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BUILDING INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE IN THE LOWER DIVISION  
CHINESE LANGUAGE CLASSROOM: A LESSON PLAN ANALYSIS

by

Maggie (Tzu-Hsin) Lin

A portfolio submitted in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

of

MASTER OF SECOND LANGUAGE TEACHING

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Logan, Utah

2023

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## ABSTRACT

BUILDING INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE IN THE LOWER-DIVISION  
CHINESE LANGUAGE CLASSROOM: A LESSON PLAN ANALYSIS

by

Maggie (Tzu-Hsin) Lin: Master of Second Language

Teaching

Utah State University, 2023

Major Professor: Dr. Ekaterina Arshavskaya

Department: World Languages &amp; Cultures

This portfolio is a compilation of what the author has learned in the field of Chinese as a second language in the Master of Second Language Teaching program at Utah State University. There are three main sections in the portfolio. The first section contains the author's teaching philosophy statement, with a focus on intercultural competence development and teacher-student rapport. The second section consists of a reflection on a classroom observation. The main paper presents how the author designed a lesson plan and implemented it, as well as her analysis and introspection on a video recording of the lesson. The portfolio ends with a statement of the author's future goals and plans.

(61 pages)

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## LIST OF ACRONYMS

ACTFL: The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages

C1: Home culture

C2: Target culture

DLI: Dual Language Immersion

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

ICC: Intercultural Communicative Competence

L2: Second Language

MSLT: Master of Second Language Teaching

TA: Teaching assistant

TL: Target Language

USU: Utah State University

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Appendix A: Chinese Dining Etiquette Worksheet

Appendix B: Chinese Dining Culture Vocabulary List



## INTRODUCTION

Language learning has always been a big part of my life. I started my first English lesson in Taiwan at the age of three, and it ignited my passion for languages. Since then, I have been a language learner for nearly 23 years. I enjoy exploring, learning, and appreciating the beauty of the language and culture.

Back in Taiwan, I studied applied foreign languages focusing on English language education in college. Throughout my four years of school, I developed a keen interest in becoming a language teacher. Upon graduation, I applied for an internship where I worked as an assistant teacher at an English-immersive kindergarten. The skills and knowledge I acquired from the outstanding teachers drove me to gain more teaching experience, so I applied to become a part-time language instructor in Taiwan. After three years of teaching, I noticed that I was struggling to find a way to improve my teaching skills. At that time, I felt inadequate to be an instructor due to the lack of knowledge and training in teaching a foreign language, so I decided to apply for the Master of Second Language Teaching (MSLT) program at Utah State University (USU) to further advance my teaching skills.

The two years in this program have drastically changed my perspectives on language teaching. Learning about second language teaching has made me realize that I neglected some important elements when teaching in the past. I focused only on delivering the

linguistic knowledge of the language and disregarded the fact that there is more to it, such as having exposure to the target language and access to authentic learning materials. There are things I never thought about in the past. After learning from the professors and other experienced teachers, I realized that changes must be made. Therefore, I wanted to put what I have learned into practice and started applying the strategies to the course I was teaching (i.e., a lower division Chinese course). Since then, my teaching style has significantly changed. I started looking into how I could make the lessons more meaningful and useful for my students.

During the MSLT program, something I was particularly interested in was how to develop learners' cultural awareness and intercultural competence. I learned that although language and its culture are inseparable, language teachers often overlook the importance of integrating culture with language lessons, which happened to me in the past. Therefore, in this portfolio, I decided to focus on a lesson plan analysis targeting a specific aspect of Chinese culture. By presenting meaningful and authentic cultural elements to the students, they had the opportunity to observe and share their thoughts on the target culture in-depth, finding the fundamental qualities of the culture. Another thing that caught my attention was the importance of rapport between the teacher and the students. I believe that building a safe and trusting learning environment for the students allows them to explore the language and

culture comfortably. Simultaneously, it helps students develop a positive attitude and appreciation of another culture.

In sum, this portfolio demonstrates what I have learned in the MSLT program and my beliefs as a language teacher. As a language learner myself, I try to see things from my students' perspectives and learn from hands-on experiences. The MSLT program has prepared me to become a teacher who not only knows how to teach the language but also brings joy and new experiences to the students. I have and will continue to further develop my teaching strategies and skills. I hope this portfolio can bring new ideas for language teachers to create a classroom where students can explore, experience, and evolve.

TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

## PROFESSIONAL ENVIRONMENT

I have been a second language learner since the age of three. I have always felt that learning a second language is something I am meant to do in life, something that I enjoy doing the most. In 2018, I had an opportunity to become a language instructor in Taiwan. After teaching my first class, I finally realized that my passion is in teaching languages. Since then, I have been teaching second languages (i.e., English and Chinese) for nearly five years.

For the past two years, I have worked as a graduate instructor at Utah State University, teaching novice-level Chinese classes. This experience has allowed me to learn skills such as lesson planning and classroom management, better preparing me to work with Chinese language learners in the United States. Moreover, teaching in a U.S. university has given me the opportunity to get familiar with the American teaching and learning culture, which allows me to adjust my teaching style to suit the different cultural norms.

In the future, I plan to continue working with Chinese language learners in the U.S. I hope to gain more experience teaching high-school students in the Dual Language Immersion bridge program or novice/intermediate-level college students.

## TEACHING PHILOSOPHY STATEMENT

Learning a second language (L2) is a long journey, and there is never an end to it. I have spent my whole life learning a second language, English, and I can tell that this journey has not, perhaps will not, come to an end. As a lifetime language learner, I am inspired by the outstanding teachers I have had, and I am determined to become a teacher who can inspire students. Being an English as a foreign language (EFL) teacher in Taiwan has equipped me with basic knowledge of language teaching; however, the Master of Second Language Teaching (MSLT) program has broadened my horizon on more in-depth teaching skills and methods.

