
Integration of the SAC and the Chinese Program:

Expanding Time and Space in Teaching and Learning

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A three to four year language program with about eighty credits is far less time than one spends on mastering one's mother tongue, not to mention the difference between native and foreign socio-lingual environments. However, by integrating the Self-Access Center (SAC) and the curriculum, we can extend the limited courses and expand the limited classrooms for our students, meanwhile providing the flexibility and autonomy of time and space in language learning. With systematic planning and material selection, students can learn what they really need, and learn more in the SAC than in classrooms. This article discusses the integration of the Chinese program and the SAC at Nagoya University of Commerce and Business (NUCB) to expand the time and space for both our students and instructors.

What Should We Teach

Experts in the field agree on two important aspects of language teaching: language skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing (and translating); and communicative ability. But they often disagree on which of these two should be the general goal. This article suggests they are the two steps of reaching one goal—mastering a language. Without four or five basic skills, we cannot exchange information or ideas with anything or anyone from another culture. However, without cultural adjustment and an understanding of social psychology, language skills do not turn into communication ability automatically. We need them both to reach our general goal, and both of them need special training and cultivation.

From ancient Greece and Rome through the Middle Ages and beyond, people learned foreign languages in order to read and translate the classics. So language teaching was focused on grammar and written translation. The Industrial Revolution and the development of the world economy dramatically increased the opportunities of contacts among people from different countries and different regions. Thus, people wanted to learn a foreign language not only just to be able to read and translate, but also to be able to listen, talk, and write to each other.

In 1887, the International Association of Phonetics established six principles of foreign language teaching:

- 1) Start from “every-day” oral language teaching
- 2) Enable students to be familiar with phonetic sound, frequently used sentences and idioms;
- 3) Apply the inductive method in grammar teaching;
- 4) Encourage students to think in the foreign language;
- 5) Imitate first, and then creatively write, in writing practice; and

- 6) Undertake the written translation at a more advanced stage.

Before functional linguistics, there were experts in the field arguing the order of the four skills in the learning process, and differentiating in the measures of teaching.

Methodology	Focus	Characteristics
Direct Method	Speaking	Speaking first, reading and writing last
Audio-oral Method	Listening and Speaking	Repeated drills in audio-oral training
Audio-visual Method	Listening and Speaking	Using modern audio-visual measures in audio-oral training
Cognitive Method	Listening and Reading	Cultivating the ability of receiving first, then the ability of expression

One thing in common among the above four methodologies is to consider cultivating the language skills as the goal of the language teaching. In a sense, they all belong to structural linguistics, which treats a language as a leveled, isolated, and self-sufficient system.

Since the 1960s socio linguistics, applied linguistics, linguistic communication, and related fields developed, along with social and technical development. In a sophisticated and multicultural society, we need not only language skills, but also the ability to communicate. According to Dell Hymes, the founder of functional linguistics, in social communication we have to understand the societal and cultural background, and know how to use a language, in addition to having the language skills. As opposed to Chomsky's concept of language ability, Hymes' concept of communication ability includes the four language skills, yet it is above the language ability. It implies both understanding and application of the language. It covers various aspects of language behavior, such as using appropriate language as different social roles according to different people and different situations based on both written and unwritten rules within a certain society.

In the 21st Century, the world is becoming smaller, and people are closer. We have more needs and opportunities of making contact with people outside of our society and culture. A language program at a business college certainly should set up communication ability as the important part of its curriculum. Yet it has to start with cultivating the four basic skills in order to establish the foundation of future development.

Our Chinese curriculum at NUCB is targeted toward basic skills and communication ability, and it contains:

- 1) In the area of speaking:
Chinese Speaking Skills I & II
Advanced Chinese Speaking Skills I & II
- 2) In the area of listening:
Chinese Listening Skills I, II, III, & IV
- 3) In the area of reading:
Chinese Reading Skills I, II, III, & IV
Advanced Chinese Reading Skills I & II
Readings in Chinese Culture I & II

- 4) In the area of writing:
Chinese Writing Skills I, II, III, and IV
Chinese Business Writing I & II
- 5) In the area of translation:
Translating and Interpretation I & II
- 6) In the area of communication ability:
Chinese Business Communication I, II, III, IV, V, & VI
- 7) Other courses:
Chinese Language Structure I, II, III, and IV
Media Chinese I & II
Practice for TECC I, II, III, IV, V, & VI &
Computer Practice in Chinese

The above listed courses are integrated into a curriculum, which should well serve the goal of teaching students both the four language skills and communicative ability. Now we will look at how we teach these courses.

