

HAOHSIANG Our pedagogy here is we would like to train our students to become successful participants in Chinese culture by using Mandarin as their primary language. So this means we expect students to behave in a way that whenever they have an opportunity to interact with Chinese people, they will find it comfortable from both sides. So that's the general idea about our pedagogy here.

LIAO: In order to do this, besides language proficiency, we're talking about the grammar. We're talking about the language forms. We also extend our attention to their behavioral culture. And we feel that this is an essential component for a successful communication in a second culture. The time in class, we'll usually use it, for the most part, to provide students the opportunity to perform. And by performance, we mean that performance in the second culture based on what we call the situational knowledge.

So we feel as an instructor, our role is to provide a state for students to practice in class. I think the example could be as simple as, how do you create your teacher versus your friends in Chinese culture? When students ask me, so what am I going to learn for Chinese 101, I always tell them that after Chinese 101, if you have friends who don't know any Chinese ask you, so how do you speak "hi" in Chinese, your answer can be more sophisticated than saying "nihao," which is a general greeting in Chinese.

So for example, the way we greet our teachers on campus is really different from the way that we greet our friends. So we're trying to get students' attention to the environments or the situation they're in, for example, the people they are speaking with, their role in the conversation, or the place. So speaking with a teacher takes different strategies compared to speaking with your friends in Chinese culture, for example.

We learn to do things in foreign languages so that's a very fundamental concept here that we're always trying to convey to our students. We try to encourage them that what you're doing here is to accomplish things by using Mandarin as your primary language. I think for us, we consider culture as common daily practices and social norms that define an individual to function successfully in a society.

So for us, we feel one of the priorities as a language instructor, our responsibility is to help students prioritize those daily practices and then show them the patterns or the rules involved. And once students have the opportunity to be exposed to those rules and then in class, they have their opportunities to practice them, to perform them and as an instructor, you're providing feedback, then they go through this what we call a "cycle."

So out of each class, they can get out of each 50-minute class with a story. Today's story might be, how do you decline an offer from your employer? Tomorrow's story might be, how do you deal with conflicts? So this is what we call the stories here and our experience shows us that a cross-cultural miscommunication, for the most part, they don't lie in language proficiency. They lie in cultural competence.

And that's why we would like to bring the cultural competence into the core components of our curriculum here. We're not saying that language proficiency is not important. We're just trying to point out that the way you behave in a second culture is as important as your use of the language.