During my first year at Utah State University (USU), I had the opportunity to co-instruct a lower-division Chinese course. Originally, I planned on teaching the course the way I was taught and how I taught in Taiwan, which was focusing on language proficiency exams. Nevertheless, not until I did my first classroom observation, have I realized that teaching L2 is not merely about getting good grades on tests. In fact, the classes place emphasis on allowing students to use the language communicatively. Since then, my point of view on L2 teaching has changed significantly. I then became curious about how I can improve my teaching skills and provide students with a more authentic and meaningful learning environment.

Teachers play an essential role during students' journey of learning new languages. In

my opinion, learning an L2 should be an enjoyable, interesting, and most importantly, rewarding process. Learning a language involves not only the language itself but also the culture. Students are not simply memorizing the vocabulary and sentence structures. Instead, they are immersed in the culture, which is embedded in the language. My goals for my students are to be able to interact in communicative practice by using the target language (TL), developing intercultural awareness, and building interest in future learning of the TL. Furthermore, my goals as a teacher are to create an environment where students feel comfortable making mistakes, exploring the language, and learning effectively. After all, learning a language should not be stressful or frustrating.

“Effective teachers guide their students from the level the students start at, directing them to the resources they'll need to succeed, motivating them to achieve, and challenging them to develop” (McGlynn, 2001, p. 16). In order to direct, motivate, challenge, and inspire students, I believe creating an authentic learning experience is essential. Therefore, in this teaching philosophy statement, I am going to share my thoughts on developing intercultural competence and building teacher-student rapport, based on my knowledge and experience from the MSLT program and instructing a lower-division Chinese course (Chinese First Year CHIN 1010/1020).

### **Developing Students' Intercultural Competence**

Intercultural competence, as discussed by numerous researchers, derives from Byram's

(1997) model of intercultural communicative competence (ICC). Byram defines ICC as "knowledge of others; knowledge of self; skills to interpret and relate; skills to discover and/or to interact; valuing others' values, beliefs, and behaviors; and relativizing one's self" (Byram, 1997, p. 34). In other words, ICC focuses on preparing learners to have linguistic, sociolinguistic, and discourse-communicative competence. During the process, they develop respect and appreciation of other languages and cultures while gaining fundamental knowledge of other cultures, allowing them to think and act appropriately among different cultures (Li, 2013; Moeller & Nugent, 2014; Van Houten & Shelton, 2018). Based on the ICC model, Byram (2020) proposes that while developing ICC, learners will also develop intercultural competence, which means skills in interpreting cultures, knowledge of the world, curious attitude toward other cultures, and cultural awareness. The combination of language competence and intercultural competence will then turn into ICC. While it seems straightforward, chances are that learners do not have the environment to experience the target culture. It has become the instructor's responsibility to provide learners with exposure to the culture. Therefore, bringing authentic and meaningful materials and interactions to language classrooms is essential.

The emphasis on intercultural competence comes from the developmental model of intercultural sensitivity (Bennett & Bennett, 1993; Bennett & Hammer, 2017). Researchers found that when encountering cultural differences, learners go through six stages of



increasing sensitivity to cultural differences, which are denial, defense, minimization, acceptance, adaptation, and integration (Bennett & Bennett, 1993, p. 152). These reactions are predictable and can be enhanced if the differences between learners' home and target culture are significant. Therefore, to help learners go through the stages smoothly, I believe that instead of simply introducing them to the target culture, building a bridge for learners to connect their beliefs with the new cultural concept they are exposed to is essential.

The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) suggests that "Making culture real to students is enhanced when we can connect with native speakers from the countries of the languages we're teaching so that the students can ask questions and get responses that help them understand why something is the way it is" (Cutshall, 2012, p. 35). Doing so allows learners to explore parts of the culture, and if not more, gives them the opportunity to start discussions on different cultural aspects. For instance, the similarities and differences among cultures are the most discussed topics. Learners will develop intercultural awareness when comparing their home culture to other cultures.

In my classroom, I plan on developing learners' intercultural competence by incorporating authentic materials and interaction. ACTFL defines culture as "the philosophical perspectives, the behavioral practices, and the products of a society" (The National Standards Collaborative Board, 2015, p. 67). Students will learn the 3Ps (Product, Practice, and Perspectives) of the target culture during the process. Celebrating holidays, for

instance, will be a simple yet effective way to bring Taiwanese/Chinese culture to novice-level classrooms. Whether it is tasting traditional pastries during Mid-Autumn Festival, or writing spring couplets during the Lunar New Year, students will experience pieces of the culture, even when they are far from living in a language-immersive environment. With advanced learners, the teacher can hold discussions in the target language, with the occasional use of L1 to support their ideas. Yet, one must be aware not to introduce culture out of context since it may reinforce stereotypes. However, stereotypes are not always negative. It is the teacher's delivery and students' interpretation that lead to overgeneralizing. There are factors behind the typical 3Ps in a culture that create stereotypes. Therefore, when introducing culture, teachers must provide the reasons behind certain practices, products, and perspectives of the C2. The “why” is more important than the “what”. For instance, when introducing Chinese dining culture, instead of saying Chinese people eat a lot of rice, the teacher should explain that it is the climate in certain parts of China that makes it easier to grow rice than other crops. With explanations, students will not only look at the target culture from the surface but look beyond the basic products and practices, finding the fundamental qualities of the culture.

Take my lower-division Chinese course as an example. In the first semester, I designed a lesson dedicated to Chinese culture. Students were introduced to traditional Chinese dining culture and etiquette along with hands-on practice using chopsticks. Although most students

already had a decent understanding of Chinese dining culture, engaging them in a discussion with their peers helped with processing and comparing the information they know and receiving different perspectives from other students. Moreover, some students had lived in or traveled to the countries (e.g., Taiwan or China), so they were able to share a more authentic experience with the class. Another technique I believe brings great benefits is interviews. Having students interview people from Chinese cultural backgrounds creates the authentic interaction that is missing in the classroom. Students will receive information not from the teacher or the internet, but from people who have lived in the culture. In fact, interview projects are strongly recommended since students will observe the other culture more in-depth, focusing on the differences between the two cultures (Cutshall, 2012). Indeed, teachers' instructions cannot be left out in this phase. The teacher must carefully and tactically choose the topics that will provoke meaningful and deep discussions among the learners, going beyond the surface level of the culture.

