PEDAGOGICAL TECHNIQUES TO REINFORCE DISCOURSE COMPETENCE
IN ORAL PROFICIENCY DEVELOPMENT
FOR INTERMEDIATE LEARNERS OF CHINESE

A TERMINAL PROJECT PRESENTED BY
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ABSTRACT

Title: Pedagogical Techniques to Reinforce Discourse Competence in Oral Proficiency Development for Intermediate Learners of Chinese

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Studies have shown that discourse competence is a core component in communicative competence development. However, in the practical pedagogical world, this competence is not as much emphasized as the other language competence aspects of second language acquisition. Alternately, ACTFL speaking proficiency guidelines require intermediate learners to produce loosely connected sentences in their spoken text. For intermediate-high-level language learners, ACTFL indicates that cohesive and coherent discourse should emerge in their utterances.

This project is designed for Chinese teachers to improve intermediate learner’s oral proficiency with an explicit focus on discourse competence development. The teaching portfolio design increases the emphasis on discourse competence teaching so that intermediate learners of Chinese can create comprehensible unified spoken texts at the discourse level and meet the ACTFL speaking criteria. This portfolio consists of two parts. The first provides a general guideline for adapting pedagogical techniques to improve discourse competence in the three genres of discourse: narration, description, and comparison. The second is a collection of activities that aid development of discourse competence in the three genres of discourse.
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The examining committee appointed by the Department of Linguistics for the Terminal Project submitted by

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has read this terminal project and determined that it satisfactorily fulfills the program requirement for the degree of Master of Arts.

Project title: Pedagogical Techniques to Reinforce Discourse Competence in Oral Proficiency Development for Intermediate Learners of Chinese

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Pedagogical Techniques to Reinforce Discourse Competence in Oral Proficiency

Development for Intermediate Learners of Chinese

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

In 2008, the College Board and Asian community joined efforts to hold the National Chinese Language Conference (NCLC) (Liu, 2011). Since then, it has been hosted annually and has developed to become the largest conference of its type in North America. This has resulted from a growing population involved in Chinese as a foreign language (CFL) education in the United States in recent years. As the United States and China, two world superpowers, “will find their fates more intertwined as the years pass” (Caperton, 2012, n.p.), it is undoubtedly a key moment in which to place a high value on Chinese language education in the United States.

Recent years have seen an explosion in the number of Chinese programs being offered across the country, in addition to the growth of AP Chinese courses implemented in U.S. high schools. This trend toward Chinese language learning is occurring outside the U.S. as well. Chinese is currently recognized as one of the most-studied languages in the world.

With the expanding population of Chinese learners, types of learners are diversifying based on their various needs and goals for learning the language. This has resulted in an interesting and crucial turning point in CFL education, as Chinese changes from a language “being learned by non-native speakers (adults typically) for literary, political, and historical scholarship, primarily,” to one being learned “for a much wider range of purposes: for oral and / or written communication in commercial, academic” situations, and so forth (Duff, 2008, p. 3).

Learners at the college level include not only undergraduate and graduate students specializing in
Asian Studies and dedicated to Chinese learning but also students affiliated with other academic disciplines, drawn to Chinese learning. Knowing how to speak Chinese has become “a sign of enthusiasm, respect, curiosity and hard work” (Caperton, 2012, n.p.) – qualifications that are sought by employers in every profession.

Impelled by this new energy, the need for quality in Chinese language education has directed applied linguists’ attention to language pedagogy for Chinese. Experts have looked at current issues in Chinese language education such as teacher development, curriculum and materials development, assessment, teaching of culture, and so forth (Wen & Clement, 2003; Wang & Gao, 2008; Xing, 2006). Teaching principles and approaches are discussed among specialists to discover how Chinese can be taught in a way that facilitates the improvement of students’ proficiency levels in the four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing.

In Chinese as a foreign language education, while Form-Focused Instruction (FFI) has contributed enormously to students’ language production at sentence level, a lack of knowledge of discourse development leaves students, especially native English speakers, facing the obstacle of producing the language at a discourse level. Consequently, in Chinese classrooms, the teaching of grammar as the major concentration has hindered the attempts of English learners of Chinese to produce discourse. As a result, they encounter difficulty becoming proficient in Chinese in terms of communicative competence (Brown, 2007; Mokhberi, 2011).

Likewise, from the perspective of second language acquisition, linguistic competence is not sufficient for language learners to use their second language in a communicative context (Yule, 2010). Therefore, increased development of the other communicative competences is
needed improvement in order to realize successful communication in the second language. One communicative component, discourse competence development, has aroused great interest in the area of foreign language education (Celce-Murcia, 2007). Discourse competence is defined as “the ability to arrange sentences in sequence so as to produce coherent stretches of language” (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 123). The ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines for Speaking (2012) specify that loosely connected yet valid sentences are a key descriptor for intermediate-level proficiency in Chinese, while the ability to maintain paragraph length discourse semantically and syntactically is an essential marker for advanced- and superior-level performance. In spite of the criteria specified in the guidelines, current pedagogical resources are either not sufficient or their authors are indifferent to the need for discourse knowledge in CFL instruction (Xing, 2006). Materials and activities for this purpose are absent in intermediate-level classes, even though advanced-level classes demand that students be prepared to create their utterances at a discourse level (ACTFL Guidelines, 2012).

In order to address this issue apparently existing in current CFL education, sufficient attention should be paid to discourse competence development in the intermediate-level classroom, so that students who are moving to advanced-level classrooms can be more prepared for the learning at that level.

In addition to the lack of attention to the development of discourse competence in Chinese classrooms, the learning environment in intermediate classrooms (including language practice through activities) and the language input from materials are not facilitating students’ learning processes effectively (Peregoy & Boyle, 2008). Most of the intermediate Chinese
courses at one northwest university (equivalently 2nd-year Chinese courses), are designed to develop all the skills with a focus on grammar (personal experience). Hence, communicative teaching is not frequently employed in these classrooms and discourse competence, although one of the communicative components, is likely to be neglected in the process of teaching and learning. This situation has resulted in a lack of activities and materials for discourse competence development in intermediate-level classrooms; thus, students do not benefit enough from these courses to improve their oral proficiency to the level needed to meet the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines (2012).

Given this lack of discourse competence development in some Chinese classrooms, the project I have developed is intended to help intermediate learners of Chinese develop their oral proficiency with an explicit focus on discourse competence, so that they can build a bridge to advanced-level courses by achieving the goals of intermediate-level proficiency. Additionally, the materials and activities that I have collected and developed are provided to improve student discourse competence so that learners may reach advanced-level proficiency in speaking as measured by ACTFL guidelines (2012).

