Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language

THEORIES AND APPLICATIONS

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Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language:

Theories and Applications

This sample includes:

Excerpt from Chapter 5 – *Literacy Development in Chinese as a Foreign Language*,
by
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Excerpt from Chapter 7 – *Teaching Listening and Speaking: An Interactive Approach,*
by
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Excerpt from Chapter 10 – *Linking Curriculum, Assessment, and Professional Development: Challenges of a K-16 Articulated Program,* by Madeline K. Spring

Chapter 7

Teaching Listening and Speaking

An Interactive Approach

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Listening and speaking are intertwined in the mode of interpersonal communication. The listener and speaker spontaneously convey ideas based on what each hears, request clarifications when there is doubt, and negotiate meanings to reach consensus or to reserve differences. Communication is interactive and bi-directional: When A sends a message, B immediately comprehends it in the context and interprets it according to his/her perspective. The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Language's National Standards (ACTFL Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century, 1999) conceptualize communication into three modes: interpersonal, interpretive and presentational. When learners are engaged in conversation, they are in the interpersonal communicative mode to interpret others' speech and to present their own viewpoints. Under the framework of Communicative Language Teaching, these two skills are practiced in the form of conversation, through interpersonal activities such as dialogues, interviews, discussions, role plays, and debates.

From the perspective of psycholinguistics, listening and speaking are two different processes. Listening is a decoding process that requires comprehension strategies. Speaking is a productive skill that maps concepts and ideas onto correct linguistic forms and appropriate pragmatic functions. Listening is a fundamental source of learning. The development of the listening skill precedes and empowers the speaking skill. Speaking derives from listening, and in turn, enhances the ability of comprehension.

The present article will examine three processing theories: the model of working memory, schema theory, and the input-output model of second language acquisition (SLA) and use. It will discuss the implications of these theories and research findings to the teaching of listening and speaking in the context of Chinese as a foreign language (CFL). It will also present task-based instruction as an effective model that integrates listening and speaking in a highly communicative approach. It will provide pedagogical examples for curriculum design and instructional implementation.

1. The relationship between pronunciation and speech processing: the model of working memory.

The theory of working memory was posited by Baddeley (1986). Working memory is a system that stores information very briefly and allows us to manipulate the information while various mental tasks are performed. We can keep information circulating in working memory by rehearsing it. Baddeley, Gathercole and Papagno (1998) have proposed that phonology and pronunciation are fundamental to the process of listening comprehension. When hearing a phone message such as Sample 1: "大姑于六月9号下午三点乘西北公司179号航班抵虹桥机场，她想知道你能不能去接她", we have to remember the information in the first part of the sentence in order to process the second part. What affects our memory and speed of processing is the phonological store, a mechanism that helps us with working memory (figure 1). The working memory model (Gathercole and Baddeley 1993) states that information we hear in phonological form fades away in seconds. In order to retain the information, one repeats the sound of the word or the phrase silently or aloud, a subvocal rehearsal process (Baddeley 1986). The phonological repetition recycles the sound of words through the articulatory loop back to the phonological store. In other words, the articulatory loop, or phonological loop, is specialized for the retention of verbal information, especially when the words are new and not familiar to us. It mediates and stores unfamiliar sound forms while more permanent memory representations are being constructed.

1.1. IMPLICATIONS OF THE MODEL OF WORKING MEMORY TO CFL LISTENING AND SPEAKING INSTRUCTION.

The model of working memory has two important implications to the teaching of listening and speaking. First, the level of fluency of pronunciation is vital to speech processing and comprehension. Working memory and the listening process are closely interrelated to pronunciation and language use. As Cook (2001) commented, how much one can remember depends on how fast one can repeat, and thus, how fast the information circles round the articulatory loop. Cook posits that "Pronunciation should be taken more seriously, not just for its own sake, but as the
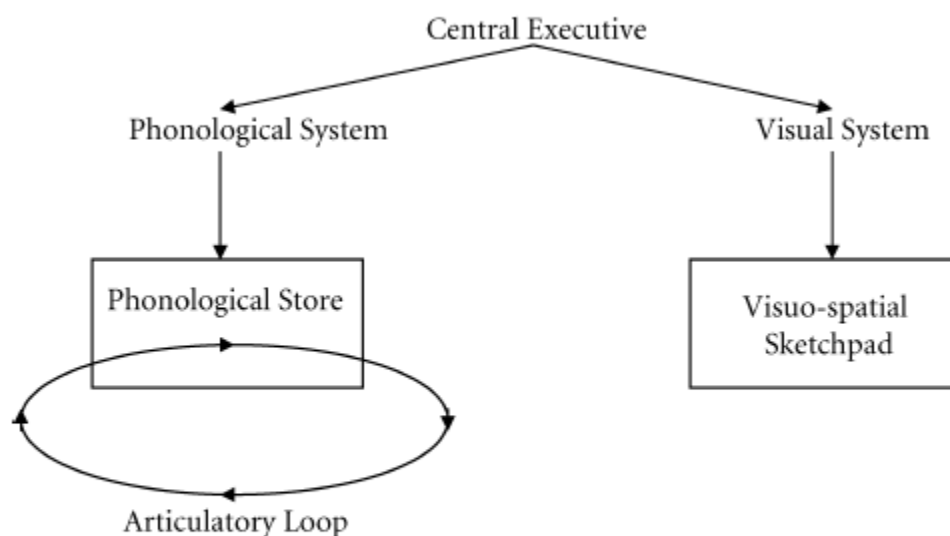
Central Executive