It is a common misunderstanding that teachers should wait until learners reach a higher level of language proficiency to introduce them to the culture. However, language and culture are embedded into each other, so it is almost impossible to separate the two of them.

Providing meaningful and authentic learning materials and content allows learners to apply what they have learned to reality by understanding how they can use the language in a culturally appropriate way. Therefore, I strongly believe that the process of developing

intercultural competence is crucial in language learning.

### **Building rapport between teacher and students**

Frisby and Martin (2010) argue that “the classroom is made up of multiple interpersonal relationships which contribute to the construction of a unique community” (p. 2). In addition to pedagogy and methodology, building a strong and positive relationship between the teacher and students is something I emphasize as a language instructor. In my opinion, an ideal instructor focuses on not only how they teach and deliver the information but also how they establish a trustful and positive learning environment. Research shows that the atmosphere of a class and the teacher’s attitude can significantly affect students’ level of motivation, enjoyment, and language learning anxiety (Cai, 2021; Dewaele, 2020; Huang et al., 2010).

“Rapport is defined as an overall feeling between two people encompassing a mutual, trusting, and prosocial bond” (Frisby & Martin, 2010, p. 147). Cai (2021) mentions that students who have a trusting relationship with their teacher generally have higher self-confidence, learning motivation, and a positive attitude toward learning and school (p. 3). In the case of learners of a foreign language, students feel that they are accepted and belong to the community, they tend to engage in classroom activities more and are more likely to participate in language practices outside of class. In fact, students put more effort into learning the language and are less anxious about failures when they receive emotional

support from their teacher (Huang et al., 2010). Furthermore, students are more willing to communicate with their teachers who show support and respect to them, leading to effective learning (Cai, 2021). Therefore, showing the students that they have a strong support system in class is indispensable.

Building rapport between the teacher and students does not have to be a difficult task. I find that creating a welcoming environment at the beginning of the class, for instance, playing music when they enter the classroom, can reduce students' anxiety, and make them feel welcome. Students are more likely to engage in small talk with the teacher and their peers when the classroom is not silent. Non-verbal language such as smiling at students, using gestures when talking, or making eye contact also lightens the mood, making students willing to talk about themselves (Cai, 2021; Estep & Roberts, 2015). Moreover, I interact with my students by leaving messages on their assignments. Whether it is a compliment or explanation of a mistake they make, I find students more willing to discuss concerns about their learning progress or the lesson when their teacher gives them different ways to communicate.

To foreign language learners, teachers are their guide to lead them through new knowledge and perspectives. They discover the world around them, knowing that there is someone there to assist them. Cai (2021) describes the teacher as “a safe haven” to the learners (p. 3), the person who learners turn to when they encounter problems. Therefore, it is

our responsibility to provide and support the learners so they can explore the language and its culture.

### **Conclusion**

There is a saying that goes, “A good teacher explains. A superior teacher demonstrates. A great teacher inspires”. My beliefs in helping learners gain intercultural competence and building teacher-student rapport have not only driven me to create a meaningful and positive learning environment for Chinese language learners but also to inspire my students to find joy in learning a second language. I hope what I have addressed in this paper will provide positive perspectives to other Chinese language instructors and help them build enjoyable learning environments for their students.

CLASSROOM OBSERVATION

## CLASSROOM OBSERVATION

I observed a 50-minute, second-grade Chinese Dual Language Immersion (DLI) class in Northern Utah. Utah's DLI program offers a rich bilingual experience for learners to immerse in a second language. Students are required to speak only the target language (TL) when they are in the DLI classroom while learning school subjects such as math and science (Utah Dual Language Immersion, 2023a). According to the Utah State Board of Education, the benefits of the DLI program are high second language proficiency, cognitive skills, and cultural sensitivity.

The class consisted of 28 students, a main teacher, and a teaching assistant (TA). The main content of the lesson was to read the book 不可以玩雪 (“Do not play with the snow”). There are ten pages in this storybook, with a picture and a sentence on each page and a vocabulary list at the end. The story was about the mother asking the children not to go outside to play with the snow, but the children ended up discovering a way to bring the snow indoors. Keywords and phrases in the book include 外面/里面/下雪 (outside/inside/snow). The teacher read the book together with the students while explaining the words and sentences in Chinese. Then, the teacher chose a few phrases such as 为什么(why) or 因为 (because) and asked students to create a dialogue with their classmates. By the end of this lesson, students should be able to recognize and understand the keywords 外面/里面 (outside/inside) by indicating the directions and asking a question using 为什么(why).



## Instructional Procedures

The teacher began the class by saying 请坐好 (Please sit properly) to the students while they were getting seated. Students sat in eight rows, with eight groups of four (a few students were absent that day). The teacher would give points to the groups that behaved well or completed their tasks fast. Then, the teacher said 眼睛看 (Look with your eyes) to catch students' attention and had them focus on the teacher.

Next, the teacher asked the students to take out the book 不可以玩雪 (“Do not play with the snow”). The students who understood the instruction fast would demonstrate to others what they should do. Then, the teacher asked them to read the book aloud together while pointing to the sentences with their fingers, so they could focus on what they were reading. The teacher walked around the classroom when the students were reading to ensure that they were paying attention to the book and participating in the practice. Whenever there was an important word or phrase in the sentence, the teacher would ask students to stop reading. Then, the teacher would ask a question or give an example sentence to ensure students understood the meaning of it. For instance, one of the essential phrases was 外面 (outside). The teacher asked the students what the phrase means. The students answered by pointing outside the window. Another key phrase was 为什么 (why). The teacher demonstrated by asking the TA and two students questions using the 为什么 (why). After

the demonstration, the students were divided into two big groups. They each had to ask the teacher a question using 为什么 (why).