How Should We Teach

Language teachers have their own styles and ways of teaching. However, how we teach should follow the general rules of how we learn. The six principles raised by the International Association of Phonetics one hundred and sixteen years ago, although incomplete and unsystematic as reading skill and communication ability were not mentioned, still contain the most basic rules of teaching a foreign language, such as starting from every-day oral language teaching; thinking in the foreign language; and imitating first, then creative writing. To learn a foreign language one needs to know the structure of the language. However, what we need more is to be able to come out of the structure, and to apply it without thinking about it.

Listening and speaking first

Listening and speaking are the beginning of our language learning. Listening and speaking are the processes of receiving and expressing. They are the basic skills of communication. They are the focuses of Direct, Audio-oral, and Audio-visual Methods.

The best resource for acquiring the ability of listening and speaking is daily dialogue in real life. It is the most frequently used, and the most available language resource. Through this channel, one can find various opportunities to practice, and get instant feedback. It sets no limits on textbooks or teachers. It creates the time and the space whenever and wherever you want.

Phonetics is the material shell of a language. Without a solid grounding in phonetics, you cannot go far in listening and speaking. In his “On Language”, Chinese linguist Yuanren Zhao made the following comments on the importance of phonetics:

Foreign language learning consists of three parts: phonetics, grammar, and vocabulary. Therefore the learning process should follow the same order. Phonetics is the most important as well as the most difficult part, because it is the substance of the language and the language itself. If the pronunciation is wrong, then the grammar cannot be correct, nor can the vocabulary.

Pronunciation affects both expression and comprehension. Without good pronunciation, even if one can speak fluently, one still cannot be understood. Poor pronunciation also limits one's

ability to distinguish sounds, thus causing misunderstandings in hearing. This, of course, sets barriers in communication. For example, it is very difficult to enhance a student's level when their pronunciation is not good. The worst thing is that it is more difficult to correct someone's pronunciation than it is to teach it correctly from the beginning. The fact that Chinese is a tonal language makes the pronunciation more critical. For example, pinyin TANG means, "soup" in the first tone, and means "sugar" in the second tone. If you pronounce "T" instead of "D", and "P" instead of "B", the sentence "Duzi bao le" (meaning "I am full") will become "Tuzi pao le" (meaning "The rabbit ran away").

Neither students nor teachers are favorable to phonetics. Yet as mentioned above it is very important. The answer is how to make the teaching of it more effective and interesting. In many textbooks, this part is organized according to a strict order in a format of pure phonetic syllables without connection to the real content, making it boring. There are two ways to make this part of teaching and learning more interesting:

- 1) Combining phonetics and vocabulary learning to see the practical aspect of phonetics, and to start the vocabulary building right away.
- 2) Teaching phonetics through the language flow to feel the variations of the phonetic sounds, and to apply them in short sentences and simple oral expression.

In order to establish a solid foundation of phonetics, students need a large amount of practice. This links to another issue in many of our textbooks, which is lack of practice, especially interesting drills and exercises. They should be more than pure phonetic combinations. Learning Chinese phonetics is not only to learn the pronunciations of about four hundred syllables, but also their different tones in various words and groupings. This can only be meaningful when these syllables are put into words and sentences. Some students can read syllables separately. But it is hard to understand them when they put the syllables into words and sentences. So in teaching phonetics, it is more effective to practice the pronunciation in sentences than in syllables and words. Textbooks should extend the period of practicing phonetics. At the early stage, texts can be organized in form of words. And at a later stage of this period, the exercises should be in the form of short sentences, short conversations, and short paragraphs. Even when the phonetics section finishes, textbooks should still contain more Pinyin exercises to help students reinforce the correct pronunciation.

