the characters of Liǎn (脸) and miànzi (面子) have the meaning of face in Chinese. In the Chinese society, liǎn (脸) and miànzi (面子) are pervasively used in daily expressions to help Chinese people to contextualize and regulate the interpersonal and individual behaviors (Hu, 1944; Kinnison, 2017). Haugh (2012) suggests that the expressions involved with liǎn (脸) or miànzi (面子) are allied with the concepts of being polite and impolite in Chinese language.

Hu (1944) explains that miànzi (面子) is equivalent to the reputation that people strive for with their life long efforts from the external environment, while liǎn (脸) represents the respect that a man receives for his high morale as he “will fulfill his obligations regardless of the hardships involved, who under all circumstances shows himself a decent human being” (p. 45). Hu (1994) addresses that liǎn (脸) promotes internal moral integrity and can be valued as a social and an internalized adhesion. For instance, àimiànzi (爱面子, love face) means to be concerned about face-saving; or to be sensitive about one's reputation, and diūliǎn (丢脸, lose face) means to bring shame on oneself.

Yet, besides viewing the dichotomy of the semantic definitions between liǎn (脸) and miànzi (面子), Kinnison (2017) suggests that researchers should contextualize the

anfractuous multifaceted characteristic of Chinese face concept through “(1) power/favor/relation face – one’s social power and connection, (2) moral/honor face – one’s dignity and integrity, and (3) mask/image face – ones’ facade to impress others” (p. 33). Learning Chinese characters and understanding the literal meanings beyond the lines can be beneficial for Chinese Language Learners (CLLs) as it eliminates language misunderstanding and increases learners’ culture awareness.

Moreover, when investigating the face notion, CLLs also need to understand that the Chinese social and ethical norms are deeply rooted in Confucian philosophy (Lin, 2014). Confucianism constructs the foundation and guideline of how people implementing appropriate pragmatic strategies in terms of speech acts in daily interaction (Hong, 2011; Kinnison, 2017; Lin, 2014). As Kinnison (2017) debates, the entities in Chinese society tend to constraint their behaviors by following the rules that correspond to their social status and personal relationships to either win or maintain an acknowledged prestige.

Chinese refusals

Deng (2016) illustrates that face-work is fundamental when Chinese speakers carry on a conversation as they can avoid or reduce social friction through preserving face. Performing refusing strategies embedded with the Chinese face concept can be a remedy of a FTA (Brown & Levinson, 1987). In contrast, without understanding the Chinese face concept, people may damage their relationship with L2 native speakers due to false pragmatic strategies.

Directly refusing a person whose social status or position higher than you conveys an implicit message that you do not appreciate the favor (不给面子/ bù gěi miàn zi) because Chinese is a hierarchical society. When refusing an invitation of a supervisor, Chinese tend to provide a longer and detailed explanation which is “culturally and conventionally legitimate” (Kinnison, 2017, p. 133) to make the listener believe that the occasion is out of the control of speaker. Chen, Ye, & Zhang (1995) conducted a detailed research on Chinese refusals and revealed that

since a fundamental principle for social interaction is that based on reciprocity, a speaker’s own miànzi [face, in Chinese] cannot be preserved unless the other person’s miànzi is maintained as well. The honor of being invited or given an offer should be acknowledged and the miànzi of the person being refused should be maintained. At the same time, the refusal must be effective and clear in meaning but not rude (p. 122; italics added).

The following invitation refusal scenario will serve as an illustration. When someone invites you to a party but you don’t want to go, using a sequence of thanking, an unclear explanation, and an indirect refusal in Chinese, such as, “谢谢您。但是我有事。估计去不了。(Xièxiè nín. Dànshì wǒ yǒushì. Gūji qù bùliǎo. / Thank you. But I have a plan. I guess I won’t be able to go.),” may be acceptable, if the invitation comes from a colleague. Yet, if the invitation comes from a senior coworker, or someone whose social status or power is higher than yours, such as a supervisor, being more indirect by showing your appreciation and giving a reason which is an obligation that beyond you can control, such as, “谢谢您的邀约。这周六我儿子有足球比赛，很抱歉我无法出席活动。(Xièxiè nín de yāoyuē. Zhè zhōu liù wǒ érzi yǒu zúqiú bǐsài, hěn bàoqiàn wǒ wúfǎ chūxí huódòng. / Thank you for the invitation. My son has a soccer game this

Saturday. I am sorry that I cannot make it.),” can preserve the supervisor’s face and maintain the social relationship in Chinese society.

Research studies with respect to refusal strategies greatly adapt the classification constructed by Beebe, Takshashi, & Uiss-Weltz (1990) (Chen et al., 1995; Hong, 2011; Lin, 2014). Beebe et al. (1990) divide refusals to two big groups, direct refusals and indirect refusals. Direct refusals are referred to non-performative, such as, “no”; and performative, such as, “I cannot.” Indirect refusals are sorted to 18 different kinds of strategies, varying from apologizing to thanking. Chen et al. (1995) adapt the classification from Beebe et.al. (1990) and examined a 16-item Production Questionnaire designed intentionally to elicit Chinese native speakers' refusals in response to four different speech acts: requests, suggestions, invitations, and offers. Each item has a specific relationship setting indicating the speaker's (S) social status in comparison to the interlocutor (S higher than H, S lower than H, S equal to H) and their social distance (very close, close, distant, very distant). The participants were constructed by fifty male and fifty female native speakers of Mandarin Chinese who had stayed in the U.S. for mean 2.4 years and had received higher-education at the time that they were participating in the study (Chen et al., 1995). The study of Chen et al. (1995) concluded the most popular refusal strategies among Chinese are:

- (1) Reasons (32.6%): giving reasons for noncompliance
- (2) Alternative (14.0%): suggesting an alternative course of action to avoid direct confrontations
- (3) Direct refusal (12.9%): direct denial of compliance without reservation
- (4) Regret (10.9%): utterances expressing regret

Yet, the appropriateness of the refusal strategies depends on the style of the initiating act. For example, even though direct refusal is of one most common used refusal strategies for the reason that it is very explicit and thus effective, simply using a direct refusal in refusing an invitation without combining other strategies is not appropriate. Chinese habitually utilize multiple refusal strategies in an utterance. Reason-alternative refusal strategy is the most frequent sequence employed by Chinese, which means providing a reason focuses on the speaker's negative response to the hearer's initial suggest to minimize the disruptive impact of the refusal by explaining why compliance is not feasible at the first place, and then followed with a hearer-related alternative suggestion initiated by the refuser, focusing on the needs and goals of the hearer by providing an alternative action plan that might be an agreeable option to both (Chen et al., 1995).