Moving on to the handwriting practice, the teacher asked the students to take out a marker and a small whiteboard. They started writing the key vocabulary with the teacher in the correct stroke order before practicing handwriting on their whiteboard. The teacher and the TA walked around the classroom to check if the students were writing correctly. After the handwriting practice, students put away everything. The teacher decided to do a small activity before going on to the last part of the class. He started pointing at different objects in the classroom (e.g., the clock, whiteboard, telephone) and asked the students to say the names in Chinese.

The last part of the class was a filler activity since there were less than ten minutes left. The teacher read the book 现在几点. (What time is it?) with the class. After reading the book, the teacher asked the students to line up at the door. He asked them to return to their seats and line up again since the students were chatting in line. Finally, the students left for recess.

## **Evaluation**

From the beginning of the class observation, I could immediately tell that the teacher has a great rapport with the students. Students were responsive to the teacher's instructions, sometimes they knew what to do even without the teacher asking. The instructions from the

teacher were clear and direct, causing no confusion among the students. During the class, students were fully engaged in all classroom activities, and the teacher would pay attention to the ones who were behind and provide more instruction to ensure they were following. Moreover, the teacher used repetition to emphasize essential elements in the lesson to enhance students' understanding.

The obvious strength of this teacher is that he creates an authentic and supportive learning environment for young learners. The exclusive use of the target language allows students to immerse themselves in the language learning environment. His expressions when explaining complex words or concepts are creative and clear, which meets the needs of this age group of learners. Furthermore, the teacher provides sufficient directions and examples before asking the students to produce output in Chinese. This gives students more confidence to speak in the target language when they are clear about what to do. The teacher also emphasizes Chinese handwriting skills, ensuring the students write the characters in the correct order.

## **Reflection**

This class observation has given me new perspectives on language classrooms and learning from other teachers. Since it was a DLI classroom, the first thing that caught my attention was the amount of TL used in class. In the state of Utah, DLI programs adopt the

50:50 method, where the teacher gives instructions exclusively in the target language for half of the day (Sung & Tsai, 2019). Therefore, the students are immersed in the TL (in this case, in Mandarin Chinese) and communicate in the TL with their teacher and peers. Language immersion has multiple benefits, including higher second language skills, greater cognitive skills (i.e., attention control, problem-solving, etc.), and better intercultural competence (Utah Dual Language Immersion, 2023b).

Next, the rapport between the teacher and the students stood out during the observation. For instance, students were actively participating in all activities and followed the teacher's instructions. Also, students' attitudes were positive, and they were motivated to learn and try new things. Frisby and Martin (2010) suggested that teacher-student rapport is essential when it comes to responsiveness in the classroom (p. 160). It shows that the students trust the teacher and feel comfortable engaging in conversations. Similarly, Dewaele et al. (2022) mentioned that "Teachers who have their finger on the emotional pulse of the class can resort to a range of strategies to lift the learners' mood and stave off boredom" (p. 2). The teacher in this class created an enjoyable and comfortable learning environment so that the students feel safe to explore another language and culture.

Going along with the teacher-student rapport, the teacher's classroom management skills were eye-catching. Wright (2005) listed four core stands in classroom management: space, time, participation, and engagement (p. 16). In this observation, I noticed that the teacher

designed the classroom with different Chinese language elements. For instance, in the back of the room, there are cards of Chinese characters and pinyin (i.e., the Chinese spelling system) pasted on the wall. Students can refer to the wall when they do not recognize a word before asking for help for the teacher or the TA. This allows students to enhance their problem-solving skills. The teacher also made good use of the time by separating the main content into sections. When they were ahead of the plan, he had an extra activity on hand to effectively use the time left. As for participation and engagement, the teacher divided the class into groups and had the students work together with their peers. He constantly paid close attention to all students to ensure they were engaged in group discussions and practices. With the strategies, the class went smoothly, and everything was well-organized.

Finally, the teacher emphasized Chinese character handwriting practice. Shen (2013) stated that studies “have shown that beginner learners who practiced handwriting characters had a considerable increase in the performance of character recognition compared to those who did not handwrite” (p. 382). Handwriting practices allow learners to pay attention to visual information, increase orthographic form, and strengthen the connection between the characters and meaning (Guan et al., 2015, p. 27). On top of that, the teacher asked students to read aloud the strokes when handwriting the characters to focus on the accurate stroke orders. This exercise has a positive influence on the form-meaning link in Mandarin Chinese, and researchers believe that it helps with character recognition, character memory retention,

and the quality of handwriting (Hsiung et al., 2017). Something I might do differently is to have the students practice handwriting the characters on their notebooks after doing so on the whiteboard. That way, the teacher can check again whether the students have learned the words and can write them correctly.

### **Conclusion**

This class observation has provided significant information and ideas for me as a language instructor. Observing in a different learning setting has made me realize that there are various strategies and skills to adopt, and it is the teacher's responsibility to choose what works best for their students. I hope what I have learned from this experience will prepare me to become a more creative and effective teacher in the future.

MAIN PAPER

## A CULTURAL LESSON PLAN ANALYSIS

### **Introduction**

As an instructor, I have spent a decent amount of time planning my lessons. Despite having four years of experience in teaching second languages (i.e., English and Chinese), it is to my surprise that I realized that I do not have much experience in developing a comprehensive lesson plan. Even though I acknowledge the benefits of having a good lesson plan, I found it time-consuming and not worth the effort in the past. However, when I started teaching at Utah State University, I noticed that writing down my plans for the lessons, whether on paper or mentally, is necessary, which led me to choose this topic for my main paper.

Before beginning this paper, I was curious if there was a standard format for lesson plans. I looked up numerous lesson plan examples created by different language instructors in K-12 or college settings. While I found most of them clear and informative, the format varied based on the content of the lesson. Some lesson plans had all the details written down, including word-to-word sentences of what the instructor would say; some were brief with a list of the general ideas of the lesson. That is when I realized that the format of a lesson plan depends on the instructor. Therefore, when designing my lesson plan, I always asked myself “How can this lesson plan help my students and myself?”. The information I put in my lesson



plan should be beneficial not only for me as an instructor but also for my students. For the instructors, the lesson plan helps them keep track of their progress in class, focusing on the main points they hope to address. A clear lesson plan also helps the instructors to assess their lesson to see whether their plan helps students meet the goals of the course.

