

BACKGROUND

Common Curriculum Courses:

- “contribute to an intellectually vibrant campus community and create in turn a challenging, inclusive, ethical, and liberating learning environment” (DU Academic Affairs, n.d., Common Curriculum Learning Outcomes section).
- Student Learning Outcome #1: Demonstrate **basic proficiency** in a language of choice in the following skills: writing, **speaking**, listening, and reading (DU Academic Affairs, n.d., Common Curriculum Learning Outcomes section).

First-year Language Program in CWLC:

- Student Learning Outcome #1: Develop **practical language skills** and communicative competence for simple conversations.

CWLC Common Curriculum Assessment:

- A formal interpersonal speaking assessment during the Spring quarter;
- Assesses how naturally students can converse in the foreign language they are studying in a quasi-spontaneous situation;
- Consists of a task-oriented conversation amongst 2 students.
- A topic of Common Curriculum Assessment: Theme: Birthday Party

Objective: Ask a friend to go to a party with you and suggest things to bring to a party.

Situation: Persuade your friend to go to a party with you. Tell him/her/when and where the party will take place, who else will be there, and what kind of food he/she/they can expect. Discuss what you want to bring for the party.

Strategy: To help you prepare for a conversation and brainstorm vocabulary, consider the following questions:

1. When and where will the birthday party take place? Who will you invite?
2. What can guests bring to the party? What do you need to bring to the party?
3. What if some of the party guests need a ride to the party?
4. What food and activities do you want to have at the party? Will you order the food or cook the food yourselves?

First-year Chinese (CHIN 1001, CHIN 1002, CHIN 1003) Curriculum:

- Focuses on engaging students in the learning process through **real-life tasks & helping students reach the learning outcomes.**
- Real-life tasks:
 - Reflect language use in real world, such as asking people out & making appointments;
 - Provide opportunities for students to use the language they have learned meaningfully;
 - Each lesson: 2 real-world situations.

Rationale for the Current Study

- In the field of second language acquisition (SLA), task-based language teaching has been a hot topic, but this topic is relatively new to the field of Chinese SLA (Han & Maeng, 2014; Yuan, 2018).
- We lack general understanding of the relationship between task, task implementation, and task outcome (Han & Maeng, 2014).

LET'S WORK ON A TASK!

Here are the two tasks we did in class. Pick a task and work on it with your friend in English!

Task 1: Planning for Your Next Trip

- You are discussing with your friend about where to travel for the summer break.
 - Tell each other 2-3 places you want to visit;
 - Discuss how you plan to go to these places;
 - Decide where you want to go and provide reasons.

Task 2: Best City to Live in the U.S.

- Discuss which city is the best place to live in the U.S. with your partner. If you don't agree with your partner, please try to find disadvantages of living in that place. Consider weather, transportation, etc.

METHOD

Research Questions:

1. Did Elementary Chinese students viewed in-class real-life tasks helpful in developing their practical speaking skills?
2. Were there challenges when Elementary Chinese students worked on real-life tasks in class?

Participants:

- 21 DU students (10 males, 11 females) who enrolled in CHIN 1002 and CHIN 1003 during Winter 2023 and Spring 2023.

Test Instruments:

- Post-assessment survey:
 - 4 Likert-scale & 3 open-ended questions
 - Example of a Likert-scale question: Do you think the tasks we did in class help you practice being spontaneous in speaking Chinese?
 - Strongly agree
 - Disagree
 - Neither agree nor disagree
 - Agree
 - Strongly disagree
 - Example of an open-ended question: What were challenges you had encountered when you worked on tasks with your classmates?

Procedure:

1. Participants were asked to give their consent during Winter 2023.
2. Participants completed Common Curriculum Assessment at the end of Spring 2023:
 - Found a partner;
 - Read 4 topics and picked 1 to proceed with;
 - Prepared individually for 10 minutes;
 - Recorded a spontaneous, unscripted, 5-8 minutes conversation with their partner on Canvas.
3. Participants completed a post-assessment survey on Canvas.