Phonological System

Visual System

Phonological Store

Visuo-spatial
Sketchpad

Articulatory Loop

Figure 1. Baddeley's model of working memory (simplified), cited in Cook (2001, p. 84)

basis for speaking and comprehending" (p. 86). Helping learners build a strong foundation in pronunciation at the beginning level fundamentally benefits them in the long run.

Methods to train learners' pronunciation may combine listening and speaking, with listening as the focus (以听带说，听说结合). First comes accuracy in listening, and then correct pronunciation. For example, learners are asked to focus on listening to and practicing the stress and length of the vowel, rhythm, and intonation in varied phonological environments. Instruction can also combine listening and speaking in sentences where grammar plays a role in stress, as proposed by 胡波 (2004). For example, in simple subject-verb sentences, the verb is frequently stressed (as in sentences 1–2 below); when the verb has an object, the object is stressed (sentences 3–4); when a complement is present, the complement is often stressed (sentences 5–6); in questions, interrogative words are often stressed (sentence 7–8).

1. 你说吧！
2. 你喜欢就拿上。
3. 他说出了她的名字。
4. 我不用手机。
5. 张老师解释得很清楚。
6. 他说得有理，做得对。
7. 谁在说话？
8. 你怎么什么都没带来？

The second implication of the model is that teaching should take into consideration memory and processing limitations. Short words and familiar information

are easier to process. The sounds of short words are repeated faster, and thus, circulated more quickly and easily back to the phonological store. Familiar information is retrieved directly from memory, saves the capacity of working memory, and consequently speeds up language processing. Different sentence structures require different capacities of memory processing. Passive sentences, for example, take longer to understand than active sentences (Baddeley, 1986). Listening materials should have good control of new words and grammar structures. It is suggested that the material should contain approximately 10% new words and 5% new grammar structures for learners at the elementary and intermediate level. The content of the material should be familiar to learners. Otherwise, a brief introduction is needed before listening. Furthermore, questions in the listening exercise should be immediate and of moderate length. For instance, referring to the information presented in Sample 1, a question such as "大姑几月几号几点乘哪一个航空公司的几号航班抵虹桥机场？" is inappropriate for learners at the elementary level because it is over-loaded with information, and thus requires a large capacity of working memory.

2. The relationship between background knowledge and comprehension: schema theory.

We receive information by listening. The process of listening comprehension, however, is by no means a passive and a receptive skill. Scholars (Clarke and Silberstein 1977, Bransford and Johnson 1982, Carrell 1984) have proposed schema theory, describing comprehension as an interactive process in which listeners actively use both linguistic knowledge and their own knowledge of the world to interact with the content of the input[1], and create new meanings based on their interpretations. What listeners contribute to the process from their memories and experiences is much more than the original input itself, as Clarke and Silberstein (1977) commented:

> Research has shown that reading is only incidentally visual. More information is contributed by the reader than by the print on the page. That is, readers understand what they read because they are able to take the stimulus beyond its graphic representation and assign it membership to an appropriate group of concepts already stored in their memories. (p.136)

Although the topic that Clarke and Silberstein are discussing is reading, schema theory is equally valid and applicable to listening. In the listening process, three steps seem to occur: We first receive the message, then comprehend it in context, and interpret it in each of our own ways. For example, in response to a mother's

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[1]Input in this article refers to any language to which the learner is exposed.

statement "饭做好了!", everyone in the family might interpret it differently. What the father hears is "Set up the table and get ready to eat!"; the elder brother might think "The food is finally ready; let me go down to the dining room!"; the sister might think "What dishes are they? I hope they are my favorites." The interpretation from the younger brother is different from them all: "There is no chance to go to McDonald's; the food is ready and we are going to eat at home." They all share one thing in common. Everyone actively interacts with the input. They receive the same message but interpret it differently, and create varied meanings based on their concerns and perspectives.

