

Exploring New Directions

Classroom at a Glance

Teacher:	Haiyan Fu
Language:	Mandarin Chinese II–IV
Grades:	9–12
School:	Northside College Preparatory High School, Chicago, Illinois
Lesson Date:	January 15
Class Size:	19
Schedule:	Block schedule, 96 minutes twice a week

Video Summary

In this lesson, students in Chinese II–IV work on the theme “directions.” The class begins by reviewing the previous day’s vocabulary, then practices writing characters. Next, Chinese II and Chinese III students work together in groups: The Chinese III students in each group describe local restaurants to prepare for a restaurant review project, while the Chinese II students use a map to practice giving directions to the restaurants. Meanwhile, Chinese IV students prepare and present a dramatic interpretation of two poems to the class. Finally, the whole class reads and interprets a portion of a poem that contains “directions” vocabulary, and then watches a filmed, musical performance of the poem.

Standards Addressed

- Communication: Interpersonal, Interpretive, Presentational
- Cultures: Practices, Products
- Connections: Making Connections, Acquiring Information

Read about these standards at the end of this lesson.

Key Terms

- authentic materials
- character dictation
- heritage speaker
- proficiency level
- spiraling

Definitions for these terms can be found in the Glossary located in the Appendix.

Class Profile

“The things that they do in class—activities, language tasks—have to be from the student, from whatever they want to do and want to say. So the student can have a lot of control over the process and they will be very interested.” —Haiyan Fu

School Profile

Haiyan Fu teaches Mandarin Chinese I–IV at Northside College Preparatory High School in Chicago, Illinois. The school serves the North Side community, a diverse region in Chicago with a large Asian population. Students apply for freshman-level slots at this selective enrollment high school, a magnet school that offers a rigorous academic curriculum. The Northside World Language Department offers students a choice of seven languages: Chinese, French, German, Japanese, Korean, Latin, and Spanish.

Lesson Design

Using the National Standards for Foreign Language Learning as a guide, Dr. Fu designs her lessons to develop students’ ability to express themselves in Chinese. Each course is divided into five-week units, and each unit focuses on a different theme. Although Dr. Fu selects the main topics and general activities for each unit, she incorporates students’ personal interests to help shape their learning. This both motivates students and creates opportunities for comparisons between Chinese language and culture and the dominant language and cultural heritage of the students. Dr. Fu adjusts her curriculum as she works with each new group of students. At the end of each unit, students are assessed on a presentation that reflects all of the elements of the unit and shows how well they are functioning in the language.

To help students learn and retain their knowledge of Chinese characters (typically the hardest part of learning Chinese), Dr. Fu designed a student-led daily dictation. At the end of each class period, students select several characters or phrases from the current unit to learn for homework. The following day, one student leads the class through the dictation, while the other students write each character, its phonetic spelling, and its meaning. After they finish the dictation, students review each other’s papers, which gives them one more chance to study the characters. Dr. Fu then collects and grades the papers.

The Lesson

This lesson combined students in Chinese II–IV in a single class. Although these classes are not typically merged, the common theme of “direction” allowed for the participation of the three levels in a cooperative learning activity. Prior to this class, the Chinese II students had been studying geography, including using general terms like “east” and “west” and describing the location of their houses. They had also learned the vocabulary for places in the city, such as the post office and barbershop. The Chinese III students were in the middle of a unit on cooking and restaurant reviews, and were working on describing local restaurants, the ingredients of their dishes, and the dining experience. They worked with the Chinese II students to determine and describe the location of the restaurants.