Students can only improve their auditory and oral ability through constant and continuous practice. As mentioned above, the best environment to do so is daily life, which includes the teacher-student interaction in classrooms and on campus. Teachers ought to provide students with as many opportunities for listening and speaking as possible. Many foreign language programs have two unwritten rules: 1) Instructors should talk less than 30% of each class period; 2) Instructors should minimize the usage of the students' native language. The intention of these two rules is obvious—to maximize students' listening and speaking time in the language they are learning. It appears to be difficult for many students in the short run, but it pays off in the long run.

Grammar teaching

When we discuss the issue of adult learners of a second language, cognitive methodology cannot be ignored, especially in grammar teaching. It is hard to model the grammatical rules without understanding them. However, second language grammar learning does not have to

include the whole grammatical system. It should be practical, targeted, and standardized. This means to:

- 1) Teach the most useful rules. In other words, the most basic and necessary rules. With the understanding of these rules, students can apply them to their beginners' audio and oral practice. (For example, basic sentence structures, and various usages of numbers.)
- 2) Teach the targeted rules. In other word, the most difficult and confusing part of the grammar. It would be more difficult for students to learn these rules without the instructor. (For example, measure words and modal words.)
- 3) Teach the standard rules. In other words, the most stable and acknowledged rules. It is not wise to expect the second language beginners to make judgments on controversial grammatical issues. (For example, some of the new rules that the instructor himself/herself does not understand or disagrees with.)

The methodology of grammar teaching has moved between three types: classical, practical, and analogical ones.

Induction and deduction are the two classic methodologies since Aristotle. They have been used in the field of second language teaching. Using the inductive way, instructors expose students to the concrete language materials first, and then induct the grammatical rules from them. Applying the deductive way, instructors introduce the grammatical rules first, and then provide sample sentences, followed by students' production.

The grammatical rules are conducted through the induction of numerous examples. Inductive method is widely used in teaching a first language. However, in the second language grammar teaching, it is hard for instructors to adopt a typical inductive method due to the limited language materials of students. Despite the International Association of Phonetics' suggestion to teach grammar in an inductive way, in practice teachers usually follow the pattern of deduction; sometimes more or less using both inductive and deductive methods.

The goal to study grammar is to use it. Does it make a significant difference to apply one method or another first? A new principle was put forward—practical methodology. The grammar teacher can start either from induction or deduction. What should follow is the practice. The format of a typical lesson according to this principle is: simple explanation first, and a large amount of practice next. The content should be practical and society-oriented. In order to give students maximum practical time, this principle suggests avoiding using the students' native language as much as possible except in the explanation of new words and major points of the grammar. The key to learning grammar is to practice it. To a certain extent, this idea contributes to functional linguistics' focus on communication ability.

Since the 1970s, the methodology of analogy has been widely adopted and approved to be very practical in teaching grammar. The characteristics of this method are that it:

- 1) doesn't talk about grammar itself;
- 2) doesn't apply either induction or deduction;
- 3) is from concrete language material to concrete language material; and
- 4) leads students to learn the language through copying and exchanging samples and models.

Drills and exercises have become an important part of many textbooks since then.

By examining the classical, practical, and analogical methodologies, we see the transition of the attitudes toward the teaching of grammar: from focusing on grammar rules to just practicing these rules, and then, to without mentioning grammar rules at all. However,

there are two good reasons that we still need to teach students grammar:

- 1) Chinese has a very difficult grammatical system;
- 2) TECC (Test of Communicative Chinese) covers many grammatical rules that also need to be explained.

Instructors can use any method including the three methodologies mentioned above. However, we should:

- 1) use Chinese terms when we teach grammar, for example, Zhuyu, Weiyu, and Binyu, instead of Japanese terms;
- 2) teach those practical, targeted, and standard grammatical rules; and
- 3) teach grammatical rules in real language through listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

Reading as a key link

Before the reform of foreign language teaching and learning in Europe in the 19th century, reading and translation were the major goals in this field. This tradition was continued almost another century in certain regions of the world, like the former Soviet Union and China. Grammar teaching was the core task in order to be able to read, understand, and translate. However, intensive reading was more emphasized than extensive reading. So the reading itself doesn't help much in improving listening and speaking because of the content and quantity of the reading material.

The six principles of the International Association were raised after the reformation, which marked the beginning of the goal transition from reading and translation to oral ability. However, reading was not considered an important part of teaching, or an approach to improve one's oral ability.