The above example has shown that, as listeners, we selectively associate information in the input to the most relevant knowledge from our memory, compare the input with our existing linguistic and world knowledge, and interpret it based on our own experience. The process is highly interactive and mostly subconscious, and happens in a fraction of a second.

In the process, the listener interacts with the input at different linguistic levels and interprets it based on all possible background knowledge. A listener must understand not only the semantics of a sentence, but also its pragmatic function; not only word meaning, but also the usage in the context. For example, the sentence "有火吗?", although in a question form, is a request. There would be no communication if a person takes the question "有火吗?" as a real "yes" or "no" interrogation. Furthermore, the "light, 火" is definitely referring to a match or cigarette lighter only. In communication, the intent of the speaker is frequently indirect and imbedded. Listeners need to rely on the linguistic and/or non-linguistic context to infer the meaning. For example, when hearing the sentence "麻烦你很不好意思", we do not know if it is an apology, a request for help, or an expression of thankfulness. It is only in the context and based on one's experience that meaning becomes clear.

It is important to note that schemata may be culture specific and vary from one culture to another. For example, when a CFL learner who grows up in the western culture hears the word "婚礼", he / she would activate the schema of "white bridal gowns, fresh white roses, vows, pink flower pedals showering the bride and groom". The learner may become confused and misinterpret the text that describes the wedding with "red bridal dresses, red banners, red signs of double happiness, fireworks, and a big feast with people getting drunk." The misinterpretation is not caused by linguistic elements such as new vocabulary and grammar, but by the lack of target cultural knowledge. Therefore, one of the tasks of second language education is to build up the learner's culturally contextualized schemata. CFL teachers should help learners develop their cultural background knowledge through a variety of activities such as pre-reading, learning vocabularies that convey cultural connotations, making comparisons of cultural practices, and understanding the value behind them. Activities such as visual presentations, flow-charting, or diagramming to develop learners' understanding of the target culture are helpful.

2.1. IMPLICATIONS OF SCHEMA THEORY TO CFL LISTENING AND SPEAKING INSTRUCTION

Schema theory considers listening comprehension not only as a linguistic encoding process but also as a problem-solving process. Listeners use intonation cues, contextual clues, background knowledge, and cognitive skills to associate the input with one's existing experience, activate the relevant content in the mind, and retrieve the pertinent information from memory. When one piece of information is triggered, an associated group of similar categories simultaneously becomes active. Therefore, it is optimal if listeners can make connections between new information and what they already know.

This provides two significant guidelines for classroom instruction. First, teaching must make connections between new learning and what has been already acquired by students. Pre-listening activities serve this purpose. The instructor can initiate activities such as brainstorming to guess the content of the input, having a brief discussion about the title, showing a visual, or telling a brief personal story or an anecdote as a prelude to listening. If there are many new words in the material that are vital to comprehension, a short vocabulary list should be provided. If the material requires cultural understanding that is absent in the learners' repertoire, a brief introduction is in order. Take the previous example "婚礼". Pre-listening activities may include associating color and food with the Chinese wedding; post-listening activities may include a project of examining the meaning and practice of 男婚女嫁 in China. In short, it is essential to help learners acquire the necessary background information applicable to the material, and to create a context that activates learners' existing knowledge.

Post-listening activities also serve the purpose of making connections between learner's existing knowledge and new learning. In post-listening activities, students summarize the learning content and synthesize their understanding. Furthermore, post-listening activities assess the accuracy of comprehension, and combine listening and speaking skills to consolidate learners' comprehension. Post-listening activities should be diverse in form and content depending on the pedagogical purposes and the needs of learners. For example, the first post-listening activity of "你的车找到了" is to answer the listening comprehension questions in the handout. Then learners are asked to exchange their answer sheets with their partners. This gives them opportunities to discuss their uncertainties in listening. As a follow-up, each pair is required to create their own dialogue based on the input of "你的车找到了". The topic may be "你的钱包/手表/车/护照/小弟弟/小妹妹找到了". Since it is a guided composition, learners can produce theirs in a comparatively easy and rapid fashion. (Alternatively, this can be a home assignment so that no classroom time is taken.) Finally, the pair is required to present their new dialogue to the whole class. (If the class has more than 10 students, the instructor can select three pairs. The rest of the students can be selected in future sessions so all students have an opportunity to do a presentation.)