Data Coding and Data Analyses:

- Likert-scale questions: assigned a numerical value to each of the 5 responses:
 - Strongly disagree: 1
 - Disagree: 2
 - Neither disagree nor agree: 3
 - Agree: 4
 - Strongly agree: 5
- Open-ended questions:
 - Read through participants' responses;
 - Color coded words and phrases that appeared repeatedly;
 - Found common themes.

RESULTS

Research Question 1: Did Elementary Chinese Students Viewed In-Class Real-Life Tasks Helpful in Developing Their Practical Speaking Skills?

Q1. Do you think the tasks we did in class help you practice being spontaneous in speaking Chinese?

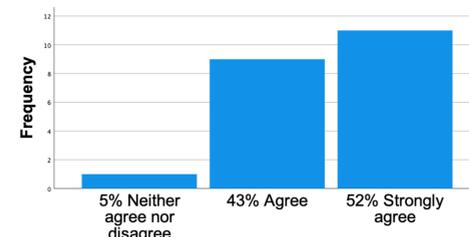


Figure 1. Bar chart for the frequency of participants' responses on Q1 in the post-assessment survey.

Q2. Do you think the tasks we did in class help you develop your proficiency in speaking Chinese?

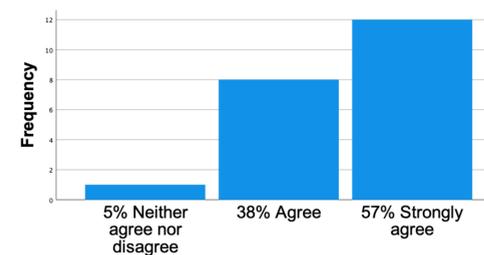


Figure 2. Bar chart for the frequency of participants' responses on Q2 in the post-assessment survey.

Participant ID9:

- The task(s) are helpful in helping students actually apply the sentences/vocabulary that we learn from regular class content into real, spontaneous conversations.

Participant ID15:

- I really liked the tasks. I just wish we did them more often. I found that I would have used more advanced grammar patterns if I had more practice.

Research Question 2: Were There Challenges When Elementary Chinese Students Worked on Real-life Tasks in Class?

Challenge:

- Having difficulty understanding or communicating with participants' partners

Participant ID11:

- The biggest difficulty is in understanding everything others are saying. There were many times I had to skip or ignore something someone said because I couldn't understand.

1) Different proficiency levels

Participant ID17:

- Some of the challenges that I had encountered when working on tasks with my classmates would be when they were at different levels that I was at, making it much more challenging to find the flow of communicating.

2) Not knowing how to say a certain word or having difficulty recalling a word

Participant ID2:

- I had a hard time recalling some vocabulary when working on tasks with my classmates. At times, this made communicating a thought difficult, and sometimes I had to change the sentence entirely.

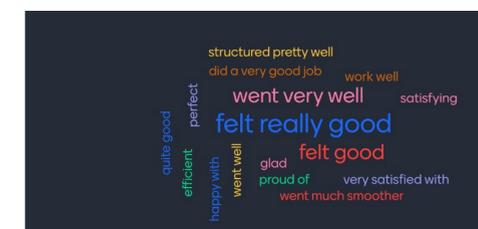
CONCLUSIONS

- The majority of participants viewed in-class real-life tasks helpful in developing their practical speaking skills.

Participant ID14:

- I think they were more difficult at the beginning of the quarter since we all tried to rely on simple sentences & grammar patterns. As the quarter went on I think we all figured out how to communicate our thoughts & piece together what we knew, rather than limiting the conversation based on exact sentences/patterns from earlier this year.

Q: How did you feel after you completed the Common Curriculum Assessment?



- One of the main challenges participants had encountered when they worked on real-life tasks was having difficulty understanding or communicating with their partners.

PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

1. Start doing more spontaneous real-life tasks earlier.

Participant ID11:

- ..., but I think it would have been good either to do an additional one this quarter, or maybe start doing more spontaneous speaking earlier.

2. Teach students communication strategies and strategies to maintain a conversation.

Participant ID18:

- I think that speaking spontaneously is really important for being proficient in a language but I found that I didn't learn many tools for carrying a conversation.

- I think that when my classmate doesn't understand what I said, they just move on and ignore it. It interrupts the flow of the conversation.

3. Assign different partners to students.

REFERENCES

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