This project consists of six chapters. Chapter one is an introduction to the general research background as well as the focus of the project. Chapter two is a literature review that contains reflections on the relevant studies in the area of discourse competence development. Chapter three is a needs analysis that includes methods and procedures used to collect data as well as an analysis of that data on the students’ perceived pedagogical emphasis of oral skills in their classes and on the Chinese instructor and the assessment researcher’s thoughts and advice
on discourse competence improvement in Chinese oral proficiency development. Chapter four contains rationale statements for the choice of teaching content and the portfolio design organization. Chapter five is the portfolio design with a collection of teaching materials and activities for improving discourse competence in oral proficiency development. Chapter six is the conclusion, including the implications of the product and the limitations to the whole project.
CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Discourse Competence in Oral Proficiency Development

Discourse Analysis

When we discuss how to interpret what we read, how to produce well-constructed oral texts that reflect what we read, how to recognize well-constructed text as opposed to jumbled or incoherent text, and how to successfully participate in a conversational activity, we are tackling what is known as discourse analysis (Yule, 2010). Various studies have come to a consensus defining discourse as a communicative unit incorporating at least two or more sentences (Crystal, 1985; Hymes, 1974; Schiffrin, 1994; Stubbs, 1983; Van Dijk, 1985; Xing 2006). Yule (2010) also defines discourse as “language beyond the sentence” (p. 142). All in all, discourse analysis studies language in texts and conversation.

Learning linguistic descriptions, as when one is developing grammatical competence, can certainly result in a cognitive understanding of a language (Yule, 2010). Nonetheless, people considered to have acquired a language are able to utilize it at a more complex level, such as in conversing and writing texts in the language. Knowing how to make ourselves understood in discourse depends on knowledge beyond linguistic form and structure, although grammar is always essential for constructing a language. Discourse competence is the ability of language users to produce utterances beyond the grammar-based sentence level to create coherent and interpretable discourse (Xing 2006).

Discourse Competence

Successful second language acquisition is associated with a non-native speaker’s ability
to use the language naturally in communicative situations with native speakers of the language.

Thus, the goal of second language acquisition for learners is not to learn more knowledge
"about" the language (as may be demonstrated in tests) but to develop communicative
competence in the second language, (Yule, 2010). In spite of the fact that grammatical
competence provides the foundation for the accurate use of words in structures, a focus on other
forms of competence for foreign language learning is of equal or greater benefit in improving the
learners' ability to interpret and generate the second language appropriately.

Discourse competence, through which learners can interpret larger contexts and produce
longer stretches of language with continuity and logical flow (NCLRC, 2003 & 2004),
determines one's ability to construct comprehensible output in meaningful interaction and to
receive language input efficiently. As Yule (2010) argued, producing interpretable utterances in
communication is a very important quality in a learner's development of second language ability.
Discourse competence provides the means through which words, phrases and sentences are put
together to generate longer texts, either in speech or in writing. Celce-Murcia, Dornyei, and
Thurrell (1995) proposed a model to specify the interrelationship of the components of
communicative competence and the role of discourse competence in it (see Figure 2.1).
Figure 2.1 Schematic model of communicative competence in Celce-Murcia et al. (1995)

To interpret discourses involves listening and reading skills. Oral discourse competence includes the concept of "speakability", as Xing (2006) proposed, which describes language users' ability to produce, developing their discourse smoothly in various oral communicative contexts to achieve their communicative goals based on utterances that are easily interpreted.

ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines for Speaking (2012) require that intermediate-level speakers produce "sentence-level language, ranging from discrete sentences to strings of sentences" (n.p.). As for Intermediate-High speakers, they should be able to "narrate and describe" content "using connected discourse of paragraph length" and should be able to handle certain tasks "associated with the Advanced level" (ACTFL Guidelines, 2012, n.p.). The guidelines also require that the language of Advanced-level speakers be "abundant, the oral
paragraph being the measure of Advanced-level length and discourse” (ACTFL Guidelines, 2012, n.p.). Evidently, as mentioned earlier, more attention should be paid to oral discourse competence in L2 language classrooms, so that learners attain discourse competence sufficient to produce oral texts beyond the sentence level.

Sub-Area Discourse Competence

According to Celce-Murcia (2007), discourse competence incorporates several sub-area skills. A very important one is the production of discourse appropriate to the generic structure of a type of discourse genre. Oral discourse segments can be identified as belonging to various genres. Celce-Murcia et al. (1995) lists the major oral discourse genres as “conversation, narrative, interview, service encounter, report, lecture, sermon, etc”. Xing (2006) roughly divides oral discourse into two types: (1) conversation between two or more speakers, and (2) interviews, debates, and commercial negotiation between two or more parties. Amongst these types of genres, conversation has been considered the simplest form of language use in oral communication (Garvey & Berninger, 1981; Goodwin, 1981; Jefferson, 1973; Lerner, 1989; Svennevig, 1999).

Nevertheless, in order to improve intermediate-level speakers’ oral proficiency to the point of reaching advanced-level proficiency, conversation is no longer on the list as a target genre for discourse competence improvement. ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines – Speaking (2012) require intermediate-High-level speakers to be able to narrate and describe a series of events and activities. Moreover, the ACTFL Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) test (Liskin-Gasparro, 2003; Salaberry, 2000) categorizes the goals of assessing students’ oral proficiency in
primarily four types of discourse structure: description, narration, comparison and (abstract) elaboration. Therefore, developing discourse competence should be associated with specific generic contexts. With explicit concentration on certain genres, learners are able to learn discrete discourse structures, language forms, and the purposes of communication so as to improve their oral discourse competence (Celce-Murcia, 2007).

**Teaching Oral Discourse Competence**

**Studies on Discourse Competence Development**

The research on discourse competence conducted in the last century is not sufficient to explain for the development of discourse competence. Scarcella, Andersen, and Krashen (1990) once argued that a great number of scholars explained the role of discourse competence in the development of communicative competence; however, up to the time of that study, few had investigated the acquisition of this competence, and few attempts had been made to develop pedagogical patterns and techniques for discourse competence development.

In spite of the lack of research in teaching discourse competence, there has still been some research on developing this type of competence. Widdowson proposed his discourse-to-discourse scheme early in 1978. He once interpreted this scheme in the following summarization:

> Since our aim is to get the learner to cope with discourse in one way or another, it would seem reasonable to suggest that instances of discourse should serve as the point of reference for all the exercises which are devised… Teaching units and the teaching tasks they specify should be organized as moves from one instance of discourse to another. The first of these constitutes the reading passage… The second instance of discourse is created by the learner himself by reference to the first and all of the exercises which intervene between the two are designed to formulate this reference in a controlled way and to help the learner thereby to
transfer his interpreting from its receptive realization as reading to its productive realization as writing. Each exercise, therefore, is justified by its effectiveness as a stage in the learner’s progress from the first instance of discourse to the second. So the progress is conceived of as cyclical: the exploitation of the first instance of discourse has at the same time the function of preparing the learner for his production of the second. (1978, p. 146)

Influenced enormously by Widdowson’s organization of discourse tasks, Council of Europe improved his idea in its proposal of text-to-text activities (2001). The council described this type of activity on a table in which a few variables were associated to reflect on the possibilities of this pedagogical technique. In 2010, Trujillo Saez and Ortega Martin made some improvement on the table, which can be seen in Table 2.1 below, to ease the understanding of this scheme.