During the development process, I noticed that from choosing a topic to designing activities, there are many details and aspects an instructor must pay attention to. I have revised my lesson plan several times after talking to my mentor professor and colleague to find the most suitable way to introduce the topic. Something I learned from the process is that discussing a lesson with another instructor is helpful. For instance, my colleagues were able to find some parts of the lesson that might not be feasible or did not make sense when I thought it was flawless. They could see the blind spots I did not notice, and they gave me suggestions so that I could improve my lesson plan. Moreover, designing this lesson plan made me realize that I have a lot more to learn about teaching a second language. Learning how to create effective and enjoyable lessons will be my all-time goal, and I find that making lesson plans allows me to evaluate how I am doing as a language instructor.

Working on this paper has enhanced my capability of creating a comprehensive lesson plan and investigating various perspectives and details of a lesson. I am motivated to design more lesson plans including different strategies and classroom activities for cultural topics. Since I envision myself teaching K-12 students in the future, which requires the instructor to

have well-developed lesson plans to meet the goals of the education system, the skills I learned will prepare me to qualify for the position. I will keep in mind what I have gained from this project and continue to use and perfect the skills in the future.

### **Brief Introduction of the Course**

This is a first-semester, college-level Chinese course for beginners of Chinese as a Second Language learners. The class meets three times a week, 50 minutes each. Before enrolling in this course, students were asked to complete a Chinese learning experience survey to ensure that most students are at the same proficiency level (i.e., novice-low or beginners). The goal of this course is to learn basic survival skills to communicate in Chinese and basic vocabulary and grammar, gain factual knowledge of Chinese culture, gain a broader understanding and appreciation of intellectual/cultural activity, and develop knowledge and understanding of diverse perspectives, global awareness, or other cultures.

### **Brief Introduction of the Class I taught**

At the time of the recording, the students had been in the course for approximately two months. The last unit students finished was about visiting friends and asking about preferences for drinks and food. The recorded lesson was an extension of the previous unit, discussing dining culture and etiquette in Chinese culture. In this class, most of the content was taught in English besides the words listed on the handouts.

**Table 1:** Lesson Plan

中式飲(饮)食文化 Chinese Dining Culture			
Language and Level/Grade	Chinese 1010 (Beginner)	Theme/Topic	Chinese Dining Culture
Performance Range	Novice-Low	Length of Unit	1 class
Numbers of Students	8	Length of Class	50 minutes
Course Goals			
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Students will learn basic survival skills to communicate in Chinese</li> <li>2. Students will learn basic vocabulary, character writing, and grammar</li> <li>3. Students will gain factual knowledge of Chinese culture.</li> <li>4. Students will gain a broader understanding and appreciation of intellectual/cultural activity.</li> <li>5. Students will develop knowledge and understanding of diverse perspectives, global awareness, or other cultures (e.g., Chinese).</li> </ol>			

Lesson Objectives			
Learners will be able to:			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Compare and describe differences between American and Chinese dining culture in English</li> <li>• Become familiar with new vocabulary for different eating utensils in the target language</li> <li>• Identify Chinese dining etiquette and complete tasks</li> <li>• Use chopsticks correctly and complete tasks with them</li> </ul>			
Materials Needed		PowerPoint slides, erase marker, chopsticks (9 pairs), beans, cups	
Main Structures		Materials Needed	Mode of Communication
Introduction (8 mins)	The instructor first greets the students by saying “大家好。你們今天好嗎?” (Hello everyone. How are you guys today?). The instructor asks one or two students based on	PowerPoint Slides (Pictures), Vocabulary	Interpersonal <sup>1</sup> , interpretive <sup>2</sup>

	<p>their answers. The instructor also gives a few reminders on the class schedule.</p> <p>Moving on, the instructor shows a picture of a traditional Chinese dinner table on the screen, asking students to guess the topic of the class. The instructor then reveals the topic: Chinese/Taiwanese dining culture. The instructor asks the class what they already know about dining cultures in China or Taiwan. In pairs, students discuss their impressions or what they have personally experienced in Chinese dining culture. Next, as a class, students share their thoughts and ideas.</p> <p>The instructor gives students a</p>	list,	
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	<p>list of new words they need for this lesson (see Appendix A). The instructor reads through the words together with the students, while explaining the words in English.</p>		
<p>Comparison (10 mins)</p>	<p>The instructor shows two pictures (one Chinese dinner table and one American dinner table) to the students. Then, the instructor shows another set of pictures (one Chinese New Year dinner and one U.S. Christmas dinner). In groups (3 students per group), students discuss the differences between two pictures for five minutes and write their ideas down on a piece of paper. They also talk about what causes the differences. The instructor goes around the class to</p>	<p>PowerPoint Slides (Pictures)</p>	<p>Interpretive, interpersonal</p>

	<p>talk to each group about their thoughts. Then, as a class, each group shares their ideas. If students have trouble identifying differences, the instructor can give directors such as “What utensils do they use?” or “What kind of food do they eat?”.</p>		
<p>Instruction (15 mins)</p>	<p>The instructor first plays a short video clip (2 mins) about Chinese dining etiquette. Then, the instructor elaborates on the ideas mentioned in the video, such as table manners and taboos when using chopsticks. Students then complete a series of True/False questions in groups before discussing them as a class (See</p>	<p>PowerPoint Slides, YouTube Video, Handouts</p>	<p>Interpretive, presentational<sup>3</sup></p>

	Appendix B).		
Activity (15 mins)	<p>Each student receives a pair of chopsticks. The instructor shows a picture of how to correctly hold chopsticks. Students practice individually and the instructor goes around the class to help if needed.</p> <p>Next, the instructor splits the class into half, then explains the activity: pick up red beans. Each group selects a representative to compete with the other group.</p> <p>Students must pick up as many red beans as possible and put them into a cup in one minute.</p>	<p>PowerPoint slides, chopsticks, red beans, cups</p>	<p>Interpretive, presentational</p>
Ending (2 mins)	<p>The instructor reminds the students about the plans for the next class.</p>	<p>PowerPoint slides</p>	



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<sup>1</sup>Interpersonal Communication: Learners interact and negotiate meaning in to share information and opinions. (The National Standards Collaborative Board, 2015)

<sup>2</sup>Interpretive Communication: Learners understand, interpret, and analyze what they heard or read on the topic.