On the other hand, Chinese speakers normally are not expected to accept an invitation or an offer immediately. Instead, to represent politeness, they are supposed to refuse several times before accepting, which is called ritual refusal and almost obligatory in the Chinese society (Chen et al., 1995; Kasper & Zhang, 1995). Kasper and Zhang (1995) conducted a semi-structured interview to examine the cross-cultural experience of 21 advanced Chinese language learners at the University of Hawai'i who had been to China, Taiwan, or Hong Kong. The majority of students knew that one is not supposed to accept an offer or an invitation immediately in light of Chinese culture. However, the experience of their ritual refusals turned out less successful than they had expected. One student commented that when he was in China for a short study program, he tried to refuse at the first place every time, yet the insistence was not followed by the inviter. He

reflected that the Chinese probably did not expect a foreigner like him to perform ritual refusal, or he might express expressions or body language in a wrong way. Another student observed that the validity of ritual refusal is related to the social distance and relationship of the two parties, for example, performing a ritual refusal is unnecessary for two close friends as both know that their offers and responses are genuine (Kasper & Zhang, 1995).

Refusal Strategies between Native Speakers of Chinese and English

There are ample studies comparing and contrasting cross-cultural refusal strategies between two different languages for the reason that performing a L2 refusal strategies is a “sticking point” issue (Beebe et al., 1990, p. 56; see also, Hong, 2011; Lin, 2014) for language learners. English and Chinese are two distinct language systems used by two or more diverse cultures, yet the native speakers of Chinese and English share similar and different refusal strategies (Chang, 2011; Hong, 2011; Lin, 2014). Of course, one can never generalize. Aside from the different culture backgrounds, some additional controversial findings are also revealed in previous researches.

In the following literature review, I will provide an overview and I will compare the refusal strategies between the native Chinese speakers, the non-native Chinese speakers, the native English speakers, the native Chinese speakers who are also second/foreign language English learners, and the native English speakers who are also second/foreign language Chinese learners. As different researchers used different acronyms to describe the backgrounds of the target participants in different researches, to avoid misunderstanding and better compare the refusal strategies preference of the aforementioned target groups, I will unify the acronyms as follows:

- L1CL2Es = Native Chinese Speakers who are also Second/Foreign Language English Learners
- L1Cs = Native Chinese Speakers
- L1EL2Cs = Native English speakers who are also Second/Foreign Language Chinese Learners
- L1Es = Native English Speakers in the United States
- NL1Cs: Non-native Chinese Speakers

Hong (2011) examined the invitation refusal strategies between L1Cs and NL1Cs by analyzing a compilation of a Discourse Completion Task (DCT) (Blum-Kulka, House, & Kasper, 1989), which is one common instrument used to examine cross-cultural pragmatic strategies by asking participants to write down their hypothetical responses to complete the designated dialogues that are confined to specific scenarios (Chang, 2011; Jiang, 2015; Hong, 2011; Lin, 2014). Hong (2011) explains that the DST survey is intentionally designed to see how the difference of the power relationships between the interlocutors influenced by their social relationships and distance would affect their pragmatic choices.

Hong (2011) compared the refusal strategies of two groups of students who were attending the same college in the United States at the time they were receiving the same DCT survey. 30 students were L1Cs from the China, and the other 30 students were NL1Cs. In this research, the author did not mention the learning backgrounds of the NL1Cs, it is hard to know if the NL1Cs are also L1Es, but all of the NL1Cs had Advanced-Low Chinese proficiency and were taking the third-year level of Chinese as a

Foreign Language (CFL) course at the same American university upon taking the DCT survey, where the students were asked to refuse a professor's invitation to a Chinese New Year's party (Hong, 2011). The findings show that the L1Cs use more politeness strategies than NL1Cs (10 vs. seven), and although both L1Cs and NL1Cs prefer "explanation" and "apology" in a refusing situation, their frequency and preferred sequence are not aligned (Hong, 2011).

First of all, all L1Cs in the study used explanations as the Head Act, whereas 80% of NL1Cs used "explanations as supportive moves either before or after their direct refusals" (Hong, 2011, p. 127). The author proposed that the pragmatic failures may have been affected by the negative L1 (English) pragmatic transfer, or perhaps "the students' lack of linguistic proficiency and interlanguage competency" (Hong, 2011, p. 129).

Second, L1Cs tended to use conventionally and culturally accepted excuses to make the hearer believe that the refusing action is beyond the speaker's intention and control, such as using family reunions and attending a meeting to minimize the possible imposition (Hong, 2011). Yet, 50% NL1C did not provide specific content for their explanations, and 16% NL1C used personal entertainment as an explanation, such as watching a football game or going to a movie. Hong (2011) proposes that the perception of power relationship between the two interlocutors in the survey, and the communication styles of North Americans and the East Asians (directness vs. indirectness) might have been a potential cause of the differences.

Third, the study shows that L1Cs used "addressing with title" and "expressing thanks" (Hong, 2011, p. 129) more than NL1Cs. Except for the most commonly used refusal strategies, explaining and apologizing, addressing with title and expressing thanks

were the third and fourth most commonly utilized politeness strategies to mitigate the refusals initiated by the speaker for both groups. However, 87% of L1Cs “addressed the hearer with the honorific title plus the surname to show respect” (Hong, 2011, p. 129), yet only 33% of NL1Cs addressed the hearer’s title. In addition, 87% of L1Cs expressed appreciation to the dinner invitation, while only 57 percent of L1Cs expressed appreciation.

By comparison, Lin (2014) analyzed the refusals of 30 L1Cs in Taiwan, 30 Advanced-Mid (B2 level of Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment) level of L1CL2Es in Taiwan, and thirty L1Es in the U.S. with a questionnaire designed with a Scaled Response Questionnaire (SRQ) and a DCT, trying to find the similar and different refusal usage and perception among native Chinese speakers in Taiwan and native English speakers in America in terms of the perception of face-threatening, overall usage, and the patterns.

The SRQ was used to examine the testers’ perception of the seriousness of face-threat based on a Likert scale, where digital one represents that the action is the least face-threatening; digital five represents the action is the most face threatening from the tester’s point of view (Lin, 2014). The use of SRQ provided an additional information to help researchers understand how participants' cross-cultural and interlanguage pragmatic perspectives might influence their speech act choices and performance (Lin, 2014).