Table 2.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text-to-text activity types</th>
<th>Input text</th>
<th>Output text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Activity type</td>
<td>Meaning Preserving</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repetition</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Spoken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dictation</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Spoken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral question/answer</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Spoken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written answers to oral L2 questions</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Spoken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading aloud</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Written</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copying, transcription</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Written</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spoken response to written L2 rubric</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Written</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing in response to written L2 rubric</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Written</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Moreover, recent studies have contributed a good deal of information on developing discourse competence. Brown (2007) and Escobar (2001) both suggested using portfolio to
compile video or audiotape recordings of a student’s oral production. The benefits of using the tool portfolio include stimulating learners’ self-assessment and reflection on their performance and overcoming time problems involved in assessing oral skills individually.

Aside from the availability of these practical schemes for developing discourse competence, however, there still exist limitations to the present study. In Rehner’s (2005) conclusion to a case study, she expressed concern about the limited information on the types of discursive uses of various expressions that can be taught. In addition, as she pointed out after her research, her study had a “somewhat limited range of expressions examined” (p. 134). Research on discourse characteristics is often not clear, and those studies available on discourse markers are not necessarily pedagogically oriented (Xing, 2006).

As for the studies on Chinese discourse, Xing (2006) reported that currently research on Chinese discourse competence is still insufficient. Studies related to Chinese discourse are more from a theoretical perspective than a practical teaching one (Chao, 1968; Chu, 1998; Feng, 2000; Li & Thompson, 1981; Shen, 1990; Tao, 1996; Tsao, 1979). Furthermore, discourse competence is part of interactive competence. It is always hard to isolate discourse competence from other competences such as pragmatic and sociocultural competences. Xing (2006) and Sun (2006) associated the development of discourse competence in Chinese with other communicative competences. Sun (2006) analyzed Chinese discourse in his study of sociocultural competence in Chinese. Xing (2006) suggested developing Chinese discourse competence by teaching Chinese pragmatics. Therefore, discourse competence development has never been isolated from other communicative competences. It is rather difficult to find studies that simply focus on discourse
competence development.

**Discourse Competence in Oral Proficiency Interview**

In response to the demand for ways of testing oral proficiency in a foreign language, the ACTFL Certified Testing Program developed the ACTFL Oral Proficiency Interview standardized procedure for the global assessment of functional speaking ability (Yoffe, 1997). The assessment is administrated in a face-to-face or telephonic interview between a certified ACTFL tester and a test taker. It determines how well a person speaks a language by comparing his or her performance of specific communication tasks with the criteria described in the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines – Speaking (Yoffe, 1997).

The OPI testing procedure has shown evidence of assessing discourse competence (Byrnes, 1989). Byrnes’s findings on the evidence for discourse competence in the OPI test suggested that discourse competence is highly involved in this test, and that teaching with a focus on discourse competence can possibly improve performance in this assessment.

**Current Applications and Innovations for Teaching Discourse Competence**

**Form-Focused Instruction**

Form-focused Instruction (FFI) pays attention to the linguistic forms of language (grammar, spelling, vocabulary, etc.) (Andringa, 2005). Experts still consider FFI to be effective for helping to develop discourse competence, because discourse competence requires the knowledge of how to combine grammatical elements and meanings along with specific vocabulary to accomplish a unified text in different contexts (Scarcella, Andersen, & Krashen, 1990). Cui (2003) suggests introducing discourse devices and explaining discourse functions to
students as the first stage of discourse competence development. The second stage of his pedagogical procedure is to help learners comprehend and apply discourse devices to speaking Chinese.

Nonetheless, FFI should take place in a communicative classroom. Language practice based on FFI may risk becoming repetitive grammar drilling, relying on a traditional Grammar Translation approach, which strongly conflicts with the philosophy of Communicative Language Teaching. Second, Cui (2003) is concerned that many language teachers do not have a comprehensive understanding of discourse devices and may not be able to teach them to students. In this case, it is dangerous to use FFI when the grammatical knowledge imparted by the teacher is not grounded in any theoretical understanding.

**Content-Based Instruction**

Content-based instruction, as defined by Brinton, Snow, and Wesche (1989), is “the integration of content learning with language teaching aims. More specifically, it refers to the concurrent study of language and subject matter, with the form and sequence of language presentation dictated by content material” (p vii). In Widdowson’s discussion of a “subject-oriented” approach (1978), subsequently known as content-based instruction (CBI), he stated that such an approach indicates a powerful line of induction for discourse competence in relation to academic genres. Foreign language teachers already bring content into their classrooms; a lot of discourse structures can be demonstrated and practiced through subject-matter content. Narration can be practiced through the retelling of an historical incident. Comparison discourse production can relate to topical discussions. The discourse structure of abstract elaboration can
be approached through CBI. Furthermore, Content-Based Instruction associated with grammatical competence development can provide both vocabulary building and the accumulation of content-based knowledge, so that students will have more confidence in developing their discourse on certain academic topics (Brown, 2007).

Brown (2007) correctly pointed out that the required content integrated into the language course through a CBI approach may hinder the teachers’ instruction, because not all language teachers are sufficiently competent in possible content areas to teach them, not having been expected to specialize in an additional discipline or other areas to gain their language teaching qualification and vice-versa. If some subject-matter instructors try to teach their course using CBI, a similar concern could arise regarding the instructors’ qualifications for teaching a foreign language. As a result, CBI, while highly recommended for language classroom implementation, tends to put more weight on selecting appropriate language instructors for this type of classroom. Under this circumstance, it can be helpful for teachers to use content already compiled and provided through teaching materials to improve students’ language skills.

Task-Based Language Teaching

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) emphasizes the use of tasks at the core of language teaching. TBLT can tackle discourse competence development through group interaction and problem solving (Yule, 2010). However, TBLT mostly focuses on the communicative classroom as a whole. There is lack of studies that show that TBLT is utilized to develop discourse competence. Still, as a significant CLT approach, TBLT should be integrated into language classrooms with concentration on discourse competence development. Students’
improvement in oral discourse can be realized through such tasks as negotiation of meaning, project presentation, interviews, and debates (Brown, 2007).

**Innovations for Materials Development**

In addition to such teaching approaches as those suggested above for improving discourse competence, some experts have devised general principles for discourse competence development. Trujillo Saez and Ortega Martin (2010) listed three general principles for developing discourse competence:

1. discourse competence at school must be linked to subject-matter content.
2. discourse competence is related to reflective thinking and action.
3. discourse competence is culture bound. (n.p.)

These three principles are well constructed particularly for developing discourse competence in different types of discourse. The first one relates to Content-Based Instruction, which involves content learning that will eventually become what learners talk about in their discourse.

The second principle implies a variety of skills in producing different types of discourse. Fisher (2001) listed skills that can possibly be practiced while developing discourse competence through critical thinking, such as “identifying reasons and conclusions, evaluating assumptions, interpreting ideas, judging the acceptability, and producing arguments” (p. 8).

For the third principle, Trujillo Saez and Ortega Martin (2010) suggested improving discourse competence through cross-cultural studies. Intercultural study will provide thoughts for the comparison of different cultures, according to Trujillo Saez and Ortega Martin (2010). Therefore, this principle can be applied to developing discourse competence for the structure of
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comparison.

As research accumulates, there will be more ideas about teaching oral discourse competence. However, applications for discourse competence development tend to have their drawbacks as well as benefits. There needs to be a further step taken in regards to different teaching approaches – compiling beneficial ways of using different pedagogical techniques and re-creating or adapting those that may have their drawbacks.

