



Joanne Shang

Personal Philosophy of Education



Just as Anna Leonowens in *The King and I* said to the Siam princes and princesses, ‘... *if you’d become a teacher, by your pupils you’d be taught*’, I too am finding myself learning from my students, *day-by-day*.

I am one who is curious about almost everything and has a desire to learn anything, well, if only time permits. Being a teacher, I am constantly reminded to reflect on my methodology, my bag-of-tools, my strategy and my interaction with the students. I learn about what interests them, what excites them, what they body language means, and what motivates them.

My immediate goal is to give the students an opportunity to excel, to perform different real-life tasks at their individual competency levels. My long term goal is to develop more life-long learners by preparing them with the fundamental skills so they can stand on their own when they want to further their pursuit in the target language in the future. I applaud U.S. College Board for naming the Chinese course ‘Chinese Language and Cultures’. They obviously understand that the ‘culture’ is such an integral part of understanding the language. Without which, the language of Chinese will just be – ‘words’.

In the classroom, I foster a safe, interactive and collaborative learning environment. I encourage student-faculty interaction, and cooperation among students. My teaching strategies are designed to support the ACTFL 5 C’s requirements: communicative, culture, connection, comparisons and community. To engage a variety of learning styles, multi-media material is incorporated as supplementary to the standard textbooks; for examples: audio/video authentic materials, music video, films, pod-casting, internet blogging, and Powerpoint with animations. ‘East meets West’ thematic units are conceived with all these notions interwoven into one colorful kaleidoscope filled with cultural enrichment ranges from traditional values to most recent pop cultures.

Students’ progress is evaluated by performance-based tasks that they demonstrate in role-plays, oral presentations, free responses, and written tests. Proficiency level is determined by an integrated set of listening, speaking, reading and writing standards. Vocabulary and grammar are introduced in a contextualized environment relevant to our daily routines.

For the beginning levels, my role is more of a knowledge provider and demonstrator who describes the rules, sets examples and encourages the learners to first imitate and then to create their own discourse. My role gradually evolves to a facilitator or mentor for the intermediate and advanced classes. This is when the learners are both mentally and linguistically more mature to develop independent and critical learning objectives. The class structure naturally evolves to be more student-centered with considerably more in-depth collaborative group work and individual assignments.

Being a teacher, to me, is a life-long process. I do not intent to be a teacher of one semester, one school year, or even of just one subject. I encourage office hour interactions when I can learn about the students’ interests, roadblocks, as well as their concerns, their celebrations and their woes. I want to be their teacher-for-life that makes a difference for them, touches their souls, by --- getting to know them.