Strategies to increase students’ Chinese language use in the classroom

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Benefits

Using target language in the classroom and learning to ride a bike

http://www.cse.buffalo.edu/~rapaport/510/alg-nancy2.gif
Benefits

- Students acquire language through meaning-making with others (like solving a puzzle). (Vygotsky, 1986) When learners hear large amounts of comprehensible input and they are engaged in meaning-making, they understand and retain what they hear and they use it to form their own messages. (Long, 1981)
Benefits

- Second language production, or output solicited from the language learner, is what most effectively drives the development of a second language. (Swain, 1995)
Benefits

- Exposing students to significant amounts of target language output has proven to be crucial to the development of student oral proficiency and essential for the establishment of mental linguistic representations of the language. (Dickson, 1996)
ACTFL Position Statement on Use of the Target Language in the Classroom

- Research indicates that effective language instruction must provide significant levels of meaningful communication and interactive feedback in the Target Language in order for students to develop language and cultural proficiency.

- The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) therefore recommends that language educators and their students use the target language as exclusively as possible (90% plus) at all levels of instructional time and, when feasible, beyond the classroom.
In the case of students’ Chinese language use in the Chinese immersion classroom, there is a lack of spoken Chinese practice due to class time and class size for Chinese immersion students (Jacobson, 2013), and teachers have difficulty achieving the 90% goal.
What do you see as the biggest factors discouraging students from speaking Chinese Language?
Reported Obstacles to students’ Chinese Language Usage in the Classroom

- Obstacles Beyond Teacher Control
- Obstacles Involving Student Factors
- Obstacles Involving Teacher Factors

(Based on a survey of 350 Chinese immersion students: 75% elementary school, 25% middle school. Abebe & Deneke (2015)).
### Obstacles Beyond Teacher Control

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Obstacles</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Large class size</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of parental support</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of Opportunity for Practicing Chinese outside the Classroom</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Obstacles Involving Student Factors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Obstacles</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of motivation</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of confidence</td>
<td>8.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear of Making Mistakes and Being Laughed at</td>
<td>21.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of Topical Knowledge</td>
<td>9.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of Linguistic Aspects (vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation)</td>
<td>35.7%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Obstacles Involving Teacher factors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Obstacles</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>negative teacher traits (e.g. having poor teaching skills and being)</td>
<td>15.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>teacher’s frequent harsh error corrections</td>
<td>12.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>classroom environment and arrangement</td>
<td>16.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>calling on students</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>assessment type and teachers’ attitude towards assessment</td>
<td>7.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>teacher’s tendency to give instructions in English</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Discussion Question #2

What **strategies** do you use to get students to speak the target language? Discuss in groups of three.
Strategies suggested by ACTFL to get students to stay in the target language

- Start the year with an explanation of why staying in the target language is so important and follow up with motivational chats throughout the year. Praise students—individually and collectively—when they make the effort.

- When your students speak to you or ask you something in English, give a quizzical look and say you don’t understand.

- Plan lessons so as to eliminate idle time, which can lead students to chat in English.

- Use activities such as inside–outside circles that allow students to practice common expressions and structures in rapid sequence. This also gives the teacher a chance to listen for places where communication is breaking down. http://www.theteachertoolkit.com/index.php/tool/inside-outside-circles

- Post high-frequency phrases around the classroom so students can refer to them if they get stuck.

(http://www.actfl.org/news/position-statements/use-the-target-language-the-classroom-0#sthash.40Zi9qNZ.dpuf)
Strategies suggested by ACTFL to get students to stay in the target language

- Change seating often so students have a chance to pair up with different classmates. And desks can be arranged to allow students to quickly partner up or converse within small groups.

- Encourage students to come up with silly stories as part of a survey or Teaching Proficiency through Reading and Storytelling (TPRS) activities.

- Design info gap activities in a way that students must use the language to obtain the information they’re missing. Let students know they could be asked at any moment to report their information to the class. [https://sites.educ.ualberta.ca/staff/olenka.bilash/Best%20of%20Bilash/info%20gap%20activities.html](https://sites.educ.ualberta.ca/staff/olenka.bilash/Best%20of%20Bilash/info%20gap%20activities.html)

- Try a reward system in which students can earn points for maintaining the target language such as marble jar reward system. And Play games where use of the first language loses points for the team.

Other strategies

- Lay a target language line at the threshold of your classroom, or hang a sign with “English” on one side and the target language on the other. This sets expectations for language use at any given moment in the classroom.

- Develop language ladders which consist of a set of commonly used classroom expressions focused on a common classroom function and then post these language ladders around your classroom.

[https://sites.educ.ualberta.ca/staff/olenka.bilash/Best%20of%20Bilash/LanguageLadders.html](https://sites.educ.ualberta.ca/staff/olenka.bilash/Best%20of%20Bilash/LanguageLadders.html)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>疑惑</th>
<th>Confusion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>我不知道。</td>
<td><em>I don’t know</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>我不明白。</td>
<td><em>I don’t understand</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>请再说一遍。</td>
<td><em>Please repeat.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>什么？</td>
<td><em>What?</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Other strategies

- Put an outline of the lesson plan on the board. The outline would be written in the target language and can contain examples to be used in the activities.

- Use “informal pair” activities. For example, ask students to turn to a partner and to carry out a brief interaction, typically 30 seconds to one or two minutes. These interactions may be used several times in a class session during the practice phase of any activity or in its communicative phase.
Other strategies

- Create and teach the Gouin series which is an alternative format to dialogues for presenting basic sentences in a language. In this format, 6-8 sentences are arranged in a logical sequential order to demonstrate and describe how one carries out a particular activity. For example, a Gouin series could be taught in the target language on “Getting Up in the Morning”:

  I wake up.
  I get up.
  I wash my face.
  I comb my hair.
  I get dressed.
  I hurry off to school.

[Source: https://wlclassroom.com/2012/02/10/using-the-gouin-series-is-the-foreign-language-classroom/]
What specific assignments or activities do you use/plan to use in your own classroom to increase students’ use of Chinese language?
Resources