This portfolio attempts to utilize the benefits of current applications for discourse competence improvement. It includes teaching techniques, activities and materials that are adapted and developed based on current approaches in order to increase the effectiveness of discourse competence improvement in Chinese oral proficiency development.
CHAPTER III: NEEDS ANALYSIS

The principal purpose of this needs analysis is to explore the need for improving discourse competence in Chinese oral proficiency development from the perspectives of American learners of Chinese, a Chinese instructor, and a research specialist on students’ language learning results. The data collection process incorporates three procedures: 1) A survey of American learners of Chinese regarding their perceived proficiency and learning preferences; 2) An interview with a Chinese instructor at one northwest university; 3) An interview with a research specialist on students learning results.

Method

1) Survey for Chinese Oral Proficiency Development

The survey aims at investigating students’ perceptions of their oral proficiency with a particular focus on their discourse competence and their need for improving oral proficiency by improving certain communicative competences. Another important purpose of this survey is to explore the learners’ preferences of pedagogical techniques for oral proficiency development.

Participants. This survey was conducted amongst the American learners of Chinese at one northwest university. The target group ranges from students in a second-year Chinese course to students in advanced Chinese courses at a Chinese immersion program at this university.

Instrument. The questionnaire was written in English and took approximately 10 minutes to complete. There are 12 questions in the survey, which is composed of multiple-choice questions, short-answer questions and Likert-scale questions (see Appendix A). Questions 1-3 concern subject information. Questions 4-7 ask participants’ perceptions on their language
proficiency, the pedagogical emphasis in their language classrooms and their felt learning needs. Question 7 is designed to investigate students’ confidence in their ability to complete a series of tasks, which consists of 10 can-do statements. For example, for a text reading question, the student can respond with either can’t do/somewhat/can do. The results drawn in this can-do-statement section can reflect students’ beliefs about their own discourse competence in various types of activities. Questions 8-11 explore participants’ learning preferences regarding oral proficiency development. Overall, the questions are designed to investigate students’ perceptions of their current oral proficiency level, their felt needs for improving their oral skills, and their preference of pedagogical techniques for oral proficiency development.

**Procedures.** The questionnaires were distributed in Chinese classrooms and collected immediately after the students completed them in classes. The questionnaires were completed anonymously.

2) **Interview with a Chinese Instructor**

The purpose of the interview with the Chinese instructor was to understand her evaluation of the students’ oral proficiency levels and their concerns with oral proficiency development with a particular focus on discourse competence improvement. A further purpose was to learn the Chinese instructors’ needs and suggestions for pedagogical techniques for discourse competence improvement in oral proficiency development.

**Participant.** One Chinese instructor at a northwest university was interviewed for data collection. She teaches a second-year Chinese course at the university and an intermediate
language strategies course at a Chinese immersion program provided at this university. The participant was invited via email to make an appointment to have a face-to-face interview.

**Instrument.** Seven questions were created in advance for the interview, with additional questions asked in the midst of the interview, depending on the interviewee’s response to the prepared questions. The questions were designed to gain understanding of the instructors’ beliefs in developing Chinese oral proficiency for different proficiency level students. Some questions were designed to find out the instructor’s thoughts on developing discourse competence and its importance. A copy of the interview questions can be found in Appendix B.

**Procedures.** The interview took approximately 25 minutes. The conversation was recorded with the approval of the participant.

3) Interview with an Language Assessment Researcher

The purpose of this interview was to discuss students’ language learning results on the Chinese Oral Proficiency Interview test. The conversation and information provided by the researcher helped me understand what should be emphasized to facilitate Chinese oral proficiency development.

**Participants.** The interview was conducted with a research specialist at a language study research center. Her research mainly focuses on the students’ learning results in the Chinese language.

**Instrument.** Five questions were created prior to the interview, but a few follow-up questions were asked according to the interviewee’s response to the prepared questions. The questions were designed to understand what the researcher thinks of speaking test scores and
results achieved by intermediate language learners. The questions were designed to find out
whether the expected performance in this assessment indicates a necessity for developing
discourse competence. A copy of the interview questions can be found in Appendix C.

**Procedures.** The interview took approximately 30 minutes. The conversation was
recorded with the approval of the participant.

**Results**

1) **Survey for Chinese Oral Proficiency Development**

**The emphasis on oral and literate skills in Chinese classrooms.** In this survey, given a
scale from 1 – 5, 47 participants were asked to rate the amount of emphasis on the oral and
written skills in their Chinese language courses at one northwest university. Figure 3.1 indicates
the amount of emphasis on the oral and written skills rated by the learners in intermediate
Chinese courses. As the statistics show, more than 80% (16) of the students in this group think
that their instructors emphasized on training written skills above average in classes, while much
fewer students think that oral skills are major focus in their language classrooms. The learners in
these intermediate courses probably respond in this way because their instructors have spent
more effort on improving their written skills, such reading and writing, than that on speaking
skills.
Figure 3.1 The emphasis on the oral and written skills in intermediate Chinese courses (N=20)

As for the other group, also known as the college learners in advanced Chinese courses, Figure 3.2 shows that approximately 80% (16) of the students in this group think their Chinese classes focus mostly on oral skills, only 15% (3) of the students rate 5 for the amount of emphasis on written skills in advanced Chinese courses. This finding in the students’ response may reflect the fact that their instructors concentrate on training their oral skills rather than written skills. The results also may imply that the advanced Chinese classes require more students’ ability in Chinese oral skills much more than that in written skills. The students in the Chinese classroom at this level may need to use their speaking as well as listening skills much more frequently than their writing and reading skills.
Figure 3.2 The emphasis on the oral and written skills in advanced Chinese courses (N=26)

Looking at both of the charts above, we can see that the emphasis on oral and written skills shifts from intermediate Chinese courses to the advanced classrooms. The intermediate Chinese courses at the university reinforce written skills while the advanced Chinese courses require much more proficient performance in speaking skills from the learners. As a result, the current intermediate Chinese classrooms are in need of an increased focus on students’ oral skills so as to help the learners build a better transitional bridge to the advanced Chinese classes and perform more successfully at that level.

In addition to the this gap found in the articulation of intermediate and advanced classrooms, the intermediate learners’ need for improvement in written and oral skills are indicated in Figure 3.3. The question asks in what skill(s) the learners feel they need the most improvement at this moment in time. The figure shows that 90% (23) of the learners in intermediate Chinese classrooms want to improve their oral skills. According to the learners’ felt
needs, the intermediate Chinese courses should have more focus on developing students' oral skills.

![Bar Chart]

Figure 3.3 The intermediate learners' need for improvement in the target skills (N=20)

**The reinforcement on discourse competence for intermediate Chinese learners.** In the survey, the participants were asked about their ability to do several speaking tasks through a form of self-evaluating can-do statements. In order to investigate the target learners' perceived ability to produce their utterances at discourse level, the participants were asked to rate the following three tasks. They are: 1) narrate what you often do on weekends (indicated as Task 1 in Figure 3.4); 2) describe the techniques of your favorite sport (Task 2); 3) Compare American food and Chinese food (Task 3). These three tasks involve different organizations of discourse structure, which are respectively: 1) narration; 2) description; 3) comparison.

