

Word to World Chinese Teacher Training Programs in Texas and DC

Final Report

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I. Program goals and objectives

The goal of the Chinese Teacher Program *Word to World*, in Dallas, Houston and DC, is to lead the trainees to move beyond word/grammar teaching to focusing on real-world communication in a language classroom. The participants will understand that the ultimate goal in foreign language teaching and assessment is to create contexts and provide opportunities for students to use the language to engage in meaningful communication in real-world situations.

To realize the goal, the Program has offered 90-hour instruction centering on topics of national standards, performance-based approaches and assessment, Chinese syntax and phonetics, curriculum development and daily lesson plan design. The instructor includes Weiling Wu at West Windsor-Plainsboro High School, Martha Gallagher U.S. Military Academy, Xiaohong Wen at University of Houston, and Meng Yeh at Rice University. The Program also included 20-hour computer instruction, introducing online tools and teaching/learning software, offered by Chin-His Lin. Finally, the Program arranged teaching practicum during the summer in June and July. At the end of the Program, the trainees with a passing grade of **B** demonstrate their ability to implement their knowledge in actual classroom practices.

The Program started in March and ended in June 2008. The workshops were offered during the weekends. The target number of trainees in three cities is 52, but the actual enrollment is 58: Houston (11), Dallas (23) and DC (24).

The model of Texas/DC Startalk Programs is the collaboration among school districts, heritage schools and Chinese Language Teachers Association of Texas. Chinese heritage schools include Huahsin Chinese School, Fort Worth Chinese School, Chenggong Chinese School, and Washington Metropolitan Association of Chinese School. The schools include Plano Independent School District in Dallas, Pin Oak Middle School in Houston, Parkland Magnet Middle School and Burleigh Manor Middle School in Maryland, Lanier Middle School in Virginia.

II. Enrollments

	applicants	enrollments	completed with A	completed with B	Not completed
Houston	11	11	5	5	1
Dallas	35	23	12	10	1
DC	37	24	13	10	1
Total	83	58	34	21	3

III. Program Outcomes: Participant Growth in Knowledge, Skills and Perspectives

- ***Approaches and Methods***

Our trainees learned the language teaching approaches in the 21st century in light of the ACTFL National Foreign Language Standards and K-12 Performance Guideline such as 5C and 3 modes of communication. To connect theory to practice and link the Standards with Chinese classrooms, the participants were guided to develop a repertoire of teaching techniques and strategies that are effective for a diverse student body in different learning settings. The skills acquired by the trainees are to design standard-based activities and lesson plans. The trainees also created *Best Practices* book, a project that collects their good ideas on teaching Chinese for excellence. This book was placed online and is used as a guide for teaching and observation during the summer program or in the participants' own classrooms.
- ***Chinese Syntax and Phonetics***

Our trainees acquired essential knowledge of Chinese syntactical structure, phonemes, pronunciation with emphasis on effective teaching. During this course, the participants were guided to develop the standard pronunciation in his/her speech as well the techniques and strategies in teaching tones, pronunciation and grammatical patterns. They acquired the skills of detecting of their pronunciation problems and practicing standard pronunciation. Each trainee recorded his/her voice for three times (before, during, and at the end of training) by reading one designated article. The mistakes in the recordings were compared and analyzed. A diagnostic analysis was given to the participants for their improvement. The trainees also demonstrated the skill of explaining grammar in a clear and simple way and developing activities that integrate grammar practice and communication. Through this course, the trainees understand to teach syntactic structures from a functional perspective. The goal is not only to explain grammar, but also provide students a context where the structures are used, i.e., the functional use of grammar. This course raised the trainees' awareness of their own strengths and weaknesses in pronunciation as well as learned the methods to improve the weaknesses.
- ***Assessment***

This course first led the trainees to understand the conceptual development from language competence to language proficiency in the field of the second language acquisition. Second, the trainees were introduced various approaches to assess the proficiency of Chinese with the focus on two types of assessment: Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) and Integrated Performance Assessment (IPA). The design of rubrics was also taught and practiced. The trainees demonstrated their skill in the assignment of

designing integrated performance assessment. They also used the skill of oral interview through phone conversation with the students registered for the summer programs and during the summer classes. Rubrics are used to evaluate students' oral interview performance. Students are placed into appropriate levels of classes based on the interview result. Finally, they designed rubrics for the course projects, such as *all-about-me poster* and *family album*. The trainees definitely acquire a new perspective of assessment after this course. To them, assessment is not limited to written quizzes, mid-term and final exam anymore. In a performance-based curriculum, student language proficiency is evaluated through the three modes of communications, not their language knowledge based on the results from fill-in-the-blank items and multiple choices. The understanding and use of rubrics led them to articulate what exactly they expect students to achieve.

- ***Designing Curriculum and Lesson Plan***

This course explained the concept of Backward Design, the goals/development of thematic units and the planning of everyday lesson content and procedure. Our trainees also learned to develop task-based activities and the writing of syllabi. Based on the theme *Your Space My Space* of the summer program, the trainees developed the topics, lessons, and materials for the 3-week novice and intermediate course. Moreover, they designed task-based activities and lesson plan for each day as well as collected related songs, poems, YouTube clips, ads. All of the items mentioned above were placed online before the summer programs started. Our trainees realize that the curriculum is designed not based only on a textbook. The material was developed through our discussion of course goals and themes and what we want students to be able to do with the language. They understand that a well-thought lesson plan ensures smooth classroom teaching. The practice of writing lesson provides them ample opportunities to consider the organization of a class.

- ***Technology Instruction***

Our trainees learned to work with Moodle, an online course management system. The course also introduced recording softwares, Chinese word processors, application of PowerPoint, downloading clips from YouTube. The trainees recognize the importance of technology tools and how they enrich the instruction with sounding and visuals. Those tools also reduce time in preparing classes and make 'communication' between teachers and students easier.

- ***Teaching Practicum***

The trainees are offered hands-on teaching experiences during the summer. 8 teachers out of 55 trainees were selected to teach STARTALK summer student programs. The rest of teachers were required to visit the classes and work with the Master teachers. During their visits, they had to teach

some lessons, observe other classes and write a short report. Our trainees used Moodle (an online course management system), recording softwares, Chinese word processors, application of PowerPoint, tools to download clips from YouTube and other video sites. Every trainee taught during the summer, an opportunity to implement lesson plans in actual classroom and demonstrate their teaching ability. Summer student programs provide the trainees with the opportunity to put ideas/theories into practices. It is a new experience for them to meet and teach American middle/high school students. They observed various styles of teaching and handling classroom order. Each of the trainee presented their critiques and comments of their own teaching and observation in written reports and oral presentations.

- **Post-summer Presentation**

After the completion of 90-hour courses and teaching practicum, every trainee presented 10-minute report, using PowerPoint Presentation. Three objectives for this task: first, the trainees digest, reorganize, and reflect the perspectives, frameworks, approaches of language teaching/assessment covered in the workshop and their performance in the teaching practicum during the summer. Second, the trainees demonstrate their skills in applying what they have learned to the issues that have not been fully discussed in the workshop. Third, it provides the trainees the chance to make a formal, organized and professional presentation.

- **Cultural Awareness**

In order to teach the materials in *Your Space My Space*, the trainees explored the youth pop culture in both societies and learned what interest the teenage learners. The trainees also became aware of the learning styles and classroom behaviors of American middle and high school students.