Lin (2014) found that direct strategies were the least adopted by all three groups, where strategies of negative willingness/ ability were much preferred than solely saying no. The study also showed that L1Cs and L1Es used different softening devices for

mitigation, where L1C preferred to use the modal “可能 (kěnéng / may),” while L1E preferred to use the modal “I won’t” and subjectivizers, such as “I don’t think ...” or “I don’t feel comfortable...” (Lin, 2014, p. 646). Comparing the refusal patterns of L1Cs and L1Es, L1Cs seemed to give their excuses before expressing regret or negative willingness, whereas L1Es often expressed their regret before their excuses and negative willingness (Lin, 2014). Lin (2014) also revealed that L1CL2Es failed to use native-like formulaic expressions and had negative L1 (Chinese) pragmatic transfer in expressing the content of their excuses.

Besides, Lin (2014) found that both L1Cs and L1Es tended to provide unspecified explanations, which the author suggested that this shifting might be ascribed to the influence of western culture disseminating through the media and the increasing contact of English language among the younger generation. The important note is, the research revealed that the use of specified excuses and unspecified excuses was determined by the L1Cs’ perception of social status with the hearer, where 82% of L1Cs used specified excuses to refuse an invitation that came from a boss (Lin, 2014). Lin (2014) suggests that Chinese concern the relationship with people whose social status are higher than oneself and thus perceive the need to provide detailed explanations to convince the hearer, while Americans view people who have higher status equally, and thus there is no need to provide detailed explanations to convince the hearer. This finding echoes to Guo (2012), where claims that Americans tend to give explicit reasons to refuse an invitation regardless of the social status, while Chinese tend to provide explicit reasons when refusing an invitation from a person of higher social status.

To understand the refusal patterns of L1Cs, L1Es and L1CL2s, the findings of Lin (2014) are examined and organized in table 1 below. Here we can see the most common refusal strategy patterns used by L1Cs, L1Es, and L1CL1Es and the examples:

Table 1 Common Refusal Strategy Patterns

Group	Refusal Strategy Patterns	Example
L1Cs	(1) excuse+ negative unwillingness/ability (2) excuse+ regret	(1) I already have other plans, so I won't have time to go there. (2) I need to use my car later. I'm sorry.
L1Es	(1) regret+ excuses (2) negative unwillingness/ability	(1) Sorry, I am very busy today. (2) I'm sorry, I can't make it today.
L1CL2Es	(1) regret+ excuses (2) negative unwillingness/ability	(1) Sorry, I still have a lot of work needed to be done. (2) Sorry, I don't think I can come.

(Adapted from Lin, 2014, p. 648)

In another study, Guo (2012) examined the refusal preferences of total 120 participants, consisted of 60 Chinese and 60 American college students and teachers, with a DCT questionnaire to understand the cross-cultural differences of refusals between Chinese and Americans. The findings showed that both L1Cs and L1Es used more indirect refusal strategies than direct strategies (Guo, 2012). Moreover, among the

indirect strategies, giving reasons, providing an alternative suggestion, and showing regret are most preferable between the two groups (Guo, 2012). Guo (2012) also suggested that a refusal act usually consists of both direct and indirect refusals, yet L1Es generally used a greater proportion of direct refusal than L1Cs did.

Jiang (2015) conducted a written DCT survey to Chinese, L1CL2Es, and American high school students to know how the refusals strategies of L1CL2Es were influenced by their L1, Chinese. The findings revealed that excuses (reasons or explanations) were most frequently used by all three groups, and Americans preferred a statement of positive feeling aligned with other refusal strategies, and used more direct refusal strategies than Chinese (Jiang, 2015). L1E tended to express more positive expression than L1Cs or L1CL2Es, such as “I’d like to” or “I’d love to”, and this semantic formula often follows up with regret, and finally a reason or explanation to refuse the hearer. (Hong, 2011; Jiang, 2015; Liao, & Bresnahan, 1996; Lin, 2014).

Comparing L1Cs’ refusals to L1Es’, both Chinese and L1CL2Es tended to address form, such as Sir or Boss, whereas none of Americans addressed form in the survey (Jiang, 2015). Since the Chinese and L1CL2Es participants demonstrated the similar content in their excuses of rejection, Jiang (2015) also suggested that L1CL2Es tend to have a negative pragmatic transfer from their L1, Chinese.

To compare the aforementioned findings, some of the findings echoed to each other. First, Lin (2014) found L1C and L1E both used “excuse/reason/explanation” (p. 646) in a refusing situation the most, and both Lin (2014) and Jiang (2015)’s findings indicated that L1C used more explanations more than L1ES. Second, conventionally and culturally accepted excuses, such as “family matters and health problems,” (Lin, 2014, p.

647) are considered the most persuasive refusal excuses to L1Cs. Third, multi-strategy patterns with adjuncts (supportive movies or positive remarks) or indirect strategies are preferred by all of the L1Cs, L1Es, and L1CL2Es as they are less face-threatening than direct refusals (Lin, 2014). Fourth, in light of semantic patterns of refusals, L1Cs tend to provide their excuses before showing regret or negative willingness, yet L1Es show the opposite (Lin, 2014; Hong, 2011). Fifth, advanced language learners in either Chinese or English generally adopt a false pragmatic strategy constrained by their L1 society, L2 teachers should help students to be familiar with more target-like pragmatic patterns and expressions (Lin, 2014; Hong, 2011; Jiang, 2015).

However, some findings also remain controversial. Two findings of Lin (2014)'s are controversial and not in agreement with other studies. First, the finding indicated that most L1C and L1E employed multiple refusal strategies when they perceived similar face-threat severity in their L1, and all of the participants used indirect strategies more frequently than direct strategies, which contradicted to the previous studies, where suggested L1Es are inclined to be more direct in refusal than Chinese (Guo, 2012; Hong, 2011, Jiang, 2015). Second, unlike Hong (2011) where L1Cs tended to provide a detailed explanation to minimize the disruptive impact of the refusal, yet both L1Cs and L1Es tended to provide unspecified explanations in Lin (2014)'s study.