In Figure 3.4, we can see that over 60% (12) of the intermediate Chinese learners think that they can narrate their regular life events on weekends, and that they can compare American
food and Chinese food. Approximately 30% (6) of the learners think they cannot fulfill these two tasks. As for task 2, most of the students in this group do not have enough confidence in describing the techniques of their favorite sports. About 20% (4) of the students do not think they can fulfill this task, 68% (13) of the student feel they can do it only somewhat.

These results seem to reflect that discourse competence needs to be developed in different types of discourse structure. Also, as not all the students have confidence in competing these speaking tasks, it may imply that it is of importance to reinforce discourse competence by introducing generic discourse structure of different discourse genres while improving students' oral proficiency.

On the positive side of the findings, we should realize that the results reflect the fact that the intermediate learners do believe they have some ability to produce their Chinese utterances at discourse level. Therefore, a good number of activities as well as teaching materials can be applied in the intermediate language classrooms to reinforce students' discourse competence and their oral proficiency.
Figure 3.4 Intermediate learners’ ability in the three tasks (N=22)

2) Interview with a Chinese Instructor

Intermediate Chinese learners’ language performance. The Chinese instructor I interviewed is teaching intermediate Chinese courses at a northwest university. The instructor evaluated her students’ oral Chinese performance in the intermediate classrooms as being between intermediate-mid and intermediate-high level, using the ACTFL Guidelines. As she described, her students are able to speak Chinese at sentence level, and they can express themselves by using a group of sentences. The problem she has noticed in the students’ utterances is that they have no realization of using discourse connectors and devices to make their group of sentences more cohesive, coherent and logical.

According to the instructor’s response, it is time for them to begin to realize the need for discourse devices to make a group of sentences into discourse. The students are only able to list several sentences to express their ideas about a certain context. Their discourse competence
needs to be reinforced at this stage of language learning in order to overcome this weak area and develop their utterances at discourse level.

**Teaching discourse competence.** With regard to the pedagogical emphasis on learning discourse competence, the instructor stated that her students do not know very much vocabulary or grammatical structure and patterns, and hence, they do not have the structure and range of vocabulary needed to develop their discourse very well. She thinks that her students should be given a concentration on learning more about discourse structures and language forms as materials for them to help them establish their discourse.

In addition to the emphasis on language form learning, the instructor also mentioned that it is imperative to help students realize what Chinese discourse is and how they can make their utterances become discourse instead of just groups of sentences, especially at the beginning of teaching discourse competence.

In terms of the instructor’s ideas on teaching discourse competence, she thought it is necessary to use Form-Focused Instruction to improve discourse competence. Language materials, such as discourse connectors and devices, vocabulary and grammatical structure, can be taught effectively through Form-Focused Instruction. The instructor indicated that correcting learners’ ungrammatical use of discourse structure and devices could help students establish their consciousness in regard to producing utterances at discourse level.

**Pedagogical techniques to reinforce discourse competence.** When asked how to improve discourse competence in oral proficiency development, the instructor considers that interactive activities and authentic materials help students practice their discourse competence in
their oral language production. Activities such as real-life language tasks and role-plays can be used. She also mentioned that various content topics and contexts, such as daily life experience, society and media, should be provided for language practice, because students are expected to make their discourse about a certain idea or topic. Moreover, different types of discourse structure need to be utilized within a given context. For instance, narration can be practiced through some activity like expressing what you do on weekends. Comparison discourse practice may be realized through some activity like comparing two different cultures.

The instructor stated that Communicative Approaches, such as Content-based Instruction and Task-Based Language Teaching, could also be employed in order to develop discourse competence. As the instructor mentioned, activities for language practice are primarily based on the teaching principles of Communicative Approaches. As for materials development, it should be authentic and connected to the real-life use.

3) Interview with an Language Assessment Researcher

Discourse competence establishment. In the interview, the researcher said that a good number of language learners at intermediate levels she had worked with were limited to a set of sentences when they tried to speak. She added that those learners didn’t have much connectedness in their utterances. When she was asked how to improve learners’ competence in connecting sentences, she stated frankly that she does not think everyone manages their discourse well, even in their native language. When she reads and listens to people on Facebook or even sometimes just talks to people in general on buses, these people do not tell a story very well, and she has a hard time following it. Her point was that, to a certain extent, when people
are talking about something that requires knowing how to manage language or organize
discourse and make it comprehensible enough to lead the listener through it, the skill needed is
not just about learning words or grammar, but is something that comes with general education on
how to manage and organize your utterances.

On the question of developing discourse competence, the researcher believed that in
order to establish such competence in learners' language skills, information and tools for how to
organize discourse should be introduced and taught to students who are reaching the level that
requires the emergence of well-connected sentences in their utterances. Her point of view may
also reflect the reality in current language classes, that the teaching of discourse organization is
not well emphasized in language learning, so even the students who sound fluent while speaking
the language do not have cohesive and coherent discursive language in their spoken discourse.

The researcher's responses are fairly supportive of the need to teach discourse structure,
namely the rules of establishing discourse. Moreover, teaching discourse structure in different
genres can help language learners learn how to manage their discourse appropriately, according
to their own purposes in their language production, as different genres of discourse have their
own structure.

**Language proficiency improvement.** When the research director was asked about her
suggestions for language proficiency improvement from her perspective as one who studies
students' assessment results, she mentioned one conversation she had with a school language
program director. In the conversation, she told the school director that, according to their testing
results, his students were doing better than the rest of the country on the speaking test. The
director’s response was all about one idea – reinforcement. The researcher emphasized that
effective language practice requires a certain amount of time input, and through repetitious
practice and reinforcement on one or two skills, the learners can achieve better performance in
related areas.

The researcher’s answer to this question seems a common response to how to improve
language proficiency; it is of importance that emphasis should be placed on a certain skill when a
lack of such skill becomes a factor in learners’ language learning process. This also reflects on
the need to reinforce discourse competence for intermediate learners of Chinese when there is the
need for them to improve such competence, and when there is no sufficient teaching or practice
in their current language classrooms.
CHAPTER IV: PORTFOLIO JUSTIFICATION

This chapter will provide the general rationale for the portfolio based on findings from literature review and needs analysis. The rationale establishes the foundations on which this portfolio of teaching techniques to reinforce discourse competence in oral proficiency improvement for intermediate learners of Chinese is based. The chapter also describes the framework of this teaching portfolio.

Rationale for the Portfolio

The findings in literature review and needs analysis indicate that it is of evident importance to reinforce discourse competence in the process of developing oral proficiency for intermediate learners of Chinese. The literature review and the results from needs analysis suggest the kind of materials and activities that need to be developed and collected for the teaching of discourse competence to intermediate learners.