Under the influence of Structural Linguistics, many textbooks were focused on grammar through perfect understanding of the texts, which were model articles carefully chosen from the classics. This was beneficial to writing and translation. But because the structure was weighted more heavily than the content it couldn't expand students' vocabulary and reading effectively.

Under the influence of Functional Linguistics, many textbooks were focused on communication ability through various oral conversations. Functional Linguistics emphasizes the importance of cultural knowledge to communication ability. Thus we need to make a connection between reading, especially extensive reading, and communication ability.

In fact, reading is not only the channel to acquire cultural information, but also the key link to listening and speaking as well as writing. Reading can:

- 1) improve listening and speaking by providing the background knowledge and language material;
- 2) cultivate a comprehensive language ability in terms of practical use of the grammar, vocabulary building, and styles and ideas for writing;
- 3) set up the foundation of the communication ability—the cultural knowledge.

In our current curriculum, the reading courses we have are: Reading for TECC, Readings in Chinese Culture, Advertising and Media Chinese, Chinese Studies, and part of TECC Practice. Besides the titled reading courses, other courses can also train students in reading. For example, at the end of the listening class, we can ask students to read through the listening material; or before the communication class, we can hand out a piece of information which helps students understand the context of the communication to be taught. In short, instructors

should provide students with various reading resources as much as they can. Students do not have to fully understand all the materials of their extensive reading. The key here is quantity. So students can have more information in mind to be used when they need it.

Writing and translating

Translating, both oral and written, has always been an important aim of learning a second language. Although the learning of translation starts when the language learning begins, from explanation of the words in the students' native language to text translation, a course of translating and interpretation is usually offered to more advanced students. In terms of vocabulary explanation, it makes more sense to understand the various meanings of a word within the second language context, because it is often hard to find a word from another language having exactly the same meanings. It is also better to explain the text in the second language itself, which helps students' reading comprehension and their thinking in the foreign language. Only when students have a basic foundation in the second language should they be trained in translating and interpretation.

Writing is the aspect that experts have discussed the least, although we offer writing courses to our students. Writing in second language learning is more practical than academic. We teach our students to write sentences while learning vocabulary and grammar. We teach them to write short paragraphs, for example, introduce themselves, to cope with a conversation class or practice putting words and grammar together. We cultivate a habit of writing diaries, and help students gradually think in the second language every day. At a more advanced stage, students have more practice in writing letters, news reports, and various applied articles.

Writing is the most difficult part for most second language learners. However, a second language learner does not have to be a perfect writer, as long as he/she is able to write the needed materials without mistakes.

The following are some of the practical ways of teaching the second language learners to write:

- 1) Making sentences:
This is an effective way to master the vocabulary and grammar.
- 2) Formatted writing:
This can be done in various lengths and contents.
- 3) Imitative writing:
This imitates the structure of the article on a different topic, or imitates the content in a different style.
- 4) Standard writing:
This is the way to write most applied articles, using the same structure and same wording.

Starting from students' junior and senior years, the writing courses can be focused more on academic and subject related topics, special reports, and theses.

Communicative ability

Communicative/communication ability should be a major focus in today's second language learning programs, especially at a business college. But, what is communication ability?

In his "What To Say and How To Say It", Zhipu Qiu gives a very simple explanation of

communication ability, which is to know where and when to talk, under what situation, and to whom you are talking. Communication ability emphasizes appropriateness while speaking skill focuses on accuracy of speech.

Kaitai Fan, in his “On Cultivating Chinese Communication Ability”, writes:

Chinese communication ability includes both oral and written communication abilities.... It includes three parts: (1) the systematic ability of Chinese language, meaning to use Chinese according to the grammar, and to be acceptable; (2) the expressive ability of appropriate Chinese, meaning to use the most appropriate expression to reach the most ideal expressive effect; (3) the ability to adjust to Chinese culture, meaning to adjust to the Chinese socio-cultural psychology when communicating in Chinese.

So the learning process of communication ability has to have multiple dimensions. All the courses for the four basic skills, or systematic ability in Fan’s term, are to build the foundation of communication ability. All the culture related courses are to search for the social context of communication ability. And the communication courses are for learning the appropriate way of expression according to different situations. Without the first two steps, one cannot learn so-called communication ability.