Year at a Glance

Chinese II

Basic Chinese Grammar Structures
Weather; More Complex Sentences
Location; Geographic Description of Our School

Direction

- **Directional and resultative complements**

Home

Group Projects: Storytelling; Integration of All Grammatical Points

Chinese III

Review; Past Experience; Body and Medicine

Time

Leisure Activities

More Grammatical Structures

Food

Writing and Reading; Midterm Project; Cooking and Restaurant Reviews

Introducing People; Cultural Study:

Marriage

Presenting Facts and Arguments; Cultural

Comparison: Educational Systems

Seeking Information; Cultural Study: Area Studies and Travel

Comparative Information; Cultural Study:

Political and Social Systems

Chinese IV*

Wudi to Qin Dynasty; Modern Versions of Classical Texts, Folk Tales, and Proverbs

From *Shijing* to *Tang* Poetry; Classical

Poetry and Authors

Yuan Drama and *Ming-Qing* Novels;

Stories/Legends and Drama/Novel

Modern Times—May 4th Movement 1; Classical to Modern Literature

Modern Times—May 4th Movement 2;

Essays and Poetry

Modern Times—May 4th Movement 3;

Drama

Contemporary—Revolutions 1; Popular Literature

Contemporary—Revolutions 2; Literature and Movies

*The first topic listed in each unit is for historical background. The second topic includes reading, writing, discussion, and dramatization activities.

Class Profile, cont'd.

The Chinese IV students were transitioning from a unit on classical poetry to a unit on modern poetry that used modern language—a new “direction” in literature. As part of their unit project, students had to interpret two poems, research their authors, and perform them, which they did for the Chinese II and III students in this lesson. The project also included a written comparison of the old and new styles of poetry. The Chinese IV class included three heritage Cantonese speakers, one of whom had regular exposure to the language outside of class.

Key Teaching Strategies

- **Differentiated Instruction:** In a multilevel class, the teacher plans projects in which students work on some tasks according to their proficiencies then come together periodically for shared tasks.
- **Interpreting Literature:** The teacher facilitates the interpretation of literary pieces by having students preview, read, and discuss a literary work in the target language. This includes having students acquire cultural background knowledge, analyze the text, and respond personally to themes and issues raised by the author.
- **Theme-Based Curriculum:** The teacher chooses themes as the organizing principle for a series of instructional activities in a unit.

Analyze the Video

As you reflect on these questions, write down your responses or discuss them as a group.

Before You Watch

Respond to the following questions:

- What do you need to keep in mind when teaching a class that includes more than two adjacent levels?
- What literary genres are most accessible to high school students?
- When is it appropriate to use English when working with literary texts?

Watch the Video

As you watch “Exploring New Directions,” take notes on Dr. Fu’s instructional strategies, particularly how she organizes the group activities for her multilevel class and integrates culture into each activity. Write down what you find interesting, surprising, or especially important about the teaching and learning in this lesson.

Analyze the Video, cont'd.

Reflect on the Video

Review your notes, and then respond to the following questions:

- How does Dr. Fu ensure that students at different levels of study have a chance to be successful during group work?
- How does Dr. Fu weave culture into the lesson?
- How does the poetry component of the lesson provide cultural information for all levels of learners?
- What perspectives of Chinese culture were developed in this lesson? What practices and products did students explore?
- Consider the collaboration that took place among the Chinese IV students. What kinds of thinking, planning, and practice must have gone into the presentation that they performed?

Look Closer

Take a second look at Dr. Fu's class to focus on specific teaching strategies. Use the video images below to locate where to begin viewing.



Video Segment: Group Work Across Levels

You'll find this segment approximately 10 minutes and 30 seconds after the video starts. Watch for about 3 minutes.

Chinese II and III students work together in small groups: The Chinese III students in each group describe local restaurants to prepare for a restaurant review project, while the Chinese II students use a map to practice giving directions to the restaurants.

- How do the maps that the Chinese II students use support the task of giving directions?
- As students in Chinese II and III work together, how are the tasks differentiated?
- How would you describe the language proficiency of the Chinese II students? How does the language proficiency of the Chinese III students differ from that of the Chinese II students?
- How do the students react to working with classmates of a different proficiency level?

Analyze the Video, cont'd.