First of all, studies about the teaching approaches for discourse competence development and the interview results from previous chapters have supported communicative approaches such as Content-Based Instruction and Task-Based Language Teaching, along with general communicative techniques as major strategies for developing teaching techniques and activities for discourse competence improvement. A few studies have shown that Content-Based Instruction as well as Task-Based Language Teaching are often applied for the purpose of improving oral proficiency in a foreign language. The Chinese instructor indicated that these teaching methods are effective for teaching and learning discourse competence in her intermediate Chinese classrooms.
Secondly, according to the literature review as well as the interview results, Form-Focus Instruction is of great value to help students establish their discourse based on their knowledge of grammar, vocabulary and various types of discourse structure. One of the instructors emphasized that students cannot produce utterances at discourse level because of a lack of realization of the importance of using discourse connectors, devices, and discourse structure. Further, she thinks teaching grammatical patterns and vocabulary can help students improve their sentence structure and develop the content they intend to express in their discourses. Therefore, the portfolio will also include the employment of Form-Focus Instruction in the development of activities and materials.

Thirdly, the researcher's suggestion in the interview supports the idea of teaching discourse structure based on various genres of discourse in this portfolio. As she pointed out, teaching discourse structure helps language learners to better organize and manage their language so that they can make their utterances more comprehensible, leading the listener through the discourse successfully. There are various genres of discourse structure in a language. This portfolio focuses on narration, description and comparison. Under these three discourse genres, different structure should be taught to establish learners' skills in managing their discourse appropriately. Therefore, the portfolio will collect and develop diverse activities and materials for the improvement of each of the three genres.

Fourthly, some other teaching techniques will be utilized to help students realize what Chinese discourse is and how they can make different types of Chinese discourse structures with coherence and cohesion. As one of the instructors mentioned, it is appropriate for intermediate
learners of Chinese to start learning narration, comparison, and description at the beginning stage of their discourse competence development. Therefore, the teaching materials and activities will be developed and collected to practice discourse competence in these three types of discourse structure.

**Organization of the Portfolio**

The portfolio consists of two sections. The first section provides a general guideline for using and adapting some useful pedagogical techniques to improve discourse competence in the three genres. The information provided in this part aims at giving suggestions for re-creating and using existing activities and materials effectively so as to realize the reinforcement of discourse competence practice.

The second section is a collection of activities and materials that are suggested for developing discourse competence in the three different genres of discourse. The portfolio uses a genre-based classification to introduce activities and materials in the second section.
CHAPTER V: COLLECTION OF TECHNIQUES AND ACTIVITIES

This chapter provides guidelines for developing pedagogical techniques and sample activities to reinforce discourse competence in developing intermediate Chinese learners’ oral proficiency. The guidelines for developing pedagogical techniques to practice oral discourse competence suggest ways to adapt, re-create, and develop activities for learners to reinforce their oral skills in producing the three genres of discourse. The activities focus on how to practice oral skills in producing three genres of discourse, narration, description and comparison, and how to embed grammar practice in communicative activities.

Guidelines for Using Pedagogical Techniques

In this section, several guidelines are listed, along with examples of pedagogical techniques used to reinforce discourse competence in oral proficiency development. These techniques are also flexible enough to be adapted and recreated in order to reach different goals. Overall, they are generic modes of teaching techniques for discourse competence development.

Guideline 1. Language form can be practiced through communicative activities.

As the instructor and the researcher mentioned in their interviews, they consider discourse competence development cannot be isolated from grammar teaching and drilling, because language forms are the materials for students to form their discourse and make it informative. However, language form drilling does not necessarily mean grammar drillings, such as gap-filling and multiple-choice questions. In activity 4, the vocabulary and grammatical patterns that are taught to describe the instructions of drawing flags are drilled through an interactive context. That is to say, as long as the activity includes the use of the target grammar
and vocabulary, language form can be practiced through repetitious drilling in such communicative activities.

**Guideline 2. Use good examples of discourses to serve as models.**

"Discourse structure translation" is a type of activity that can help students develop their discourse competence through imitating given examples of discourse. There are many good readings that model good Chinese discourse structure. The teacher can find authentic examples from Chinese reading materials to teach a certain type of genre. And then the students can be asked to “translate” the discourse structure into their own speech and put their own information in the same structure. As the researcher emphasized in her interview, it is always good for language learners to read good writers and listen to good speakers, which can help them learn how to organize and manage their discourse well. When the discourse cues are taught through readings and are expected being used in a spoken discourse as well, the teachers should be careful about choosing reading materials and make sure that the discourses cues taught through the reading are commonly used in a relatively formal spoken discourse such as presentation and speech as well. Activity 6 is a demonstration of this idea.

**Guideline 3. Use interactive communication to develop students’ interactive skills and practice different genres of discourse.**

Role-play and situational tasks are often used in communicative foreign language classrooms (Brown, 2007) and can be focused on discourse competence development. For example, in an activity to practice descriptive discourse, a pair of the students is asked to design a short play to show how one student teaches the other one to shoot a basketball into a hoop.
When the student tries to describe how to shoot the ball into the hoop, he/she should produce descriptive discourse to explain the techniques. In this portfolio, activity 4, 6 and 9 are the examples of this idea.

**Guideline 4. Use visual materials to support activities, facilitate learning and motivate learners.**

Visual stimuli such as pictures and video clips can provide information that is easily perceived, so that learners can make their discourse based on different notions or purposes. For example, in Activity 4 and 5, students are asked to describe flags and cultural elements. The visual content is easily perceived in the pictures and the video so that they can describe what they have seen in their discourse. Also, the students can practice narrative discourse after watching a movie or cartoon clip. The teacher can ask students to narrate the story that is told in the movie clip. The events that happen in the video can become good hints and materials for students to use when they organize their discourse and try to make it informational.

**Guideline 5. Provide model discourse cues in handouts to the students for different discourse structure learning and practice.**

Along with activities, the teacher can provide some model discourse cues for students to learn and practice by using them in their own discourse. For example, in activity 1, 5 and 7, suggested discourse cues are given in the handouts to the students to help them prepare their own discourse in different genres (see Appendix D, F and G). Some discourse cues are suggested as discourse connecters used to build a good logic flow in a certain type of discourse (in the handouts of Activity 1 and 5). Some discourse cues are suggested to use for a certain function,
like introducing aspects in a comparative discourse (in the handout of Activity 7). Although students may have learned discourse cues in the teaching materials on different discourse genres, it is always useful to give model sentences for students to learn and use along with a corresponding activity. It is also a good opportunity for students to accumulate model language materials, so that the accuracy of their utterances can be improved.

**Activities**

This section is a collection of some sample activities for developing discourse competence in three genres, narration, description and comparison. The materials associated with the activities are collected or adapted from the YouTube website, a Chinese website and Zhang’s textbook (2009). Activities are demonstrated in the three categories of discourse genre.