<sup>3</sup>Presentational Communication: Learners present information to explain on the topic using appropriate media and include audience. (The National Standards Collaborative Board, 2015)

## Video Content

In Fall of 2022, I co-taught Chinese 1010 with another graduate instructor from the MSLT program. We switched off as the lead teacher in class every two weeks. On the day of the recording, I was the lead teacher, and the co-instructor worked as a TA. All eight students were present on that day.

### *Language Use*

The language I used to instruct this lesson was mainly English. While trying to increase the use of the TL in novice-level classrooms, I noticed that it was challenging for both the students and the teacher since it creates a barrier between them. Students may feel less interested in the C2 due to the language barrier, and the teacher might not deliver the concept clearly and comprehensively. Therefore, I used students' L1 80% of the time, and when we encounter words that students knew, I switched to Chinese. On the other hand, I offered students a list of words with pinyin and English translations to provide sufficient information to lessen the language gap.

**Table 2:** Video content description and reflection.

Time stand	Description	Reflection

<p>0:00 – 2:25</p>	<p>As we always do at the beginning of the class, I asked the students questions such as “How are you today?” and “What is the weather like today?”. Then, I went through some important reminders for them. I talked about the speaking test we did two days ago, the Chinese proficiency exam which came up in two days, and the final project of this course.</p>	<p>Since we talked about most of the reminders already in previous classes, I did not spend much time on them. Although we had everything set on Canvas, I should have at least put all the reminders on a slide so that students would be clear about what we would do in the next few weeks. This will also help students who came in late understand what we were doing at that time.</p>
<p>2:26 – 11:04</p>	<p>I asked the students to give contexts to a picture (e.g., location, occasion, cultural background). After they shared their ideas, I disclosed the topic of the class. The next question I asked was if they already knew anything about Chinese dining culture, based on</p>	<p>In the first part where students had to guess what the picture is about, I noticed that most students were quiet rather than giving thoughts. I believe one of the reasons is that the picture itself did not offer enough information for them to elaborate on.</p>

	<p>what they have seen, heard, or experienced. I had students talk in pairs and discuss their thoughts. Then, a few students shared their experiences with the class, while I explained some ideas they mentioned.</p>	<p>I could either use more pictures, a video, or give instructions so that students would have clearer ideas and directions.</p>
<p>11:05 – 17: 50</p>	<p>Students received handouts with a list of vocabulary relevant to Chinese dining culture, including names of eating utensils and common ingredients. We read through the list together, with elaboration on words or dining etiquette. Students asked questions or shared their experiences from time to time.</p>	<p>Since the lesson was focused on culture, I did not have the students learn to write the new words.</p> <p>Although they were able to refer to the list later on in class, it would be better if I did an activity (e.g., a matching game) to help deepen their impression of the words. Moreover, this part took longer than I expected since we had several discussions on the topic.</p>
<p>17:51 –</p>	<p>I showed the students two pictures</p>	<p>There was one group that did not</p>

23:24	<p>from both Chinese and American cultures. They were asked to talk to their partner and compare the differences between the two cultures, such as the eating utensils, ingredients, plating, etc. During the group discussion, I talked to each group and listened to their thoughts before discussing them with the class.</p>	<p>have many ideas about this topic. Luckily, I had my co-instructor helping them out. I could have listed a few examples on the slides for the students to elaborate on the ideas.</p>
23:28 – 29:55	<p>I played a video on YouTube to illustrate some aspects of Chinese dining culture, including table manners and eating etiquette. Students received a worksheet with eight true/false questions. The answers could be found in the video.</p>	<p>Explaining the ideas in the video took longer than I thought, resulting in me skipping the worksheet. Fortunately, I was able to complete the worksheet at the end of the class. I should have asked students to write down the answers while or right after watching the video to assess their comprehension.</p>

<p>29:56 – 37:40</p>	<p>I showed two pictures about how to use chopsticks correctly. The first picture showed the chopsticks manners and taboos. I went through the points listed while demonstrating with real chopsticks. Then, the next picture showed how to hold the chopsticks correctly. Each student was given a pair of chopsticks to practice. Students also talked about their experience using chopsticks.</p>	<p>When introducing the chopsticks manners and taboos, I could make it into an activity where students guess the correct ways to use chopsticks or have them show me how they normally use chopsticks.</p>
<p>37:41 – 47:54</p>	<p>This activity was to pick up as many beans as they can in 30 seconds. Students were split into two groups of four and asked to practice for around 6 minutes. Then, each group chose one representative to compete. We did two rounds with only students, and two</p>	<p>I think a better way to proceed with this activity is to put all students into pairs, and they can compete in pairs in the first round. Then, the winners of the round will compete against each other. Finally, the last two students will finish the last round. The way I designed the activity</p>

	rounds with the instructors.	might have led to some students doing nothing but watching the two students competing. The change in the design can allow all students to engage in the activity.
47:54 – 50:34	In the last part of the class, I went through the reminders I mentioned at the beginning of the class. I then realized that we did not go through the questions on the worksheet, so we quickly completed the true/false questions. Finally, I asked if students had any questions before they left.	Again, it would have been clearer if I had put all the reminders on the slides.