Video Segment: Poetry Recitations

You'll find this segment approximately 16 minutes and 30 seconds after the video starts. Watch for about 5 minutes.

Chinese IV students explain and then recite for their Chinese II and III classmates two poems involving directions.

- What purpose is served by the students' use of English? Is this an appropriate place for English? Explain your response.
- Why are these poetry recitations considered to be examples of "presentational communication"? How do the presentations reflect that students had interpreted the poems appropriately?
- How do the Chinese IV students demonstrate effective presentational strategies? Does their audience understand the message of the poet?
- What aspects of poetry as a literary genre make it accessible to high school students? What aspects of these specific poems make them a good choice for the students?

Connect to Your Teaching

Reflect on Your Practice

As you reflect on these questions, write down your responses or discuss them as a group.

- In a multilevel class, how can the more proficient students motivate the lower-level students to continue to learn the language?
- What aspects of poetry compensate for beginning students' limited language understanding?
- How do you go about collecting and connecting authentic materials to expand themes in lessons/units (for example, a poem or play turned into a film, or an article on a historical event used as background for a short story)?

Watch Other Videos

Watch other videos in the *Teaching Foreign Languages K–12* library for more examples of teaching methodologies like those you've just seen. Note: All videos in this series are subtitled in English.

"Interpreting Literature" (Spanish) and "Interpreting *La Belle et la Bête*" (French) show students interpreting a cultural work—a story and a film respectively.

Connect to Your Teaching, cont'd.

Put It Into Practice

Try these ideas in your classroom.

- Use spiraling to address developing language proficiency and/or higher order thinking skills and to teach a multilevel class. To reach across three levels of instruction, Dr. Fu had to plan inventively with the theme “directions.” She did so by spiraling from a very concrete task (giving directions) to an abstract one (exploring new directions in poetry). Spiraling a theme permits students to revisit the theme as their language proficiency expands. Think about how you might spiral themes like artwork from the target culture, a historical event, or a current event across different levels. What language and/or cultural tasks would be appropriate for each level?
- When selecting literature for students to interpret, choose works whose background or setting is accessible to students. Reading literary works requires a balance of language proficiency and experience, and in many languages, contemporary literature is linguistically more accessible than traditional pieces. Dr. Fu selected her literary pieces based partly on the language of the piece. She chose contemporary poems rather than ancient ones because the language in the contemporary poems was colloquial and the lexical and grammatical structures were simple. This holds true for many languages. The goal is to challenge students to interpret poems or other literary pieces but not frustrate them. That requires editing the *tasks* you give them, not the text.

Resources

Haiyan Fu's Recommendations

Web Resources:

Fulaoshi.com: Web Resources

<http://www.fulaoshi.com/resources.php>

Web links to resources for Chinese language and culture study assembled by Dr. Fu

Standards

National Standards for Foreign Language Learning

Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century defines what students should know and be able to do in foreign language education. This lesson correlates to the following standards:

Communication: Communicate in Languages Other Than English

Standard 1.1: Interpersonal Communication

Students engage in conversations, provide and obtain information, express feelings and emotions, and exchange opinions.

Standard 1.2: Interpretive Communication

Students understand and interpret written and spoken language on a variety of topics.

Standard 1.3: Presentational Communication

Students present information, concepts, and ideas to an audience of listeners or readers on a variety of topics.

Cultures: Gain Knowledge and Understanding of Other Cultures

Standard 2.1: Practices of Culture

Students demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the practices and perspectives of the culture studied.

Standard 2.2: Products of Culture

Students demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the products and perspectives of the culture studied.

Connections: Connect With Other Disciplines and Acquire Information

Standard 3.1: Making Connections

Students reinforce and further their knowledge of other disciplines through the foreign language.

Standard 3.2: Acquiring Information

Students acquire information and recognize the distinctive viewpoints that are only available through the foreign language and its cultures.

Notes
