

# Training for Autonomy:

## Arming Students to Engage China in Chinese on Their Own

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### THE Fishing Pole

- ✘ A Chinese folktale
- ✘ Giving students the fishing pole AND opportunities to gain the experience necessary to fish on their own

### Chinese as a Skill set

- ✘ Learning Chinese is like learning how to fish, play the piano, or play football
- ✘ Complex set/range of skills
- ✘ Curriculum/program/classes should target different skills at different times

### How long does it take?

- ✘ Learning Chinese, like any language, requires significant time and commitment
- ✘ By the time a child is six years old, he/she has been exposed to at least 22,000 hours of language (estimate of 10 hours per day)

### Getting students to learn on their own

- ✘ It would take more than 40 years for a student who spends two hours each weekday in foreign language classes to get equal practice time!
- ✘ Students will not learn Chinese in your class; it requires more practice than they can get in *ANY* Chinese class (or program)
- ✘ Students will be successful learning Chinese because of what they do outside of (in addition to) Chinese class

### Fostering autonomous learning

- ✘ The most important thing is what they are doing outside of class
  - ✘ Getting students to use Chinese on their own
  - ✘ Are your students engaging/using Chinese on their own outside of class?
  - ✘ The more you can get them to do on their own, the more effective class time will be and faster they will learn

## Guiding autonomous learning

- ✘ What are they doing outside of class?
  - ✘ Do they know where to find Chinese learning resources? Do they know how to use them?
  - ✘ Is there an aural component to their practice?
    - ✘ Primacy of spoken language/foundation for all other skills
    - ✘ Get them listening to Chinese audio files on the computer/in their iPods, watching TV shows, practicing speaking (with others and into the mirror) outside of class (get parents involved)

## In the classroom

- ✘ Most important thing becomes not what I, the teacher, am doing but what are the students doing?
  - ✘ How are *they* (not just me) using Chinese?
  - ✘ Are they speaking, reading, listening to, writing Chinese in situations that they will encounter in real life?
  - ✘ What do/can I get them doing in Chinese?

## Don't be afraid to speak Chinese

- ✘ Examples:
  - ✘ Teacher speaks in Chinese...students ask questions in English (mixed codes/cultural environment)
  - ✘ Teacher responds to unintelligible Chinese (to what they mean instead of what they say)
  - ✘ Teacher says it in Chinese then follows it up with English or says it *really* slowly

## Precious opportunities to hear Chinese

- ✘ When handing out syllabus, assignments, returning homework, taking roll, make it a Chinese exchange
  - + Names, *qing, xiexie, bu keqi*, etc.
  - + Give instructions in Chinese when motions, gestures or contexts make meaning clear (stand up, close the door, come here, etc.)
  - + Understand the difference between exposure to Chinese and expectation to use Chinese

## **Make them work to stay afloat**

- ✘ Students should always feel as though they are swimming
  - + They are in the water and can keep their head above water but must work to do it
  - + If they come out of the water, can float along without working or they sink, they are in the wrong class

## **What students need in the classroom**

- ✘ Students need:
  - ✘ Practice listening to Chinese (You to speak natural Chinese)
  - ✘ Practice speaking Chinese (producing Chinese on their own without your assistance)
  - ✘ Discovery learning-exposure to situations in which they don't have all of the information (guessing based on context-it is motivating and it is what we do in every day communication)
  - ✘ Guided feedback (you need to know where their problems are, you must point them out with concrete advice on how to adjust, and you must give them the opportunity to do it again correctly)

## **What they don't need**

- ✘ Extensive explanations (of grammar, etc.)
  - ✘ Explanation mode vs. T-S mode vs. S-S mode
  - ✘ Have them do it
    - ✘ Students will remember ten times longer and understand much better if they learn on their own in context
- ✘ Choral repetition
  - ✘ Not an effective use of precious class time
  - ✘ Isolate individual students to check comprehension, pronunciation and usage

## **Shift towards performance**

- ✘ Shift away from textbook-centered learning
  - ✘ Design drills that require them to listen to things in Chinese and produce based on what they hear
  - ✘ Shift away from teacher-centered drills

- ✘ Design drills that force them to use Chinese without your help so that they can speak when you are not there

### **Teaching how to learn Chinese**

- ✘ Most students at the K-12 level (for most levels actually) do not know *how* to study/learn efficiently
- ✘ Most important thing you can teach them is how to go about learning Chinese (they can then do it on their own)
- ✘ Teaching how to learn Chinese vs. teaching Chinese
- ✘ Does not matter when you begin!