Second, the listening input should be challenging enough so that learners have ample opportunities to employ cognitive skills and learning strategies in the process. While listening, learners not only use bottom-up strategies to understand the meaning of words, but also top-down strategies to grasp the gist of the whole passage, look for internal relationships among the information in the discourse, and infer meaning based on key words. For example, the dialogue in Appendix I (刘珣等 2003) is for learners at the high-elementary level. It has a considerable number of new words. Some (e.g., 丢, 自行车, 派出所, 警察) are essential to comprehension of the whole dialogue; others (e.g., 东升, 城里, 牌子, 永久牌, 取, 拿) are minor and can be easily skipped. It also requires some cultural background, e.g. the local police station in China acts as a "lost and found" for people for such items as bicycles. Before listening, the instructor helps learners focus their attention by asking warm-up questions such as:

1.   如果你的自行车丢了，你会做什么？

Students may give different answers. One might say "告诉 police." The instructor will then write the new word "警察" on the board since it is a key word, and present a visual that shows a Chinese police station with a Chinese police officer and a bike.

2.   谁可能把你的车找到？
3.   警察会问什么问题呢？

(Please see the dialogue in Appendix I.)

During listening, learners are encouraged to first focus on main ideas. If the material is lengthy and presents a certain level of difficulty, listening can be repeated. The first pass may focus on obtaining the major information. The second pass can be more targeted to specific information and details. For example, the instructor may ask learners to "jot down all the numbers," or "jot down the time sequence and names." In the example "你的车找到了", the instructor may ask learners to "jot down the 是……的 sentences" if the purpose of the activity is to practice the "是……的" pattern. Learners are guided toward piecing information together in order to derive complete ideas, and to infer meanings in context. The task of listening instruction, therefore, is to help learners employ varied cognitive skills such as categorizing, comparing, synthesizing, hypothesizing, and testing, as well as learning strategies such as guessing, predicting, skimming, scanning, and looking for key words and clues in the context.
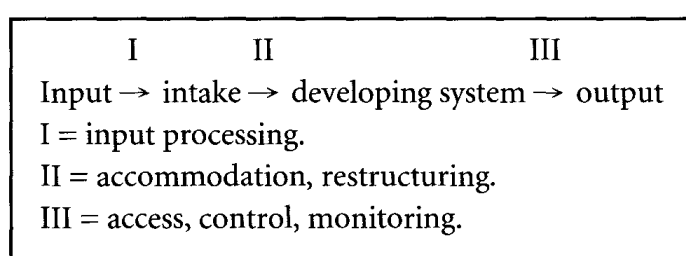
Table 1 summarizes the design of such a series of activities, from pre-listening through post-listening.

Table 1.   Structured activities for dialogue "你的车找到了"

Summary	

Tasks and Goals	1. Pre-listening: (In the interpersonal mode) warm-up activities to
	    a. activate learners' relevant linguistic and background knowledge,
	    b. motivate learners' interest.
	2. Listening: (In the interpretive Mode)
	    a. encourage the use of cognitive skills,
	    b. induce learners to use certain specific strategies.
	3. Post-listening: (In the interpersonal Mode)
	    a. assess/confirm listening comprehension; learners negotiate meanings and clarify ideas,
	    b. guided composition for production; creatively apply what they already know to new learning,
	    c. group presentation.

Detailed Plan	

Step 1: Pre-listening
T/S interaction Interpersonal Mode
	1. Use questions for warm-up
	    a. 如果你的自行车丢了，你会做什么？
	    b. 谁可能把你的车找到？
	    c. 警察会问什么问题呢？
	2. Write down the key new words while listening to students' answers: (e.g., 丢, 自行车, 派出所, 警察).
	3. Present a picture of a Chinese police station with a Chinese police woman or man and a bike.

Step 2: Listening
S interaction w/ input Interpretive Mode
	1. Direction: listen for main ideas such as:
	    a. who is in the story?
	    b. why do they talk?
	    c. where are they?
	Remind students to guess the meaning in context and do not get stumped on a particular word
	2. Read listening comprehension questions on our handout first and listen for the second time. Then, write answers to questions.

Step 3: Post-listening S/S interaction Interpersonal Mode	Students interact and negotiate meaning by: 1. exchanging answer sheets with their partner and discussing the differences in their answers, 2. creating a new dialogue based on the input, 3. presenting the dialogue in class, 4. writing a narrative based on the input and submitting it as homework.

3. The relationship between input and output: The model of second language acquisition.

The development of listening and speaking skills reflects the processes of both first and second language acquisition (SLA). In a formal instructional setting for SLA, listening input is pedagogically designed to tailor its content, form, meaning, and function to the language development stages of learners. VanPatten (1995) proposed a model of SLA and use (figure 2) consisting of three processes and four concepts in an interactive relationship from instructional input to learner's output.