### Analysis

When designing this lesson plan, the main objective I had in mind was to help students develop intercultural competence. In Byram's (1997) intercultural communicative competence (ICC) model, he mentioned that besides linguistic competence, learners must have positive attitudes, skills, and knowledge to acquire intercultural competence. Similarly,

Moeller and Nugent (2014) state that intercultural competence is “the preparation of individuals to interact appropriately and effectively with those from other cultural backgrounds” (p. 2). By emphasizing intercultural competence in language classrooms, we are preparing learners to have the attitude, skills, and knowledge to interact and communicate with people from different cultural backgrounds. Although it sounds straightforward, the process of building intercultural competence is rather intriguing. According to Li (2013), “a person’s intercultural competence increases as one progresses through the increasingly complex reactions to different cultures, from ethnocentric stage (including the substages of Denial, Defense, and Minimization) to ethnorelative stage (including the substages of Acceptance, Adaptation, and Integration)” (p. 127). How learners develop intercultural competence can depend on how they are exposed to the target culture, what previous experience they have with the culture, and the differences between their home culture (C1) and target culture (C2).

Based on Byram’s (1997) model, Li (2013) proposed that in order to develop intercultural competence, learners must first have a positive attitude toward other cultures, a fundamental knowledge of the world, and a set of skills (e.g., leadership, communication skills, and etc.) to involve in an intercultural environment. It goes without saying that providing learners with integrated, meaningful, and authentic opportunities to engage in the C2 becomes essential in language classrooms. Therefore, to evaluate whether this lesson plan



has met the objectives of intercultural competence, I am going to analyze my teaching video based on Byram's (2020) and Li's (2013) three intercultural competence dimensions: attitudes, skills, and knowledge, along with other similar concepts from different research. I will illustrate how and why my lesson plan worked in class and the flaws I noticed along with the solutions.

### *Attitudes*

To develop intercultural competence, it is important that students first have positive attitudes toward other cultures and openness to accept and respect cultural differences. However, it is possible that students may feel defensive or denying when encountering cultural differences (Bennett, 1986), which is common and understandable. Therefore, as a language instructor, exposing students to the target culture has always been my goal. Moeller and Nugent (2014) mentioned that language teachers should be prepared to guide learners toward other cultures, and that it is essential for teachers to create a safe, inquisitive, and open environment to allow learners to explore the culture. In the lesson video, the reactions of all students were positive and joyful, which I believe is an indication of feeling comfortable exploring and discussing cultural differences in class. Furthermore, this lesson mainly focused on facts about the foreign culture, which posed very few threats to students' C1 and identities. Therefore, I believe the phenomenon of defense and denial is not seen in this class. Nevertheless, during the lesson, I emphasized not only talking about Chinese

culture but also connecting students' home culture and traditions to the lesson. Since most students come from a similar cultural background (i.e., American and Taiwanese culture), they were able to relate to one another. This strategy allowed students to recognize the importance of both cultures, the benefits they can gain from learning about another culture and minimize the differences between the two cultures by creating a bridge between them, connecting learners' background with the target culture (Bennett, 1986; Cutshall, 2012; Li, 2013).

Although it is challenging to have students immersed in the culture when they are not in the country, integrating the ACTFL 3Ps: Products (foods, music, games), Practice (social interactions), and Perspectives (values, attitudes, meanings), into the lesson can create a small target culture environment in class for the students (Cutshall, 2012; The National Standards Collaborative Board, 2015; Van Houten & Shelton, 2018). Students are allowed to observe different aspects of the culture during the process, and therefore develop insights about the target culture. For instance, bringing authentic tools (e.g., chopsticks) to class and having students operate them provided opportunities for them to closely investigate the product from Chinese culture and provoke a discussion about the culture (Cutshall, 2012). One thing to be aware of is that most students are familiar with using chopsticks, which is something I did not expect. Therefore, this activity did not bring many new perspectives to them. My solution is to prepare the wh- questions (i.e., where, why, who, when, what, and how) to start a more

in-depth discussion. Questions such as “Why did people use chopsticks instead of forks and knives in ancient China?” or “When did they start using chopsticks, and what did the first pair of chopsticks look like?” will be given to the students. They will conduct a small research on the questions and present them to the class. In that case, students are able to look more closely at the meaning behind a cultural product and show their understanding by sharing the information with their peers.

On the other hand, during the comparison activity, students were asked to come up with the differences between Chinese and American dining cultures, which goes along with one of Li’s (2013) criteria: awareness of the similarities and/or differences between one’s own and foreign cultures. Students had the opportunity to think critically about how the two cultures are similar yet different at the same time. In Reid (2005)’s article, she mentioned that the comparison method is one of the most used and essential techniques. She mentioned, “Not only features of different cultures, but also those within a single culture should be compared, because cultures never remain static, they are constantly changing, and different generations interpret things differently” (p. 941). Similarly, The National Standards Collaborative Board (2015) stated that both similarities and differences between the home culture and the second language culture should be addressed during instructions, otherwise, it can create biases when the resemblances of the two cultures are overlooked.

### *Skills*

Li (2013) stated that students must acquire certain skills to be capable of surviving in an intercultural setting. The skills include using knowledge to solve problems, communicating with people from other cultures, and elaborating one's access to information by using knowledge from other cultures (p. 131). Since the length of this lesson plan was only 50 minutes, students did not demonstrate many skills from this category. Yet, by presenting products and practices from Chinese dining culture, students had the opportunity to think about why people from the target culture have certain practices. Furthermore, students practiced the skill of discovery by exchanging information with others, while drawing upon their existing knowledge (Byram, 2020, p. 61). On the other hand, the students have learned new vocabulary for them to engage in basic discussions on this topic, allowing them to connect the language with the culture.

If this topic were to extend to a unit (i.e., one to two weeks), students would be able to use and elaborate on what they have learned in class in real life. With the knowledge of another culture, the possibility of having more interpersonal communication in their daily life will increase. As stated in *The Language Educator* (2012), "Making culture real to students is enhanced when we can connect with native speakers from the countries of the languages we're teaching so that the students can ask questions and get responses that help them understand why something is the way it is" (p. 33). Whether in class or not, the cultural and

linguistic knowledge students learn in class will help them articulate their thoughts and ideas and connect with people from other cultural backgrounds.