Introduction of Invitation Refusal Lesson Plan

The contradictory findings above indicate that the use of invitation refusal strategies cannot be over-generalized as the L1Cs' perception of L1EL2Es' pragmatic appropriateness differ vastly, whereas language teachers can help students to be open-minded, raise cross-cultural awareness of how social factors might determine linguistic

expression and understand there are various ways to interact with the target society (Deardorff & Deardorff, 2000; Hong, 2011). Deardorff and Deardorff (2000) developed the OSEE (Observe, State, Explore, and Evaluate) tool, which is a teaching sequence that a language teacher can make use to facilitate L2 learners' intercultural communication skills. OSEE represents:

- O: Observe what is happening in the given context
- S: State objectively what is going on from your perspective
- E: Explore possible explanations that account for what is happening
- E: Evaluate which explanation suits the context the best

In addition, Glaser (2013) suggests that language teachers use “implicit-inductive framework” (p. 150), where students are exposed to some exemplary dialogues that are enclosed refusal speech acts at the first place, and followed by explicitly highlighting the subtle pragmatic rules to construct effective pragmatic instruction. This pragmatic teaching approach is effective because it mimics a real-life situation that allows students to evolve in the meaningful and authentic language production (Glaser, 2013). The following invitation refusal lesson plan will adopt the OSEE tool and implicit-inductive approach to help Intermediate to Intermediate-High L1EL2Cs to conduct the optimal invitation refusal strategies.

Preparation

The teacher has to set up a discussion forum on Canvas or Blackboard, or on one of the many available free on-line platforms, such as Flipgrid (<https://flipgrid.com/>), before the class. The students will need to role play the conversation in pairs, and record the video or voice and upload the file on to the Internet for later use. Moreover, the

teacher needs to prepare the handouts, paper, and pencils, and make sure the internet connection is working or to download the video clips in advance.

Target students

Chinese post-secondary second- or third-year college students (Intermediate to Intermediate-High)

Learning Objectives

1. Students will be able to identify and explain the invitation refusal strategies used by themselves.
2. Students will be able to identify the invitation refusal sequence used by L1Cs
3. Students will be able to produce and explain the refusal strategies and sequence they would use with the respect to the difference power relationships and the Chinese culture.

Estimated time

2 hours

Lesson plan

1. The teacher asks students if they have the experience of inclining an invitation in their L1. Hence, this following session makes meanings and connects to students' real life.
(10 minutes)
2. In this section, students are asked to write down their responses in their L2 to the following scenario on the Handout 1 individually. The DCT questions is adapted from Hong (2011).
(10 minutes)

Handout 1:

Your professor invites you to a Chinese New Year's party. You don't really want to go, but you don't want to be offensive. Write down what you would say to decline the invitation in a polite way.

语境：（在李教授的办公室）您的老师，李教授，请您大年三十晚上去他家吃饭，可是您去不了。

李教授：小张，明天晚上是大年三十，请你来我家吃饭，我们一起过新年，热闹热闹。

小张(您)：

3. The teacher pairs three students in a group. Students share what they wrote (the responses) within their group. Students in three summarize and write down their best response to politely refuse the invitation. Students record video of themselves role playing the conversation. With the consent of students, students upload their videos to Canvas discussion forum or the Flipgrid (<https://flipgrid.com/>).
(15 minutes)
4. The class will discuss the factors that influence the pragmatic strategies, such as power relationship, age difference, gender, social distance and talk about how they might influence the degree of difficulty or imposition to perform the speech act in Chinese society.
(10 minutes)
5. I will introduce and explain some of the indirect refusal strategies that students might have been familiar with and the ones that they are not familiar but often used by L1CS with the politeness strategies that L1Cs and L1EL1Cs used in Hong (2011). Students will be able to discuss in groups of three people and share their examples with the whole class regarding to the situation of Handout 1. In Hong (2011)'s study, the L1Cs and L1EL1Cs used the following refusal strategies to different degrees:

- explanations or excuses (e.g., I wish I could.)
- addressing the title of the inviter (e.g., Professor Chen)
- thanking (e.g., Thank you for your kindness.)
- apologizing (e.g., I'm sorry.)
- promising a future arrangement (e.g., I'll invite you for dinner next time.)
- greeting (e.g., Have a great time at party.)
- offering alternatives (e.g., I'm sorry.)
- using exclamation (e.g., Oh.)
- indirect complaint (e.g., It should be me inviting you over for dinner.)
- direct refusing (e.g., I cannot come.)

(10 minutes)

6. Each group of three people share the video they made and share what invitation refusal strategies that they had used and why they had wanted to use these strategies.

(15 minutes)

7. Each group of three people work with the following handouts to see what strategies that the L1Cs and L1Es used and list out the similarities and differences among these two groups and share their findings to the whole class.

(20 minutes)

The following corpus of authentic examples selected from Hong (2011).

Handout 2:

李教授：小张，明天晚上是大年三十，请你来我家吃饭，我们一起过新年，热闹热闹。

小张(您)：

中国人的回答	美国人的回答
1. 谢谢，李教授，不过我要和我的丈夫回他外地的老家过年，我们有好几年没回去了。谢谢你的好意。等我们回来后再去你家给您拜年吧？	1. 对不起，我不能来，我明天晚上去看电影。
2. 李教授，感谢您的邀请，可惜我要回家与家人团聚，很抱歉不能来。等您有空，我一定来拜访您。	2. 感谢您的邀请，可是我明天晚上有足球比赛，不能来。
3. 太谢谢了，我非常希望去您家吃饭，但是那天我有点事儿，估计去不了了，真是太遗憾了。等下次有机会，我再去打扰您吧。	3. 对不起，我不能参加你的晚会，我已经有事儿了。
4. 对不起，李老师，明天我要回家，先祝您新年快乐了！	4. 谢谢您请我去你家。但是很对不起我不能去，因为我有考试。

Learners discuss and find the refusal features and strategies with the transcripts in pairs and answer the questions on Handout 3.

Handout 3:

What strategies do CL1S and CL2S use?

中国人的回答	美国人的回答
Explanations (Yes/ No)	Explanations (Yes/ No)
Addressing with title (Yes/ No)	Addressing with title (Yes/ No)
Expressing Thanks (Yes/ No)	Expressing Thanks (Yes/ No)
Apologizing (Yes/ No)	Apologizing (Yes/ No)

Providing Alternatives/ Indirect Compliant/Exclamation (Yes/ No)	Providing Alternatives/ Indirect Compliant/Exclamation (Yes/ No)
What do you find the similarities and difference of LICs and LIE?	