With communication ability as the major goal of teaching and learning, and as the core of our curriculum, instructors should ensure that all courses pull in this direction. We are teaching students language skills within a certain cultural context. The four skills are connected within the language system. Without this connection, one cannot communicate appropriately in a second language. Thus, we should teach each class, listening, speaking, reading, or writing, three dimensionally. We are not teaching separate skills but different aspects of the same capability. These are language knowledge, language skill, and language ability. They are communication ability. It should be taught, whenever a skill, or whichever skill, is being trained.

Ideally, communication courses should be offered after the basic skills are introduced, so that instructors can focus on the appropriateness of speech supplemented with social and cultural knowledge in communication courses. Otherwise we are teaching the same content speaking skills under the name of communication.

Thinking in a foreign language

Thinking in a language is the outcome of a long journey of being in that environment. Only when one reaches that point, can one communicate with native speakers freely. In the 1960s, some experts applied the direct method in this process. The characteristics were as follows:

- 1) using the second language directly in teaching;
- 2) not using the students’ native language to explain new words;
- 3) connecting students’ thinking to reality;
- 4) using real things, pictures, and gestures to help students to understand; and
- 5) almost no grammatical explanations.

However, to realize this goal within three or four years is not realistic. But to make this journey shorter, instructors can train students in this direction from the first vocabulary and the first sentence they introduce to students.

Here are some of the simple steps instructors can practice in each of the classes:

- 1) Giving each student a name in the second language, and using it.
Students often run into all kinds of names when they listen, speak, read, and write. Using foreign

- names among themselves certainly smoothes their listening and reading comprehension, and they will feel more comfortable talking with foreigners.
- 2) Using classroom sentences in the target language.
These sentences are repeated everyday, such as “turn the page” and “please stand up.” Students will understand and be able to use them shortly. By using these sentences in the second language, we are creating more communicative opportunities in a real situation.
 - 3) Explaining new words in the second language.
The best way to learn a new word is not to find an equivalent in the native language, but to understand the range of uses of that word in the target language. To cope with the difficulty in this matter, the easy way is to teach students how to use a dictionary. Other methods are, using synonyms, or simple sentences, putting the new word in a sentence or within a context, or simply using pictures and explanations.
 - 4) Using sentence patterns to interpret the grammatical rules.
If we have to use the students’ native language to explain some of the grammar rules, we should, at least, use the terminologies of the second language. It is more accurate, and reduces confusion in the future.
 - 5) Interpreting the text in the second language.
It is better to use simpler sentences to explain the more difficult ones than using the students’ native language, in most cases. This helps students understand the text more accurately and deeply. Meanwhile, it increases their exposure to the second language within the context.
 - 6) Conducting the culture related courses in the second language.
This can be difficult for some students. But with the help of audio-visual, and other multimedia devices, students can expand their language knowledge as well as cultural terminology and communication background through these courses especially when they are conducted in the second language.

To summarize, in order to help students reach the highest goal of language learning—thinking in that language, we should use the second language whenever we introduce a new word, sentence, rule, meaning, and explanation, thus helping students accumulate the building blocks of thinking in the second language. Meanwhile we should also supplement with large amounts of various original audio, oral, and reading materials within the range of the textbook, and outside of it. All these will be beneficial to learners’ ability to translate at a later stage.

In the curriculum of our Chinese program at NUCB, we have every course we need to teach students the four basic language skills, cultural background, and communication ability, such as basic listening, speaking, reading, and writing courses, business communication courses, and culture-related courses. And we assume that all the instructors are using the most effective ways to teach our students. Still there are complaints from both students and teachers. Complaints from the students are usually: the pace of the classes is too fast; the texts are too difficult; there are not enough speaking opportunities in the classroom, and so on. Complaints from the instructors are: shortness of time, difference in students’ levels, unsatisfactoriness of the textbooks, and so on.

To accommodate all the needs, and to coordinate the time and space of learning and teaching, we need a good Self-Access Center, SAC.

