Abstract

Building an Innovative Online Language Teaching and Learning Program: A Collaboration between TTTT and UUU

I. Background and Rationale of Project

Language learners of 21st century are no longer satisfied with learning confined within the walls of classroom. Thorne and Black (2007) have claim that CALL has the potential to transform teaching that is teacher-centered in traditional classroom settings into multidirectional interaction. The technology has diversified the options for teachers and students by providing alternatives that transformed how languages are taught and acquired. Motivated by the lack of real life teaching experiences for pre-service teachers and the lack of communicative practices with native speakers for the L2 learners, in spring 2013, TTTT and UUU launched a joint collaboration aim to eliminate that kind of deficits prevalent in most of the Chinese programs. The purposes for this project are multifaceted. First, it provides a platform for pre-service teachers with opportunities to apply their knowledge in Chinese pedagogy in a real life context so that they gain first hand and authentic teaching experiences. Secondly, L2 learners of Chinese in the U.S. receive supplemental instructions through online extracurricular activities that not only enhance their regular classroom learning but also increase their interests in learning the language and culture. Thirdly, the program aims to ultimately develop a robust platform through which the collaboration between the trained pre-service teachers and overseas L2 learners of Chinese is possible and eventually accessible for all parties interested in gaining experiences that regular classrooms can’t provide. Ideally, this project would allow students from both sides to not only interact synchronously but also reciprocally supply with each other with what the other party is lacking: pre-service teachers contribute their knowledge and trainings in teaching Chinese into this project and thus gaining invaluable online teaching experiences; L2 learners of Chinese present real life teaching opportunities to their counterparts while receiving supplemental instruction to reinforce or enhance their learning in addition to those offered in their regular classroom settings.

II. The Methodology

The data presented in this talk are gathered mainly from the post-program surveys and actual session video recordings. The participants in this project are 29 Graduate students/pre-service teachers in the Department of Chinese as a Second Language at TTTT and 68 undergraduate students in UUU. Both parties have designated required work in their respective courses offered in spring semester 2013. The pre-service teachers were taking Chinese Language Teaching Practicum and the UUU students were taking Mandarin classes. The surveys asked about participants’ attitude/expectation toward the project, the learning outcomes from the program, the procedures/materials that are effective, the challenges they faced, and the improvements they would like to see in the future.
III. Preliminary Results

The project employed a qualitative approach, gathering data through two sets of surveys and a series of online teaching sessions as evidence for L2 teaching, learning and research materials. Students at UUU are quite excited about this new program and have learned much ranging from pronunciation, vocabulary, new expressions, grammar points to cultural information. They also report that they have become more comfortable talking to native speakers after participating in the project. Most students expressed their eagerness to continuing the project in the future.

Teacher-students at TTTT report that they learned professional knowledge about lesson planning, self-evaluation and peer evaluation, teacher-student online interaction, discipline and classroom management, learning assessment, effective teaching methods/materials. Pre-service teachers become much more confident in integrating technology tools to enhance teaching and learning in the cyber classroom. Other relevant findings will be presented in the conference.

Note: TTTT is a university in Taiwan while UUU represents a university in the U.S.