8. Students listen to their previous role play video or voice-recording (#3) and rewrite their lines with the Handout 4 and do a second video-recording. Students use their findings to reflect their understanding and learning of the optimal invitation refusal could be.

(15 minutes)

Handout 4:	
What you said before:	What you said after knowing the appropriate refusal strategies in Chinese:
What strategies you used before:	What strategies you used after:

9. Students share “before/after” video-recordings in front of the class and explain what discourse they have changed and strategies they used to make it more cultural appropriate.

(15 minutes)

Assignment and Assessment

The teacher provides similar scenarios, yet there are three settings that the power relationships are different: equal and low to high. Students will write and video record their discourse and explain what strategies they use and why they decide to use the strategies.

Assignment

Decline the invitation in a polite way.

According to the situation and different social position of you and the hearer, how would you decline the invitation politely?

- (1) 张老师^{zhānglǎo shī}(I) invite you over my house for dinner. You don't really want to go, but you don't want to be offensive. Write down what you would say to decline the invitation in a polite way.

张老师：这个周日我想邀请你们来我家吃晚饭。你可以来吗？
你：

- (2) Your classmate invites you to his birthday party this Sunday. You don't really want to go, but you don't want to be offensive. Write down what you would say to decline the invitation in a polite way.

中文班的同学：这个周日是我的生日。我想请你来参加我的生日排队。你可以来吗？
你：

- (3) Your best friend invites you to his parents' house for a family-gathering this Sunday. You don't really want to go, but you don't want to be offensive. Write down what you would say to decline the invitation in a polite way.

你最好的朋友：这周日我家有一个聚会。我想要你我一起去。你有空吗？
你：

What strategies do you use in different scenario?

Do you use different Chinese refusal strategies when talking to teachers, your classmate, and someone you are very familiar with? What is similar? What is different? Why or why not?

What do you need to concern when you use Chinese to decline an invitation?

Conclusion

Turning down an invitation without proper pragmatic competence may be consequent “great face-threat” (Lin, 2014, p. 642) and result in cross-cultural misunderstandings between the Chinese language learners and the Chinese native speakers. This paper is carefully conducted to understand the influence of Chinese culture and social perspective toward Chinese invitation refusal strategies. This paper also examined research on the refusal speech acts of Chinese and Americans with the aim to provide conductive information for Chinese language teachers to understand the cross-culture differences and teach pragmatic competence of the invitation refusals. Finally, a proposed sample lesson plan provides practical insights into teach Chinese refusal strategies.

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

INCORPORATING DIGITAL STORY TELLING IN L2 LEARNING AND TEACHING

Introduction

Digital Story Telling (DST) is a growing trend in education, particularly in second language learning. On a personal note, while I was planning my first Chinese class for the second-year Chinese course at Utah State University in the summer of 2017, I spent a large amount of time pondering what final project I should put in the curriculum that would incorporate all the skills. I carefully examined the guidelines for a DST project shared by a former USU Graduate Instructor, I-Chiao Hung. As part of the final requirements in her first-year Chinese class, students used a PowerPoint slide as a platform to narrate stories with the voice they recorded while also incorporating animation, pictures, and music. The stories varied widely. Two students in one group talked about how they grew up and met each other in the United States. One student talked about his trip to Xi'an in China. One group talked about the story of the RMS Titanic.

Short films, Vines, and microfilms are becoming more and more popular today around the world, from film festivals, to viral videos online, to streaming platforms, all growing in popularity for their use in education as well. The word microfilm is translated from Chinese: 微电影/ wēi diànyǐng, which usually means a short film that is less than six minutes. Microfilms were first introduced into the Chinese film industry in 2010, which also refers to “a short film production which offers low risk, high output

promotional opportunities for both business and personal communication and development” (Nottingham International Microfilm Festival, n.d.).

In my own experience, DST provides a connection to authentic materials and increases opportunities to communicate with and create with language. After seeing the students’ DST products, and realizing that digital elements can make student’ stories vivid and persuasive, I believe that producing microfilms has the potential to increase overall Chinese proficiency thereby improving students’ communication skills, improving learner motivation, facilitating peer collaboration, as well as linking students to a real-world project. Subsequently, using DST-based pedagogy through a presentation of microfilms has become an effective teaching tool for me in my classroom.

This annotated bibliography was written after I conducted a microfilm project with my students. It helps me to better understand how DST can be implemented to improve L2 learning and best practices. It also brings me insights to improve the microfilm project that I conducted. Below, I talk about the research findings and the pedagogies associated with DST. Lastly, looking forward to the practical application of the theories discussed in the research reviewed below, I propose a microfilm DST project plan that I hope to carry out with young DLI language learners in the future.

Literature Review

Though this literature review does not endeavor to be exhaustive, it provides a useful overview of the theoretical framework and some major teaching methods in DST over the past fifteen years. DST combines the traditional way of narrating a story with a novel way: using digital tools. *DigiTales: The art of telling digital stories* is an explicit tool book that many educators consult before embarking on telling a digital story. In the

introductory chapter, **Porter (2004)** explains that DST is a way that people use technology to make the story that we narrate come alive through orchestrating “images, graphics, music, and sound mixed together with the author’s own story voice” (p. 1). Once we visualize and articulate our ideas, experiences, things, or people that we know well or have passion with, we can easily connect ourselves to our targeted audiences.

Jiang (2017) conducts a questionnaire to thirty-four second year Chinese as a Foreign Language or Second Language (CFL/SL) students in a college in Australia to explore the influences of a self-recording storytelling assignment associated with a computer assisted language learning (CALL) project, where students were assigned to record their own responses to appointed prompts for at least two minutes, then upload the sound file on to the course website on the learning management platform Blackboard. Before recording, students were asked to write out their scripts and pay attention to the use of vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and intonation. After posting the sound file on Blackboard, students were required to submit a hardcopy of their story scripts. The results show that all of the students wove personal anecdotes into their assignment despite the fact that they were also suggested to use either cartoon pictures, movies, or novels (Jiang, 2017). Thus, a personal connection was successfully made.