What Can We Do in the SAC

Gill Sturtidge, in “Self-access: Preparation and Training,” discusses four types of SAC systems, or four roles of a SAC: the instruction centre, the practice centre, the skill centre, and

the learning centre. All four share the characteristic of enabling students to progress at their own speed, and are self-access in the sense that they are available for use when the learner chooses. Each type plays one of the major roles: providing a surrogate teacher to taught classes; providing a place to practice at different levels; providing devices to improve different skills, and providing a bank of materials to students for all purposes. In other words, a SAC is a place for students to find their own instructors and textbooks, to try new means other than those used in classrooms, and to do their extra work to make up, catch up, or get ahead. A SAC can provide students the freedom of time and space in learning.

This article explores the functions of the SAC from the three dimensions of language ability: language skills, cultural background, and communication ability.

Language skills

What can we do in the SAC to improve students' four basic language skills?

The biggest disadvantage of learning a foreign language in a learner's motherland is the very limited access to the auditory exposure and oral practice of the language. Students can have only two channels to listening to native speakers: teacher's daily instruction if the teacher conducts the lesson in the students' second language; and the listening materials used in the classroom. For the speaking, their instructors are the main native speakers they can practice with. However, the SAC can create a native environment with audio-visual facilities that enable learners to have access to various accents in contextualized situations.

Audiotapes are easy and cheap to make. Most SACs have a reasonable number of audiotapes. However, what a SAC needs are tapes through which students can teach, practice, and improve their listening and speaking skills themselves. The best audiotapes are course-related in content, and a little more advanced than what has been taught in the classroom. And, there should be a wide variety of content and situations available for students to choose from. These audiotapes are accompanied by worksheets so that students can be more targeted, and see their levels and progress.

There are two other popular areas for making audiotapes: pronunciation exercises, and short stories. Practicing phonetics through audiotapes, has proven to be very effective. However, there is far less than enough time in the classroom for students to complete this task. But in the SAC, students can listen and repeat until they are satisfied with their own pronunciation. Dictating short stories is a good way of self-teaching in listening, reading and writing. With a universal worksheet, students can easily teach themselves a lesson a day by spending half an hour to forty-five minutes at the SAC. The worksheet can ask students questions in listening comprehension, and direct them to rewrite the story, etc. Different from listening to the audio-tapes in the classrooms, students can: select the tape and stop anywhere in the tape at any time; choose the order and the speed; and learn much more beyond the classroom and the curriculum.

The same reasoning also applies to videotapes, which will be discussed later. However, there is one program that is hard to be done in the classroom, but easy to be managed in a SAC, which is watching the news. The news can be directly from the TV or recorded from TV News in the second language. The length of the news can be about five to fifteen minutes. After watching and listening to the news, students would complete a universal worksheet, which usually covers a few simple questions asking about important names of people, places,

what kind of news, what happened in the news, and a brief summary. This will be beneficial to students in all three areas we are discussing now.

Besides audio and video devices, computers are very effective for self-teaching, for they introduce a degree of inter-activity, and provide learners with instant feedback. Computers are very effective to teach students writing. With suitable software, learners are guided to practice writing step by step, from words and phrases to sentences, from topic sentences to paragraphs, with different tasks such as messages, diaries, letters, short articles, etc. Computer technology is also a powerful tool for recording data with students using word processors and e-mail to share, edit and publish information as part of the language learning activity.

Richard Harrison at the University of Melbourne conducted a project "Using Digital Video for Listening Comprehension" years ago. In his project, satellite transmissions are recorded on videotapes, which are catalogued to form a library of materials. A segment is selected and converted into a digital file format. These files are then downloaded to a central file server, which can be accessed from the Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) laboratory. In this case, a computer is used as a digital video player. It allows students to work either individually or collectively.

Readers improve their reading comprehension at the SAC through two kinds of reading: intensive and extensive. The example of a reading program, which is very suitable for a SAC, is the Graded Readers. The books are chosen to meet the standards of certain levels. Following the organized worksheets, readers predict when they read, guess words from the context, and answer the comprehension questions. And sometimes they rewrite what they have read. Readers can also enjoy their extensive reading at the SAC. Books belonging to this category are usually cultural and socially related books, or interesting stories, providing the background knowledge of learning language. Many books can be used for purposes of either intensive reading or extensive reading. It depends on learners' needs and time.