I   II   III
Input → intake → developing system → output
I = input processing.
II = accommodation, restructuring.
III = access, control, monitoring.

Figure 2. Model of second language acquisition and use (based on VanPatten 1995)

The model is highly applicable to teaching listening and speaking. One emphasis of the model is on meaning and comprehensibility of the input, and input processing. As scholars have stated (e.g., Long, 1990, Ellis, 2003, VanPatten, 2004), comprehensible input is the first step to the successful generation of language output. Comprehensible input, however, does not guarantee that input will become the learner's intake[2]. It is the learner who converts input into intake, and intake to output, who succeeds in developing strong listening and speaking abilities.

3.1. IMPLICATIONS OF THE MODEL OF SLA AND ITS RELEVANCE TO CFL LISTENING AND SPEAKING INSTRUCTION

Instruction can assist and enhance the listening and speaking processes. Well-designed learning activities need to accommodate intake and restructure the learners' language system by helping them access their linguistic repertoire on the one hand and monitoring their speaking output on the other. Examples of such activities are presented in Tables 1, 2, and 3 of this article. The instructor can strategically direct learners' attention to important features in the input, and facilitate form-meaning mappings that consequently lead to better intake and quality output. Instructors can design a variety of activities to facilitate listening comprehension by using visual images (以图助听), by designing activities that involve

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[2]Intake refers to grammar knowledge that becomes part of a learner's competence after mediating between input and grammars.

taking notes (以笔助听) and listening by doing (以做助听), and by integrating speaking and listening in an interactive fashion (听说互动).

Visual aids help decrease the load of working memory and thus speed up input processing. They also promote interest in learning. Visual aids should vary in form and may be charts, tables, maps, schedules, or vivid or funny pictures from a web page. The choice of the form is determined by the content and difficulty level of the material. The image may have brief words in it so that learners compare and identify the relevant meaning, or can be an empty chart with a title that learners can fill in with key words from the input. Figure 3 is such an example.

8:00 a.m.
8:30 a.m.
10:30 a.m.
2:00 p.m.
4:00 p.m.
9:00 p.m.
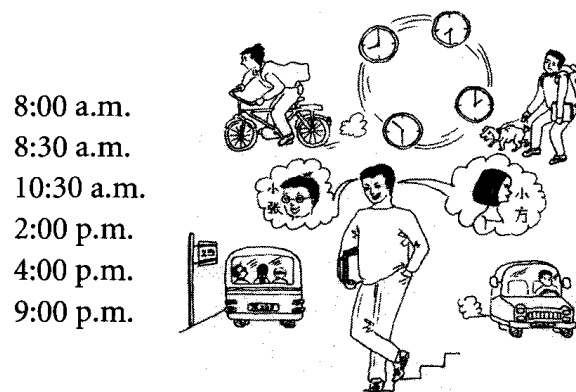
Drawn by Miss Jiayao Pang

Figure 3. My schedule on Sunday

Taking notes while listening is an important skill that assists conversion from input to intake. Taking notes requires learners to use cognitive skills to look for cues and identify key information in the input. Notes taken can be numbers, connecting words to show sequences, layers of meanings, and relationships such as cause-effect pairs, conditions, and consequences. Notes might be words, such as nouns, key verbs with its nouns, time sequences, or clues in the context; or may even be a map or a floor plan. The form of the notes (Pinyin, characters, or English) should be flexible to accommodate individual learning styles and preferences, language proficiency levels, and goals of instruction.

Visual aids and taking notes make learning easier and help combine listening and speaking skills. For example, when learning locations and directions, students can draw a map while listening. Then they can exchange their maps in pairs or small groups, and compare differences among their drawings. Based on the input they have just heard and discussed, learners can work out a new description of a familiar location. It can be a favorite restaurant, a popular bookstore, or a quaint downtown street. The instructor can ask a few students to tell the class their descriptions individually while the rest of the class listens and draws the location based on the input. This activity that integrates listening and speaking (听说互动) is summarized in table 2.

This is an example of the output from a student:

Table 2. Integrating listening and speaking "你知道这个地方吗?"