However, while it might be easy to tell a story about something personal, a story still needs to be one that is appealing and engaging to a reader or wider audience. Porter (2004) explains that when using digital tools to tell a story, storytellers need to pay attention to six elements. First, instead of telling a story in a detached manner, a good storyteller needs to think about how to tell a story from the heart to make the audience emotionally connected. Second, a good story always has something important to say,

such as a meaningful moral lesson, something inspirational, or an elaboration of an idea which helps to gain understanding. Therefore, a good storyteller would think about what the takeaway message of the story is. Third, a good story bears a hook, a twist, or different pacing that intrigues the audience. To give a very brief, extremely simple example: Lily got lost in a foreign country, and she was trying to use the Chinese she had learned to find the hotel where she was staying in order to reunite with her friends. Did she make it (or not)? How did she make it (or not)? A good story makes the audience think and oftentimes includes an element of surprise. Fourth, the art of making a story intriguing is to shorten a story to preserve the beauty and core value of the story itself. Fifth, instead of just telling with words, a good digital story should show, that is to say, integrate multimodal aspects, such as sound effects, music, or images to make a story come alive. Lastly, a good storyteller should avoid overusing or misusing media elements, such as color, animation, voice, music, and white space, that might distract the audience from the story.

As **Brenner (2014)** suggests, “digital media production functions as a mechanism for learning, expression, and building community and identity” (p. 22). Most students agree that storytelling improves their language competence because they are required to comprehend the story that the teacher created, so that they may then read and write their own stories. One learner reflected that storytelling helped to enrich vocabulary, to familiarize Chinese culture by constructing thoughts to retell a story, and to gain confidence when restating one’s own stories to people.

In a similar fashion, **Thang, Mahmud, & Tng (2015)** examine the responses derived from the questionnaires and interviews toward DST of a class of CFL/SL

students and the teacher's reflections in Malaysia, and addresses that the numerous times of practicing and reproducing the fluent speech of a digital story as well as the countless negotiations among students' collaborations lead to gains in L2 vocabulary and pronunciation. In addition, Thang et al. (2015) also find that working in groups enables students to learn from each other and enlarges their communication and technology skills simultaneously, and assert that DST provides teachers of Chinese an innovative pedagogy to shift away from the traditional teacher-centered learning styles. I agree with these findings based anecdotally on my own experience with DST.

Previous findings indicate both the teachers and students generally have positive attitudes with integrating DSL into language curriculum. To look into how DST can influence students' academic performance, critical thinking, and learners' motivation, **Yang and Wu (2012)** conducted a one-year long quasi-experimental study with two English as a foreign language (EFL) 10th-grade classes in Taiwan. Students' pretest and posttest English and critical thinking scores, a qualitative questionnaire, and the recording data from students' and teachers' interviews were collected. Information technology integrated instruction (ITII) was used as the independent variable in both the DST (experimental group) and lecture-type (comparison) classes. The analyzed results show that the class involved in the DST pedagogy significantly outperformed the one who taught with lecture in terms of English achievement, critical thinking capacity, and learners' motivation. Moreover, both the teacher and learners reported that the DST improved the understanding of course content, students' willingness to explore, and critical thinking ability, which stresses the educational value of integrating DST into a language classroom. Moreover, the teachers and students all reported that DST helped

students understand the course content better and boost learners' "21st century skills" (ACTFL, n.d.) (e.g., increase students' willingness to explore and critical thinking ability).

American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) and The Partnership for 21st Century Skills (P21) collaborated on the 21st Century Skills Map, which provides examples for teaching World Languages as well as enhancing skills and literacies (**Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2011**). Today's language learning objective of teachers is to enable students to use the language, so they are able to communicate with the native speakers of the language. Besides the three modes of communication skills (interpersonal mode, interpretive mode, and presentational mode), 21st Century Skills are as interdisciplinary skills that across core academic subjects, include: collaboration skills, critical thinking and problem solving skills, creativity and innovation skills, informational literacy, media literacy, and technology literacy skills, flexibility and adaptability skills, initiative and self-direction skills, social and cross-cultural skills, productivity and accountability, and leadership and responsibility (Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2011). Integrating a DST project into curriculum can help cultivate language learners' linguistic proficiency and also help to develop 21st Century Skills.

The research results echo what I found when I observed my own students in the microfilm project. They not only integrated Chinese knowledge that they learned from the previous lessons, but they also used the language as a tool to express their opinions, to illustrate and explain their ideas and thoughts, and also to be imaginative. The findings positively reinforce my belief in employing DST pedagogy to achieve learning objectives

and increase students' academic scores as DST projects create meaningful access and provide autonomy for students to integrate and contextualize the language that they have learned and wish to learn.

Another research study conducted by **Li & Hew (2017)** indicates that DST can serve as useful demonstration material to learn Chinese. Li & Hew (2017) compared and contrasted how using traditional DST and multimedia DST influence Chinese idioms learning by conducting a Chinese idiom comprehensive test and a questionnaire made up of five-point Likert scales upon eighty-three college students who were taking novice-level Chinese as a foreign language in Malaysia. Eighty-three students were divided into two groups, where forty-three students in the experimental group were learning Chinese idioms through “multimedia storytelling prototype (MSP)” (Li & Hew, 2017, p. 455), and the other forty students in the conventional learning group were accessing to the Chinese idiom materials through traditional storytelling. A MSP means transferring the stories to visual images with the consideration of the setting, characters, plot, conflict, and solution, which are also seen as the five elements of telling a story (Li & Hew, 2017; Yang & Wu, 2012).

The results revealed that students who learned with MSP achieved better grades (mean rank 56.31 vs. 26.61) and higher motivation and satisfaction than these who were taught with the traditional DST approach. One hundred percent of students in the experimental group agreed that multimedia storytelling was interesting, engaging, and helped them to understand the Chinese idioms better. On the other hand, only sixty-five percent of students in the conventional group agreed that the traditional way was engaging, yet ninety percent of them agreed that the instructor played an important role in

explaining the idioms, which helped them to understand Chinese idioms. The demonstration or modelling aspect of DST is therefore very useful, effective, and even motivating.

To know if DST is a favorable tool to assist students to make their stories more persuasive and engaging for the audience, a class of fourth-year high school Spanish learners' project-based DST learning experiences were examined by **Castañeda (2013a)**. The DST project conducted here entails the scaffolding procedure coined by **Lambert (2013)**, which encompass (1) sharing exemplary samples, (2) brainstorming the story outline, (3) writing a draft, (4) providing and receiving feedback, (5) revising the draft, (6) designing storyboards, (7) producing the audio, (8) editing and revising the digital product (9) presenting (Castañeda, 2013a). The pre- and post- questionnaire responses, interviews, observations, and reflection journals were collected and analyzed qualitatively by the author and one graduate student.