Cultural background

Textbooks provide very limited resources on cultural background; a self-access center is a place for learners to search for this.

The materials one can find in a SAC to serve this purpose are many, such as books, newspaper, magazines, catalogues, audio-and videotapes, VCDs and DVDs, etc. This article highly recommends three programs in this aspect: video programs, a "culture corner", and special Internet WebPages.

In his "The Video Connection", Rick Altman wrote:

Because videos simultaneously provide commentary on a culture and a fascinating example of that culture, well-chosen video programs often deserve to constitute separate course units.

Of course they are very suitable for use in a SAC.

Well-chosen video programs include some of the culture programs organized by TV stations, foreign programs recorded abroad, and those made by the foreign countries, such as famous movies, etc.

It would be ideal to have a culture corner, or even a dedicated room, at a SAC as a cultural recourse especially for those who have had very little exposure to the culture. In this room, books would be organized according to cultural categories. Pictures and items would

be exhibited with explanations. Students could listen to the native speakers talk and sing and watch them, for example, doing shows, by pushing the buttons of audio and video equipment. Students can experience every trait of the culture in this room.

Culture is a process from past to present. Knowing the present helps in understanding the past. The best way for students to learn the present culture of their second language is through information technology, and the Internet is the best choice. To have a few excellent WebPages available to students when they need them, or just to be easy to access, will attract students' attention, and cultivate a habit of finding first-hand information about what is going on in this culture, and at the same time improving their reading comprehension.

Communication ability

Communication ability is based on language skills and cultural background. What one has done in a SAC for the above two purposes is actually the preparation for this part. In other words, one can use all the equipment and materials mentioned above to improve one's communication ability. Yet, a SAC can also provide other special resources for this purpose.

Learning communication ability in the classroom is not enough, in terms of topics, situations, styles, accents, etc. A SAC can offer various audio-tapes of communication from the real world in different situations and on different topics with different accents. The questions on the worksheets are usually focused on the culturally and socially diverse. If necessary, a piece of information can be attached to the tape to explain the situation. In terms of video, Altman had an excellent comment on it:

Video is extraordinarily well suited to display the connections between language and the real world upon which comprehension depends.... First, (it) can provide any desired diversity of sounds. Second, video programs reveal the range of sounds produced by individual speakers in differing situations.... Third, video matches sounds both to bodies and to contexts.... Fourth, video shows the sublingual sounds that never appear on the printed page but are perhaps a given language's single most unique attribute.

By watching well-made videotapes in a SAC, students can learn communication ability, not by the written word, but through the real pictures of facial expressions, gestures and body movements, dress habits, and communication styles.

In addition, a SAC is also a place to look for books on this topic, such as books analyzing the theories and traditions behind the appropriateness of communication. This also includes teacher reference books.

In short, almost any activity and exercise that can be used in a classroom can be adapted for use in a SAC. Some activities or exercises, which cannot be done in a classroom mainly because of the limits of time and space, can also be done in a SAC. Provided with appropriate materials and organized in a systematic way, a SAC can be a second classroom for students. It is a classroom that has no limitations on time and space in learning. It is a classroom where students can find a teacher matching their learning style and a textbook meeting their interests. It is a classroom where students can learn on their own at their own pace. Students can learn more in the SAC than they are in the classrooms with our careful planning and material selection. Students can learn more efficiently because they can choose the materials at their levels. By all these means, a SAC provides instructors the freedom of time and space in teaching.

What Do We Need in the SAC at NUCB

The SAC at Nagoya University of Commerce and Business Administration currently has the following materials for Chinese learners:

- Copies of about eighty textbooks
- About thirty test preparation books
 - * (About one third of the above books have either CD or audio cassettes.)
- A few short stories
- 5 sets of phonetic listening and pronunciation tapes with printed materials
- More than twenty VHS tapes of Chinese movies
- About ten VHS tapes of teaching material
- About ten VHS tapes on news and Chinese culture

Some of the materials on the list have rarely been used. And yet, we still need to provide more suitable and effective materials so that the SAC can attract more learners, and learners can achieve more when they spend time in the SAC.