### **Creating opportunities to gain experience using Chinese**

- ✘ Think of the classroom as focused rehearsal and feedback laboratory; a place where students have the chance to perform things correctly in Chinese
- ✘ Learning to do specific things in contexts you create (based on Chinese culture, not own base culture)
- ✘ Give them the fishing pole AND give them experience with situations in which it can be used
- ✘ Creating contexts for use of Chinese rather than teaching content
- ✘ Learning to handle contexts; learning to perform in contexts frequently encountered in Chinese culture
- ✘ Not teaching Chinese but teaching how to do things in Chinese

### **Building Chinese contexts**

- ✘ Must build contexts for students to perform in
- ✘ Most students have never been to China; only know American culture so you must create Chinese microworlds in your classroom
- ✘ When students walk through the door, they should automatically know they are in a different cultural environment and automatically shift to Chinese mode

### **Behavioral Culture Matters**

- ✘ This means that we have to think of culture as something much more complex than a few representative physical objects (realia), activities, literature, or the grand tradition
- ✘ We must think of culture as including behavioral and thought patterns
- ✘ In teaching Chinese, we are helping students develop new behaviors/habits

## Performance Rehearsal

- ✘ Creating new habits requires repetition
  - + Cyclical presentation of knowledge: return to contexts handled previously each time at a higher level
- ✘ How many actors go on stage without having practiced their lines? Pianists put on a concert without having rehearsed what they will play? (And, how many times do they do it before they go on?)
  - + Get students up doing things they would be doing as they say the things they are learning to say

## Building performances

- ✘ Layered memories built through cyclical regimen of rehearsal performances, directed feedback, adjustment, re-rehearsal, follow up feedback
- ✘ **Pre-performance preparation**-Memorization of verbal script-allows you and students to focus on higher level aspects/elements of the language and communication/interaction during rehearsal
- ✘ **First time**- "getting it out"
- ✘ **Second time**- "getting it out accurately" (focus on pronunciation, tones)
- ✘ **Third time**- "getting it out with the right mood/intention" (focus on intonation, facial expressions, etc.)
- ✘ **Fourth time**- "movements"-what are my hands, feet, body doing while I am saying this and what should they be doing?
- ✘ **Fifth time**- "variation"-alter an element of the script/slightly change the context to show contrast
  - ✘ This is where much of the learning will take place

## Adopting performance approach

- ✘ Reduce amount of target material while raising expectations for what students can do with covered material
- ✘ Raise expectations (no one rises to low expectations!)
  - + As a teacher/administrator you need to believe that your students can actually learn Chinese AND learn it to sophisticated levels
  - + If you don't believe they can, your students will never believe they can
  - + Expect students to develop ability to use Chinese accurately and appropriately

- + Then, you have to convince your students (demonstrate) that Chinese is learnable for non-natives

### **Making it fun**

- ✗ "I have to make it fun and interesting or they won't learn"
- ✗ "Making things fun and interesting involves playing games (or singing songs, etc.)"
  - ✗ We don't have to simplify things for them to be fun
  - ✗ Think of learning to play a sport; an art like piano
  - ✗ Long hours of practice are necessary to develop those complex skill sets that are not always fun but kids knock themselves out doing it....Why?

### **Making sophisticated learning "Fun"**

- ✗ Why can't we make sophisticated learning exercises fun and interesting?
  - + Not suggesting that we cannot play games or sing songs in class
  - + In fact singing songs develops fluency and exposes students to language in larger chunks of discourse and playing games is a realistic way of learning language in context
  - + But, what are our goals when doing such activities?
- ✗ Difficult things can be fun
  - ✗ Intrinsic motivation works the best (figuring things out from context on own, doing things successfully in Chinese, etc.)
  - + Show connections to real life communication with real people
  - + Show goals/outcomes; regularly show them progress made (video taping and reviewing)
  - + Continually alter type of class (focus on different skills conduct class in different ways)
  - + Make them feel different when they walk into Chinese class (even the seating arrangement affects students' level of engagement/motivation)

### **Peddling Motivation**

- + Use intrinsic motivation-allow them to have successes doing something with Chinese
- + Show them that you are concerned with their long-term progress/results
- + Use competition-who can do best performance-first in lunch line; dialog shootouts-bonus points; most creative performance-stage time (any time

you can make them feel like they are the star of the show, most of them will do it)

- + Use reward (bonus points, small and large rewards) and punishment (link performance to grades)

## Recap

- ✗ What they do outside of class
- ✗ Teaching how to learn Chinese
- ✗ Aural learning
- ✗ Learning by doing (performing)
- ✗ Learning in context (Chinese culture)
- ✗ Discovery learning
- ✗ Intrinsic motivation