Goals of the Task Interpretive Interpersonal Presentational modes	Practice
	1. Listening strategies: note taking, identifying key words and information, guessing, inferring, synthesizing.
	2. Communicative skills: group discussion and negotiation of meaning based on their drawings.
	3. Speaking strategies: logical sequencing of the information, clarity.
Steps	1. Individual work: listen and take notes / draw. (The interpretive mode)
	2. Pair/group interaction: exchange and compare drawings. (The interpersonal mode)
	3. Individual work: use five sentences to create one's own description of a favorite place on campus or in town and how to locate it. (The presentational mode)
	4. Individuals report their descriptions to the class; other students listen, guess, and answer questions. (The presentational mode and the interpersonal mode.)
Cognitive skills and strategies practiced	1. For input processing: Listen for key words and information, grasp the gist, guess, listen for details by taking notes/drawing, tolerate unknowns, identify, and discover.
	2. For output: Logical sequencing based on the input, clarity, coherence, choosing interesting content.
Linguistic skills practiced	Understand meaning, and use forms accurately and appropriately: 1. 1. S. 在 N. 的 location. 2. N. 的 location 是 N. 3. Location 有 N.
Activity form	1. Interactive between the learner and the input, and among learners.
	2. Communicative: learners interpret, express, and negotiate meaning about locations and directions.

"这个饭馆在 Calhound 街上。这个饭馆的旁边有一个加油站。这个饭馆的对面是 law school。这个饭馆的左边有 Wendy's。这个饭馆离45号公路不远。你知道这个饭馆吗？"

Listening by doing is another instructional strategy that facilitates the conversion from input to intake by focusing on comprehension. The method Total Physical Response (Asher 1982) is especially appropriate for material that takes time to process. In this method, learners are given time while listening to pay attention to the linguistic forms and react to meaning. Comprehension is reinforced through action. For example, the instructor can conveniently use props in the classroom to help learners understand the function of the "ba" construction (把字句) while they physically respond to the requests while listening:

"请把门关上／打开。" "请把灯关上／打开。"
"请把你的电话号写在黑板上。" "请把你的手机拿出来。"
"请把你的钱包拿出来。" "请把你的钱给我。"

The exercise can also be at the phrase level. For example, when teaching the verb complement, the instructor can ask learners to act on the input and pay attention to the word order and the language form:

"请你（们）走到教室前面来。" "走上来。"
"走过去, 走到那儿去。" "走下去。" "开门出去。"
"往前走三步。" "往后退一步。"
"向左拐，往前走，停。走回来。"

It is fine if there are a few new words in the input (e.g., "退", "步" "向", "停"). Learners are encouraged to guess the meanings and to develop a tolerance for unknowns. A similar method can also be used in practicing locations and directions that are notoriously difficult to learn because of word order, preposition usage, and spatial conceptualization, which is abstract and culturally distinctive (Bowerman 1989, Wen 1994, 1995, and 1997a). Learners are asked to act on the statements to confirm their listening comprehension:

"你的笔在书上。" "你的笔在书里。" "你的书包在桌子上面。"
"你的手机在书包里面，不在书包外面。"
"你站在丽莎的后面，在斯蒂文的前面。"

After repeatedly hearing and acting on the statements, learners might be able to notice the word order and sentence structure of Chinese sentences and realize linguistic differences between Chinese and English, compare the input with their existing knowledge, and continuously restructure their interlanguage[3] system.

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[3]An interlanguage is an independent linguistic system produced by a learner of a second language. It is developing towards the target language, and is also preserving some features of the learner's first language.

4. Integrating listening and speaking in communicative tasks: Task-based instruction

Task-based instruction is a teaching approach that integrates listening and speaking skills in one carefully designed task. In a simplified sense, a task is a means of motivating learners to actively use the language communicatively to achieve learning goals. One of the major underpinnings of task-based instruction is SLA theory, namely, that learning is autonomous and language may develop independently from instruction (e.g., Selinker 1972, Pienemann, 1987, Pienemann 1989, Wen 2006). Other underpinnings of the approach are theories of sociolinguistics that consider communicative competence and language use as fundamental to both language and language acquisition (Hymes 1971, Savignon 1983, Brown 1994), and from Halliday's theory of systemic-functional grammar (1975, 1978). Halliday takes a social semiotic approach to the function of the language, and investigates how meaning is constructed in relation to a speaker's intention, and understood within a context. He proposes that we use language as a means to achieve communicative goals, interpret information in context for purposeful use, and negotiate meanings interactively.

There are several implications of the underpinnings of task-based instruction to the teaching of CFL. Theories of language acquisition tell us that teaching must be learner-centered. In the classroom, learning tasks should be meaningful to learners, purposeful with specific outcomes that can be assessed, interactive by nature, and closely based on themes of daily life that reflect genuine communication. How are we to make these happen?

In the early days of task-based instruction, Prabhu (1987) proposed the "gap principle"; that is, that instruction creates an information, reasoning, or opinion gap within the input or among learners so that learners need to genuinely communicate in order to bridge the gap and accomplish the task. The task, "How to make "宫保鸡丁" and "蛋炒饭", as illustrated below, is such an example. In addition to input, Swain (1985, 1995) has posited that a learner's output is vital for language acquisition and the development of communicative competence. Learners need ample opportunities to produce "pushed output" that is not only fluent and accurate, but also with an appropriate sentence length and level of complexity.