We need the following in the SAC at NUCB:

- 1) Books other than textbooks: that provide various interesting materials, and from which students can teach themselves comprehensive language ability. There should be a variety of books which should be fairly newly published, and there should be a range of levels. Introductory and intermediate books are more suitable to our college beginners. Chinese Graded Readers at all different levels are highly recommended. Through this program, students can sense the learning that is occurring and see the progress they are making in reading along with the program. Other needed books are practical grammar books, grammar practice books with a key, a few good dictionaries, etc.
- 2) Audio tapes other than records of the texts: that are of a certain type, and have a specific target, and from which students can improve their communication ability. Two kinds of audiocassettes are very practical besides those of phonetics and short dialogues:
 - a. Short stories or news reports
 - b. Situational Dialogues focus on communication appropriateness.Worksheets are necessary in order to improve listeners' comprehension as well as their listening skill, and to fully understand the context of communication.
- 3) Video tapes other than enrichment ones: that supplement the non-verbal information, and that show rich cultural content. Most videotapes in the SAC at NUCB are for the purpose of enrichment, not for the purpose of integration. And for the enrichment purpose, many of them are above the students' level. They are not frequently used. What we need most are integrated video programs. They are on certain topics, and last about five to fifteen minutes. Each video program should fit a certain course at a certain stage, and have clear goals set for students to accomplish. The program should also include preparatory and follow-up activities. In the preparation of the video program, the learning part should weigh more heavily than the artistic or entertainment part.
- 4) Computer assisted language-learning program: that students can practice and improve their language skills through inter-activities. Currently, we do not have any updated computer based Chinese learning program in the SAC at NUCB. Ideally, we should have at least two computer assisted Chinese language learning programs, one on simple dialogue, and one on writing. Through the first one, students can practice conversation with digital images. Students can also practice progress-assessment, self-testing, self-correction, example practice, etc. Through the writing program on a computer, students can practice writing within the format of various styles, such as letters and short stories, descriptive, narrative, or discursive writings.
- 5) A few good Chinese Web pages: that can easily be accessed and have links to various resources, and that tell learners about the latest information in the world of their second language.

The SAC should have one or two computers with the best Chinese WebPages as the screen pages

that are available to students all the time.

- 6) Picture files for students to collect cultural images, or to practice conversation, writing, and various projects. As Andrew Wright states: Pictures are not just an aspect of method but through their representation of places, objects and people, they are an essential part of the overall experiences we must help our students to cope with. Using pictures in language learning and teaching can raise learners' interest and motivation, bring in the outside world, also bring a sense of the context of the language and a specific reference point or stimulus.
- 7) A special package for job searching: that advises students to write their resumes in the second language, and trains them to utilize their second language in an interview. This mainly aims at the senior students. The resume-writing program can be either on paper or on computer with different parts for preparation, practice, and final copy. Along with this there can be some related information on this topic. The interview program can be organized on videotape. The tapes show an imitative interview ideally with a Chinese company, or a Japanese company that has business with China. The tape should help students in strategies of how to answer the possible questions, how and when to use their Chinese communication skills, how to dress for success within a cultural context, etc.
- 8) Design a one-hour self-taught lesson for students to do in the SAC themselves. It includes listening, speaking, reading, and writing sections on one topic. Students spend approximately 15 minutes on each section. Students can decide the number of lessons each week they want to pursue.

All the materials and equipment mentioned above need to be organized and categorized in a way that is easily located and accessed by students. In other words, students will need a practical orientation before they can work efficiently in a self-access center.

Conclusion

This article demonstrates the content and means of pursuing a second language. The underlying aims are to explore the roles of a SAC in a limited learning time and space to carrying out the curriculum—and to provide a solution to a language program in a foreign environment.

The teacher and students only meet physically in the same space for about one and a half hours each week. In addition to providing extra time, a SAC can provide various means of communication between students and native speakers, and the culture of the second language through printed materials, audio-video devices, and computer technology, thus expanding the unlimited time and space in students' learning.

In a postmodern society, teachers' roles are not only as knowledge deliverers, but also as guides and coordinators of the learning process. The role teachers can play in the integration of a SAC and a language curriculum is unlimited, especially in preparing materials, if they have a clear idea of the center's objectives and sort of materials that might be suitable through regular "updating" of information from the SAC staff. With this unlimited role, teachers expand the limited time and space in their teaching.

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