This is a chart to demonstrate the target discourse cues and structures used in different discourse genres.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discourse genres</th>
<th>Discourse cues and connectors</th>
<th>Discourse structures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Narration</td>
<td>Activity 1, 2, 3:</td>
<td>Activity 1, 2, 3:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>一开始……，然后……，接着……，于是……，最后……。</td>
<td>- Introduce the story</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[At first… And then… At last…]</td>
<td>- The process of happening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Activity 1: 我想谈谈……</td>
<td>- Summarize the story</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[I want to talk about…]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Activity 2: 我曾经去过……</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[I have been to…]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>那次旅行中，发生了一件______的事。</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[In that travel, something very + adj. happened.]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>有次，……</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Activity 4:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Once, ...]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity 3:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>在这个电影片段中，发生了一系列事件。</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[In this movie clip, there happened a series of things.]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity 4:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>在纸上，首先 ……，然后 ……，再 ……</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[On a piece of paper, first, ..., then ..., and then ...]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>在左边画 ……，在 …… 上面画 ……</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[On the left, draw ..., on the ..., draw ...]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>画一个星星，这个星星有 7 个角。</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Draw a star, which has 7 points.]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>画一个 ……，它像 / 有 / 是 ……。</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Draw a ..., and it is like / has ...]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity 5:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>我今天要描述的文化元素是 ……。</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Today I am going to describe a cultural element, which is ...]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>在我以前的个人经历中，有关这个元素，我的了解是 ……。</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[In my personal experience, I have learned about this element ...]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>在影片中，我看到了 ……</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>它有 …… 的特点。</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[In the video, I have seen ... and they have characteristics such as ...]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>关于影片中所展示的元素，在我个人经历中，有 / 没有看见相似的情况。比如说， … …。</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity 4:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Describe the steps in order.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- In different steps, describe the characteristics of the things you instruct the partner to draw</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity 5:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Describe the general information of this cultural element</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Describe what you have seen about this cultural element in the video</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PEDAGOGICAL TECHNIQUES</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
|**Activity 6:**

*In my personal experience, I have/have not seen the similar situation. For example...*

Activity 6:

今天，我向大家介绍的是……。

*Today, I am going to introduce ...*

在这个作品中，我们可以看到……。

*In this masterpiece, we can see that...*

这些……里，有的……，有的……，有的……。

*In those..., some are..., some are..., the others are...*

这个代表/说明……。

*This represents/indicates...*  

Activity 6:

- Introduce the exhibit
- Describe the content and characteristics of this exhibit.
- Interpret your understanding of the masterpiece.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comparison</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
|**Activity 7:** A与B在有些方面相似/不同。

*A and B are similar/different in...*

从……看，A与B的相似/不同之处有……。

比如说……。

*From... perspective, A and B have similarities/differences in... For example...*  

Activity 7, 8, 9:

- Introduce what are compared
- Indicate the things that are similar and difference
- Be specific with examples

**Activity 8:**

中美流行音乐在……类型有相同和不同之处。

*Chinese and American pop songs have similarities and differences in the genre of...*

我们所听到的这首中文歌……，比起美国的一首流行歌曲叫……。

*The Chinese song we have heard, in comparison to an American pop song called...*

他们相似/不同的地方有……，例如……。  

*From... perspective, A and B have similarities/differences in... For example...*
Narrative discourse

Activity 1: A Fun Fact for the Week

Level: Intermediate low – mid

Technique: Communicative approach

Discourse focus: Narrative process (introduction, report of events, and summation)

Materials: Handouts (see Appendix D), audio clip

Prior required procedures:

➢ The teacher records his/her own narrative about a fun thing done/to do in the week outside of the class.

➢ The teacher plays the audio clip of his/her story to the class, and asks students to look for the discourse cues in his/her story while listening to the clip.
[Script of the audio] (The target discourse cues are underlined in the text.)

我想和大家说说上周六发生的一件有趣的事儿。上周六，我计划去超市买菜和给车加油。我来到超市，发现停车场没有车。一开始，我怀疑超市关门了，我什么都不做了。我先去超市门口，发现超市门关了，然后再去加油站，发现加油站还有车在加油，于是我就给车加了油却没有买菜。我觉得这件事很奇怪却很有趣，加油站和超市是在一起的，但是加油站开门，超市却关门了。真有趣！

[I would like to share about a very interesting experience I had last Saturday. I left the house to go grocery shopping and fill up on gas, but then I arrive at the grocery store, the parking lot was empty. I was disappointed that perhaps I would not be able to accomplish what I had set out to do, so I drove to the front entrance of the grocery store, and it was closed. Luckily, when I drove to the gas station, there were still cars lined up to fill up on gas, so I was able to fill up my gas tank. The grocery store was close, but the gas station was still open. How interesting!] 

➢ After listening, the teacher asks students to prepare their own stories with reference to the model discourse given in the audio clip.

Procedures:

Activity 1 is a supplementary activity to the teaching of narrative discourse that asks students to narrate a fun thing that they have done or are going to do in the week. In this activity, students are required to tell their own fun stories by imitating the example of narrative discourse recorded by the teacher. Before they tell the story, the teacher will give a set of questions (see Appendix D) to help students think about the information and elements they need to cover in
their story. In the same handout (see Appendix D), the discourse cues that students are required to use in their narrative will be provided. Students will be given 5 minutes to prepare and then spend at least 2 minutes narrating a fun thing. While listening to the person's sharing their stories, the rest of the group need to prepare some questions or comments they would love to ask or give to the person about his/her story. After his/her story, the rest of the group will be given 2-3 minutes to ask questions or give comments about the story. Each student needs to ask at least 2 questions or give comments on at least two stories in this activity, to whomever they want to ask or comment.

Evaluation:

As activity 1 is designed for intermediate-low/mid-level learners of Chinese, it includes a series of scaffolded steps to help students know how to organize their narrative discourse and what language forms they can use to build a well-connected narrative discourse. The prior required procedures for this activity can teach and show students an appropriate way of narrating a story. Based on the interview results collected from the Chinese instructor and the researcher, this input can help students establish their realization of how to organize their utterances at discourse level and also provide a standard structure of narrative structure for students to learn. For such lower-level learners, grammatical scaffolding is very important as they may lack language materials to produce and manage a unified text, as the Chinese instructor and the researcher mentioned. Therefore, this supplementary activity provides question prompts and suggested discourse cues in the handout (see Appendix D) to help students generate their
discourse in an appropriate way. The after-story-telling session is designed to help students practice language use in a more interactive context.

Activity 2: Spin the World Story

Level: Intermediate high

Technique: Task-based Language Teaching

Discourse focus: Monologue, narrative process (introduction, report of events, and summation)

Materials: Video recording (created by the teacher outside of class), topic slips (see Appendix E)

Prior required procedures:

➢ The teacher videotapes some model speeches made by Chinese-native speakers, talking about their travel stories. In the video, given a topic about “the most _______ thing that has ever happened in your travel experience”, these people narrate their travel stories as monologues. The model speech can be made like this:

[Script of the video recording] (The target discourse cues are underlined in the text.)

我曾经去过韩国旅游。在韩国，我遇见一件非常难忘的事。在我们的旅行中，有一个年轻的韩国摄影师一直和我们同行。他会给我们拍很多我们旅行的照片。有一次，在车上，他开始发给我们拍的照片。照片拍的很漂亮。然后他一直看着我们，我们也看着他。接着，有个中国导游对我们说，这是他给你们拍的照片，你们喜欢可以用钱买，他是个学生，这是他的兼职工作。于是，我们明白他为我们工作，我们应该付他钱。我们都钱给他。他很高兴，也很意外。最后，他给我们每个人都鞠躬道谢。这个举动让我很难忘，我觉得韩国人真的十分有礼节！

[One time when I traveled to Korea, I had an unforgettable experience. During our
travels, there was a young Korean photographer who was traveling with our group. He took many great photos of us and the surroundings. We kept watching him, and he kept watching us. Then one of the Chinese tour guides gave us a picture told us that he was a student and that this was a part time position for him. We knew we should pay him for it, and when we did, the photographer was quite surprised. At the end of the tour, he graciously thanked each one of us. This experience left a very good impression of Korean courtesy.