In "gap" tasks, learners complete a task by consulting, gathering, and discussing the information with each other. During the process, learners are given opportunities to observe linguistic forms, make comparisons, and test their hypotheses by using the language meaningfully. For example, when reviewing the "ba" construction (把字句), students are divided into two A and B groups to receive different input and work in pairs to tell each other how to cook "宫保鸡丁" or "蛋炒饭". The task is designed in three phases with six steps: the pre-task phase for form-focused instruction, listening, and input processing; the in-task phase for

Table 3.   **Interpersonal interaction: How to make "宫保鸡丁" and "蛋炒饭"**

Phase	Steps
Pre-task 1. pre-listening 2. listening input Interpretive Mode	1. Linguistic preparation: practice the form, meaning, and function of 把字句, key words, and lexical chunks in the listening input. 2. Create information gap in input: Groups A and B listen to different tapes of how to make "宫保鸡丁" and "蛋炒饭" respectively. Students are informed that they will tell each other what they have heard afterwards.
In-task 3. interpersonal communication 4. negotiate meanings Interpersonal Mode	3. Students work in pairs to report to each other on how to make "宫保鸡丁" and "蛋炒饭" respectively. They negotiate meanings and clarify doubts. 4. They prepare what they obtained from the partner into a coherent narrative discourse. They are required to report to the class after their pair work.
Post-task 5. "pushed output" 6. discourse presentation Presentational Mode	5. The instructor selects a few students to report individually on what they learned from their partner. The rest of the students serve as judges for the report. 6. Home assignment: prepare a recipe for your favorite dish and send it to the class through email.

speaking and interpersonal communication; the post-task phase for assessment and follow-up language use in speaking or/and writing. Table 3 presents the steps in a structured fashion.

There are four features worth noting in the above task design. First, learners go through genuine communication. They must consult each other for necessary information so that they can do their next task of reporting what they have learned to the class. They must comprehend clearly and speak accurately to interact for meaning. Second, the series of activities is well-structured, with the previous activity feeding into the next activity. The activities start with form-focused instruction that guides learners to a range of possible language realizations, and end with the learning outcome of presenting a "recipe". Learners are provided with not only a good amount of exposure to listening input, but many opportunities to use the language for interpersonal communication. They are encouraged to speak with good quantity and quality. Third, the topic relates to daily life situations that promote interest and usefulness of the learning. Fourth, the assessment is conducted by the students themselves, which provides immediate feedback to facilitate their language processing and acquisition.

Task-based instruction provides myriad ways to integrate listening and speaking, and encourages learners to interact bi-directionally. Role-play presents

"replication activities of the real world" (Willis 1990) in which learners use language and build up their communicative competence in a linguistically and culturally rich environment. Appendix II is such an example, in which a theme determines the context where learners play different roles to reach goals and produce outcomes. Tasks are not performed for simulation because learners tend to use language for acting and display. Instead, a task should be purposeful and require learners to interact to negotiate meanings, make suggestions, solve problems, and reach agreements. There is an objective to work toward in a task, and consequently learners obtain it through interaction.

Tasks should be diverse, and varied in in content, with the flexibility to meet learners' interests, learning styles, and proficiency levels. Interviews are easy to use and interesting to learners. It can be a job or a school entrance interview in which a student plays the role of an interviewee (students do so by turns), whereas others are all interviewers. It can be a news interview where learners go to interview two or three classmates or Chinese students on campus, and then report the results of their "news" or "survey" to the class. When teaching expressions of time and place, for example, students can work in groups to play the role of "detectives" to examine schedules of "suspected" students and report to the class the conclusion of their "investigation". When teaching locations and directions, the following tasks, for example, are easy to use and interesting. The difficulty level of the tasks below varies to fit the different proficiency backgrounds of learners.

1. Learning by discovering. The instructor informs students: "I have hidden over 20 items such as pens, notebooks, Chinese stamps, maps, apples, bananas, etc. in this classroom. Can you find them? You must use two sentences to describe the location of the item you have found, such as 这个笔记本在那把椅子的上头，桌子的下头，窗户的旁边. You must find a minimum of two items and then report to the class. This is a rewarding activity: you may keep one item for yourself!"

2. Learning by identifying. Play a guessing game: First, students prepare a short narrative about a well-known person (a president, a movie/sport star), or a popular place (a country, a state, a local restaurant, a favorite local street, a building on campus). Then, they tell the class individually, asking them if they can identify the name of the person or place, as illustrated in table 2.