Findings of the research address that when a DST project “align[s] with the writing process, following these steps: planning, drafting, obtaining, feedback, reviewing, and publishing” (Castañeda, 2013a, p. 48), and adheres to an opportunity of presentation, it provides a meaningful avenue that connects language learners to the real world. Moreover, it increases students' motivation and dispels their worries toward the use of language and technology. The main findings from **Castañeda (2013b)**, also advocate the benefits of a DST project, including enhancing technological self-efficacy, creating awareness toward teacher's feedback, and raising self-evaluation of one's own writing competence. As for the aforementioned findings, the research results support that

blending DST into a curriculum is conducive for students to stimulate their presentational communication competence.

Besides the affirmative findings, what Castañeda (2013a) draws to my attention the most is that the DST project used here is almost the same as the one I designed for my second-year, college-level Chinese learners. Though they are for different languages and different proficiency levels, in both DST projects students were instructed to be involved in a process of brainstorming, writing, providing feedback to each other, revising, practicing their oral speech with their script, acting out the movie, and editing the film. Furthermore, students are given a chance to polish their oral and listening competence when they introduced their film and answered questions from the audience in the experience of the ‘premiere’ screening of the project. However, upon reflection, there are differences between my own DST project and the one in this paper. Instead of writing narratives of an individual personal experience, the aim for my DST project was to have students work in groups and utilize what they learned in the previous lessons to collaboratively create a dialogue-like script after brainstorming the story outline. Students are also cooperatively in charge of their movie’s directing, acting, and editing. Identical to the findings of this paper, my college students initially had concerns about their skills of filming and editing, yet their “self-awareness” (Castañeda, 2013a, p. 53), “audience awareness” (Castañeda, 2013a, p. 54), peer motivation and collaboration made their language learning a team game. Students cooperated and motivated each other to make an interesting short movie to impress not only the audience, but also themselves. Students’ ambition and collaboration made their hands-on language learning experiences unforgettable while cultivating their 21st-century skills simultaneously.

It is paramount that focusing on “crafting, revising, and narrating the story” (Castañeda, 2013a, p. 46) in both the processes of writing and producing the product is more important than using digital technology itself for the reason to promote multi-literacy in a language classroom. **Barrett (2006)** advises that DST “facilitates the convergence of four student-centered learning strategies: student engagement, reflection for deep learning, project-based learning, and the effective integration of technology into instruction” (p. 1). Still, DST needs “tight control of the content, narrative structure, and organization” (**Oskoz & Elola, 2016**, p. 159). Without specific guidelines and understanding, the effectiveness decreases. Teachers also need to investigate affordable and commonly used writing and communicating collaborative tools among students to facilitate collaboration, such as two or more language learners using Google Docs as well as Google Hangouts when collaborating on writing a story (**Elola & Oskoz, 2017**). Technology should not hinder the process of language learning, yet training students to use DST software is the key to a successful experience of the DST task (Brenner, 2014; Castañeda, 2013a; Elola & Oskoz, 2017; Oskoz & Elola, 2016). Oskoz & Elola (2016) in *Digital stories: Overview* summarizes the process as follows:

To avoid the frustration that the integration of DSs might bring to the classroom, many L2 DS studies implement a process-oriented approach to help learners develop their research, L2 writing, and digital literacy skills. Although they differ in their process approaches to some degree, implicitly or explicitly following a task-based approach, these studies break down the DS process into sequential stages that help learners develop their content, fine tune their writing and oral components, facilitate the integration of text, images, and sound, and polish their final DSs (p. 160).

Digital Story Telling in an L2 Chinese Language Course: A Project-based Lesson Plan

Imagining that making a microfilm is like a movie production company producing a short movie, multiple people engage their intelligence to cooperate and interact industriously from pre-production to post-production to enable the final product—the movie to be playing in the theater. To build a positive language learning outcome and experience with DST, a teacher is like an executive producer, who has to make sure all of the resources are available and the processes are on the right track, the quality is ensured. The teacher must be a resource provider and a technology supporter at the same time.

Teacher Preparation

First and foremost, acting like the producer or film production company, the teacher should list all of the requirements and plan out the timeline and milestones and tasks in advance. That is to say, the teacher needs to determine the dates from explaining the project, grouping students, brainstorming the story outline, writing the script, giving and receiving feedback, revising the script, filming, using technological tools to edit the film and integrate sound and music, uploading the bilingual subtitles, examining the quality of the final product, making a rehearsal for the premiere, and finally, presenting and interacting to and with the audience in the premiere. The expectations must be made clear through a rubric and timeline.

A good feature film or short takes time to refine, and so does a microfilm. The project should ideally take at least six weeks or longer to develop. However, the teacher will need to consider how much time the class can set aside for the project, and how much time the students can cooperate outside of the classroom. For adult learners, their autonomy and capacity to cooperate outside of the class time are higher than for children.

Yet, the students benefit the most from the class time since the teacher can provide guidance and scaffold the progress of writing and speaking easily.

Moreover, the language teacher should cooperate with an IT specialist or tech, also looking into online tutorial videos or working with other teachers or lab techs for technological support. That way, it is easier to overcome the technology barrier for teachers and students alike.

Lesson 1: Students Will Be Able to Know What Composes a Good Story

I hope to be teaching in a Chinese dual language immersion (DLI) classroom in my future career. For the following project plan, I will use third-grade DLI elementary students as an example. This is how I will teach the DST project through microfilm in the future. In the first lesson, we would watch a Disney Pixar's animation, *Bao* (Shi, 2018). Since the film has no dialogue, students will be engaging in interpreting what they have seen and the whole class will discuss what happened in the story from the video. Next, I will list the six elements of a good story (Porter, 2004) on the board, and ask students if this story has the elements Porter (2014) mentioned and what they are. Then, I will divide four students into a group. Students in a group will cooperate to write out the script for the character they are interested in via pictures of the main scenes from the video and try to come up a dialogue that encloses these six elements. Then, students will practice giving a voiceover presentation of the script in front of the class. This script reading is similar to the exercises involved in Readers' Theater (Kabilan & Kamaruddin, 2010) teaching methods that have been around for many years, but it is employed using an animated film rather than a printed literary text as a basis.