### *Knowledge*

Having contextualized cultural knowledge is essential when learning a language and culture. Learners are given the opportunity to think critically and innovatively when having sufficient background knowledge of the culture. Researchers suggested that if learners hope to gain global competence, comprehension of both learners' home culture and foreign culture plays a great part in it. As Reimers (2009) stated, these factors can help with understanding the complicated concept of culture.

In this lesson plan, much of the time was devoted to introducing and sharing facts about Chinese culture and learning keywords relevant to the topic. Students were able to discuss their thoughts with their classmates and exchange different ideas on the topic. I chose this way of instruction because it is straightforward and easier for the students to understand the big concept of C2. In fact, providing students with knowledge of the target culture with contexts and giving them time to discuss it with their peers can help avoid stereotyping and superficializing (Cutshall, 2012; Li, 2013). However, when I was designing the lesson, I focused too much on delivering different ideas instead of discussing a few aspects in-depth, which can potentially reinforce stereotypes. One possible solution is to extend this topic for

another two or three classes to give sufficient time for both the instructor and the students to process the information they have and collect relevant resources outside of the class.

## **Reflection**

Once again, this project has made me realize the importance of making a clear and detailed lesson plan. Although having previous experience in creating lesson plans, I have never acknowledged how doing so can benefit both the teacher and students. In the past, I would only have a basic outline of what I was going to teach for the week. I would go through everything in my mind once and call it a day. This incomprehensive lesson preparation resulted in poor time management and in losing track of the schedule in class. However, while designing this lesson plan, I was able to manage my time wisely by listing down all the sections and activities and how long they would take in class. This helped me to stick to the schedule without being distracted by other random topics. Furthermore, with the lesson plan, I could better assess whether my lessons met the goals of the course. I paid more attention to different skills such as interpretive, interpersonal, and presentational skills. I had a better understanding of how the lesson benefited the students in the short and long term.

Certainly, I encountered a few challenges while developing and teaching this lesson plan. One of them was that I underestimated students' previous knowledge of Chinese dining culture. Most students already had a decent understanding of this cultural aspect, and this

lesson did not expose them to new ideas about the culture. If encountering a similar situation in the future, I will first estimate students' background knowledge on the topic before designing the lesson. If students are more advanced on the topics, I can discuss the content in-depth and design advanced activities. For instance, advanced-level students will make a poster about a certain aspect of Chinese culture for the Chinese department, discussing the 3Ps of the culture. In that case, students will have to do more research on the topic they already know, which will allow them to learn more about it on their own. Another challenge was the lack of instruction. There were parts of the lesson plan where I did not include sufficient instructions or examples. Students were slightly confused during some activities, which could have been avoided if I had provided clearer directions. My solution is to give handouts with instructions, regardless of students' level. Doing so will prevent confusion and help students stay on track during the lesson. Also, I will demonstrate before having students do the activity to give them a clearer vision of how they should proceed.

To conclude, this project has made me realize the significance of creating a comprehensive lesson plan before teaching a lesson. The benefits of making lesson plans include better time management, structured content, and clear objectives of the lesson. Furthermore, teaching a culture lesson has allowed me to investigate language teaching from a different perspective, that culture and language are inseparable. It is therefore our responsibility to provide learners with adequate and sufficient opportunities to be exposed to

other cultures. Culture is a gateway to the language, and I believe that the integration of language and culture in language classrooms will not only bring benefits to students' learning progress but also to their attitude, skills, and knowledge of other cultures.



## STATEMENT OF FUTURE GOALS AND PLANS

Before joining the MSLT program, I was already passionate about language education. However, it was not until I learned more about language teaching that I realized that it is more than teaching the language itself. I started paying more attention to different aspects of language teaching, discovering what I hope to further develop in the future.

With a focus on developing intercultural competence, I plan to integrate more cultural content in my lessons, creating a safe and positive learning environment for the learners to explore and experience the language and its culture. For instance, I hope to participate in the design of study abroad programs, providing experience from both the classroom and reality. Furthermore, I hope to develop better classroom management skills. As I mentioned in my teaching philosophy statement, teacher-student rapport can influence students' attitudes toward learning. Therefore, I plan to observe more experienced language instructors in the future and learn from them.

My current goal for the future is to design lessons targeting the Chinese language and culture for language teachers and learners in K-12. I hope to turn my experience into something useful for others, providing teaching and learning materials for the ones who want to learn Chinese. For instance, I hope to publish online practice activities or a handbook to help students learn and review at home.

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## APPENDICES

## Appendix A

## Chinese Dining Etiquette Worksheet

True/False 是非題(題)

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. The host usually sits at ends of the rectangular table.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. For the round table, the seat facing the door is considered the host's seat.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. You should start eating before the host or the highest status person to show respect.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. You cannot dig around or pick through specific ingredients in a dish
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. You should use 公筷母匙 (serving utensils) when getting food from the table.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. When using the turntable, you can turn when someone is still taking food from the table.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. When you are leaving the table shortly, you should stand your chopsticks up in rice.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. If you do not know how to use chopsticks properly, you can stab the food to pick it up.

## Appendix B

## Chinese Dining Culture Vocabulary List

生詞	拼音	意思
碗	[wǎn]	bowl
盤(盘)子	[pán zi]	plate
筷子	[kuài zi]	chopsticks
湯(汤)匙	[tāng shí]	spoon
叉子	[chā zi]	fork
刀子	[dāo zi]	knife
桌子	[zhuō zi]	table
椅子	[yǐ zi]	chair
米飯(饭)	[mǐ fàn]	rice
麵條(面条)	[miàn tiáo]	noodles
麵(面)包	[miàn bāo]	bread
湯(汤)	[tāng]	soup
牛肉	[niú ròu]	beef
豬(猪)肉	[zhū ròu ]	pork
雞(鸡)肉	[jī ròu]	chicken
魚(鱼)肉	[yú ròu]	fish