3. Learning by interaction. Students are divided into two groups. Students in group A are given a campus map and work as "Campus Guides for new students". Students in group B are new to the campus and need to find their classrooms, bookstores, and campus service locations. Each "Campus Guide" needs to help at least two "new students."

4. Learning by doing. This is group work, with four students in a group. The directions are: "You are residential architects and work in teams. Two of you will design houses and the other two of you will design a community plan.

After finishing your drawings, tell each other about your design. For example, explain the location of different rooms in the house and locations of the school, post office, banks, and restaurants in the community. Then your group will work out a narrative to present to the class."

When implementing communicative task-based instruction in the classroom, the instructor needs to consider five "rules" to promote the ease of flow and success of the performance:

1. Build up the path. Start with comprehensible input and form-focused[4] instruction, so that learners are very familiar with the sentence structures and vocabularies to be used in performing the task;
2. Establish a clear purpose. Ensure that learners know what they are expected to do and how to contribute to the processes and the objectives;
3. State specific requirements for the output. Requirements may include length (e.g., how many sentences), language forms, and functions;
4. Specify a time frame. State the time period learners will use for each task. The range usually varies from 3–15 minutes in class;
5. End with learner output, such as a report or a presentation to the class. Students can take turns if the class size is large.

A well-structured task plan is the key to the success of learners' performance. The task of the instructor is to provide a highly interactive language environment with clear communicative goals, and to design the tasks that internally motivate learners. In this way, learners have the desire to actively participate and use the language to solve problems and make decisions. Motivation is significant in the learners' participation and strategy use (Wen 1997b). As illustrated above, tasks should be designed and organized according to students' interests, proficiency levels, learning content, and the size of the class. Tasks should be offered in different forms and in a variety of ways in order to bring a sense of innovation and creativity to the classroom.

NOTES

1. Input in this article refers to any language to which the learner is exposed.
2. Intake refers to grammar knowledge that becomes part of a learner's competence after mediating between input and grammars.
3. An interlanguage is an independent linguistic system produced by a learner of a second language. It is developing towards the target language, and is also preserving some features of the learner's first language.

[4]Form-focused instruction refers to instruction that focuses on language form, i.e. grammar structures. The form-focused instruction proposed in this article is implemented under the framework of Communicative Language Teaching.

4. Form-focused instruction refers to instruction that focuses on language form, i.e. grammar structures. The form-focused instruction proposed in this article is implemented under the framework of Communicative Language Teaching.

Appendix 1

你的车找到了 （摘自《新实用汉语课本 2》刘珣等，2003）

女：喂，是马大为吗？

男：是啊，您是哪位？

女：我是东升派出所的警察，我姓刘。

男：刘小姐您好。找我有什么事儿吗？

女：我们想问一下，你是不是上个星期丢了一辆自行车？

男：对啊，就是上个星期六晚上丢的。

女：你的车是放在什么地方的？

男：那天我到城里去看朋友，车放在学院前边的公共汽车站了。

女：你的车是什么牌子的？什么颜色？

男：黑色的，永久牌。

女：你是哪天告诉派出所的？

男：我是星期天早上就告诉派出所了。

女：你的车已经找到了，你现在就可以到派出所来取。

男：真的？太好了！谢谢你们，我马上就去拿。

Appendix 2

Integrating the theme, context, language form, meaning, and function through role play

Theme	Context	Roles	Language form & meaning	Function
Reserve a hotel room	At the front desk of a hotel	Traveler / Hotel assistant	Unit price, money expressions: 一天多少钱？	Request, clarification, negotiation
Look for a job	Interview	Interviewee Interviewers	Past experience "-了","-过","了." S.是 emphasized V.的.	Self-introduction, explanation, convincing
Buy a house	At a sales office	Buyer Seller	Location and direction S.在 N.的 location. N.的 location 是 N. Location 有 N.	Consult, disagree, appraise

Theme	Context	Roles	Language form & meaning	Function
Buy a car	Car dealer's office	Buyer Seller	Comparison A比 B adj (一点儿/得多 / # 量词。 A比 B 更 adj.	Comparison Identify, persuasion, clarification.
Reserve a ticket	On the phone	Buyer Seller	Time, place, money expressions 从 Pl 到 Pl 得票多少钱？	Introduction, recommendation, negotiation
Meet friends	At a party	Three people	Introduce friends A 对 B 有兴趣.	Greetings, compliment
Tourism	Conversation on a map	Tourist Guide	Narrative presentation, A 是 modifier 的 N. 之一。	Statement in discourse, suggestion

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