Lesson 2: Introducing the Project and Brainstorming the Story Outline

At the second lesson, I will give a microfilm DST orientation, where students will learn about the process of making a microfilm. As for class time, for example, students know that they will have two hours on every Monday and Friday afternoon for two months to work on a five-minute microfilm project. The microfilm will be only filmed inside the school or on school grounds. The IT teacher or tech could teach them how to edit video in a lab. At the end of the semester, they will have a premiere where they can invite their families, and members of the school community will be in the audience.

In this lesson, I will arrange both high and low language proficiency learners in a group. The students will also know that they will have a good experience and film when they respect and cooperate with their teammates. Students will start from sharing an unforgettable personal story that happened at the school among members of their group. After they have shared their stories, I will ask them to discuss, write out, and share a story board outline for the story that they want to tell. Meanwhile, I will also ask them to think about the topics learned in previous lessons and encourage them to use words they know.

Lesson 3 to 6: Digital Story Telling Writing Process

The writing process will take place up to two weeks and will involve students discussing, writing, and revising their script over the course of four class meetings. In the beginning of each lesson, each team will role play and read their story aloud. The whole class will provide oral feedback, and each group will revise their script based on the feedback. Students are able to access to their textbooks to find the words they have learned. If they forget how to write the characters, they can write down the Pinyin first. I will circle around the classroom and help students to check their scripts and provide assistance. After they have modified their scripts after the four class meetings, I will

proof read them together over a weekend on Google Docs. Therefore, every student will be able to ask questions, see my comments and edit at the same time. Again, this is similar to Readers Theater, but the following lessons add digital and cinematic aspects.

Lesson 7 to 8: Rehearsal before shooting

Later, the students will practice orally and familiarize themselves with the scripts for two class hours. I will pay attention to their intonation, pronunciation, and familiarity. Besides the class time, students will also be requested to record themselves and practice at home together and alone. After listening to the recording, I will provide individual feedback with the tones or pronunciation that students are less familiar with. Learners can steadily increase their oral fluency after every recording assignment and feedback.

Lesson 9 to 11: Filming and Learning the Technology Tools

Next, the students will use three lessons to film their videos. I will be helping one group shooting and operating the camera while the other two groups are learning the techniques of editing film in the computer lab (or on apps in the classroom).

Lesson 12 to 15: Post-Production Process

At this point, students should have known how to operate the software to edit their video, as well as how to integrate sound and music. An additional three lessons will be used to carefully edit the film, add bilingual subtitles, and upload the microfilm onto YouTube and Canvas. Since not all of the audience in the premiere speak Chinese, it is necessary for students to provide both English and Chinese subtitles. However, I will confirm the validity of using English subtitle with the principal and cooperate with my partner English teacher due Chinese-only policies in most DLI programs.

Lesson 16: Check the Final Product and Prepare for Premiere

When students have their final product ready, they will introduce and play their microfilm in front of class and revise it for the last time based on the feedback they receive. This step can ensure the quality of the film and help students to practice before the premiere and enhance their confidence and achievement.

The Premiere

After two months of hard work, students will present their microfilms in front of the school teachers, classmates, and their families at a screening. They will dress nicely like movie stars, and proudly introduce their work, role playing a film festival, all in the target language. Everyone will easily understand, relate, and enjoy the stories as the microfilms are shot in and around the school, and the English subtitles will make them understandable if non-Chinese speakers are invited from outside the class.

Although the project is time-consuming, the students will realize that they have enhanced their 21st century learning skills (Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2011) as they were working on their projects, especially with respect to interpretive and presentational communication competencies, collaboration with their classmates, critical thinking and problem solving in writing the script and working on the project with classmates, and the ability of using multimedia to convey a story. They may feel a strong sense of achievement and motivation to continue learning Chinese.

Conclusion

DST was a new approach for me even when I designed a DST-type of project for my students. After looking into the related research literature and reflecting on my own experience teaching with DST, I realized that a DST teaching approach is more than crafting a story through technological tools. In essence, with the goal of stimulating

language learning, teachers should pay close attention to the pedagogical aspects of DST and help to scaffold students' working processes to boost all of the L2 skills and collaborative competency.

In the past couple of decades, our global education environment has experienced a rapid change due to the development of a variety of digital tools/technologies. The ability of utilizing technological tools, such as operating software, or editing sounds and videos, and the interpretive and interpersonal communication skills required in order to collaborate with people are considerable for the job market in the 21st-century digital age (Brenner, 2014; Thang et al., 2015). If “information, media, and technology skills” (Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2011, p. 6) are recognized as core skills for 21st century students by ACTFL (n.d.), then incorporating DST into a second language learning curriculum can be treated as a meaningful way to prepare students to acquire life-long communication skills, and to develop multiliteracy skills, that are in line with with the increasingly digitally mediated world in which we live.

LOOKING FORWARD

Teaching second-year adult Chinese learners at USU was the most favorable and thought-provoking teaching experience I have ever had. If it had not been for the trust and assistance of the Chinese program coordinator at USU, Dr. Ko-Yin Sung, I would not have been able to extensively apply the comprehensive and cultural-immersed materials, communicative activities, collaborative task-based projects, and formative and summative assessments that I learned about or created.

Upon the completion of the MSLT program, I would like to teach Chinese in the United States. I envision that my experience and energy will be a great fit to a Dual Language Immersion (DLI) program, yet I do not have a strong preference for one solely academic setting. Teaching young and adult learners is different, but teaching all ages and backgrounds is exciting and rewarding, as I have seen in my previous teaching experiences.

In the future, I would like to continue designing curriculum and modifying pedagogy to support and help motivate diverse Chinese language learners who have different learning backgrounds and learning styles. Besides the learners who grow up in the United States, I want to study and help bilingual and multilingual learners, such as Chinese heritage speakers and L2 or L3 Chinese learners from around the world.

I also want to make a contribution to teacher preparation. I have learned from attending and presenting at teacher conferences and look forward to future participation in professional development. I understand that different cultures and learning backgrounds may make teaching Chinese in the United States mentally overwhelming for some Chinese native speakers, because I myself have been through this experience. I

hope that sharing my experiences and the teaching materials I create, through online publications and through participation in pedagogy conferences, will be advantageous to Chinese native speakers who desire to be influential language teachers in the United States.

On another level, self-development through teaching observations of other teachers, evaluation of my own teaching, participating in conferences, and being involved in regional or national training are what I will be pursuing nonstop in my profession. I will remain open-minded and innovative, and I will always endeavor to refine, improve, and keep my teaching practices and knowledge up to date in order to provide the best possible learning environment and experience for my students.

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