Procedures:

This is a group activity supplementary to the teaching of narrative discourse on a travel-related topic. This activity has students narrate their travel stories by imitating the example narrative demonstrated in the video. After watching the video, the class will split into two groups. The teacher has a handful of topic slips (see Appendix E) for one of the groups to pick. After picking their topics, the students will have 2 minutes to prepare their speech. The other group will have the same amount of time to prepare some questions that they can ask to clarify or inquire information when they are listening to the travel stories. After two-minute preparation, the two groups form two concentric circles, where each student in the inner circle should be facing a student in the outer circle. The inner circle will be the group of the students who have got the slip handouts. And then the inner circle group starts to narrate their story to the other group. After the two-minute narration, the students in the inner circle move to the next spot clockwise and meet a different student in the outer circle and spend the same amount of time to retell the story to the new people. After the students in the inner circle finish 4 storytellings to the
outer circle group, the teacher needs to remind the narrators to remember to use the target
discourse features for the next few storytellings. After all the students in the inner circle meet
and tell their stories to everyone in the outer circle, the students in the outer circle take turns to
spend 2 minutes narrating to the students facing them the most impressive story they have heard
from the people in the inner circle. If the class time allows, the students can have a second round
but the two groups need to switch their responsibilities in the activity.

Evaluation:

This activity provides an interactive setting for students to practice their narrative
discourse. Students improve their communicative competence as a whole through telling stories
and clarifying and inquiring information from each other. Given model examples of narrative
discourse in the video, the students can understand and learn how to produce this type of
discourse on a similar topic by imitating the models. In the group activity, the students are asked
to narrate their stories around the same topics that are used in the talks in the video, because the
students can have a good input of what discourse cues they should possibly use while narrating
"their most ______ story in their travel experience". Given this input, students also can
establish their consciousness of organizing their utterances at discourse level, and learn how to
narrate their travel stories by using appropriate discourse structure and discourse cues. In
addition, considering the activity schema suggested by the text-to-text activity table (Council of
Europe, 2001), this activity is developed to require students to report their story to each of the
students they are meeting, which is a way to use repetition of practicing narration to reinforce the
training of discourse competence.
Activity 3: Movie Clip Retelling

Level: Intermediate high

Technique: Content-Based Instruction

Discourse focus: Report of a sequence of events

Materials: Movie clip from the movie My Own Sword Man
(http://v.youku.com/v_show/id_XMjQ5OTA2NzUy.html), handouts (see Figure 5.1)

Prior required procedures:

➢ The students watch the movie My Own Sword Man for homework and learn the main story.

➢ The teacher shares background information of this movie with students in prior class session, so that students will learn some cultural facts related to or indicated in this Chinese movie.

➢ The teacher teaches the movie content, structure in a narrative discourse about the process of events in a movie, and related discourse cues in a prior class session.

Procedures:

This activity requires students to watch a 3-minute long movie excerpt and then narrate the sequence of events in this clip to other classmates. The students will pair up. And then the teacher shows the movie clip to the students. One student in the pair is allowed to watch the clip, and the other one is only allowed to listen to the clip. This student will write down guesses of the happening events while listening. A handout (see Figure 5.1) will be provided before listening.

After the teacher shows the movie clip, the students who have watched the clip report the
sequence of events in the movie to their partners, and their partners need to clarify and gain information by asking questions of the narrators in order to verify or correct their guesses about the events. The pair of students needs to work on the corrections together and fill out the handouts. This clip could be shown more than once, as needed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>人物 [Characters]</th>
<th>时间/ 地点 [Time/Place]</th>
<th>事件 [Event/Happening]</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
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Figure 5.1 handouts in Activity 3

Evaluation:

This activity uses visual stimulus as an input and asks students to narrate the events based on the storyline shown in the movie clip. The visual prompt can help students create information and content in their discourse so that students can be encouraged to produce discourse instead of not knowing what to talk about. As this activity is a supplementary practice in a unit plan, the study of the movie in the previous lessons in the unit is based on Content-based Instruction, and the way of reporting the process of events is taught along with the content-based input. Based on their knowledge of the movie established in the previous lessons, the students can understand the story better and narrate the happening explicitly by using the narrative method they have learned in this unit.
Descriptive discourse

Activity 4: Flags to Flags

Level: Intermediate low/mid

Technique: Task-based Language Teaching

Discourse focus: Giving directions related to description

Materials: Handouts (see Figure 5.2)

Prior required procedures:

➢ The previous lessons teach language forms that are used in instructional discourse and vocabulary to describe shapes, colors and locations.

➢ The teacher teaches help students practice what discourse cues they should use while describing instructions.

Procedures:

In this activity, the students are paired up and sit face to face with a sufficiently high cardboard divider between them. Each student will have a handout of two flags (see Figure 5.2), and direct their pair partner to draw the two flags according to their description. The drawer should also ask questions to clarify the information given by the describer. After they all finish the instructing and drawing tasks, the teacher will ask each students what flags they have drawn and whose flags they are.
Evaluation:

This activity targets lower-level learners, and therefore language form teaching associated with the activity is relatively important. This activity is supplementary to the teaching of language forms particularly used in the discourse of instructional description (also known as discourse cues), and the teaching of the vocabulary frequently used to describe characteristics of things, such as colors, shapes and so forth. Also, this activity provides a beginning stage for students to practice describing a technique (as draw a flag in this activity) by using lower-level vocabulary and language forms. Practicing this type of discourse in this activity, lower-level students can establish their discourse competence in this type of generic structure. In the future, as they accumulate more specific vocabulary, they will become more skillful in various describing discourses.
Activity 5: Describe Cultural Identities

Level: Intermediate mid/high

Technique: Content-Based Instruction

Discourse focus: Describing abstract characteristics and identities

Materials: Video clip (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2TRs2s-22tg), handouts (see Figure 5.3 and Appendix F)

Prior required procedures:

➢ The teacher teaches Chinese culture related to food, holidays and nations through reading materials and textbook in prior class sessions.

➢ The teacher teaches what discourse cues and what structure students need to use when they are describing cultural characteristics or identities.

Procedures:

In this activity, students will practice descriptive discourse though describing Chinese cultural identities. In order to help students recall what they have learned about the discourse cues in such types of descriptive discourse, a suggested structure used in the target descriptive discourse (see Appendix F handout 2) will be provided in the handouts distributed to them before their preparation.

Another handout (see Appendix F handout 1) will be distributed to the students first before they watch the video. It includes a list of questions for students to consider while they are watching the video. Before showing the video, the teacher will give several cultural elements for the students to choose from as topics, such as architecture, food, music, dance, painting, nations
and so forth. All these topics will be demonstrated in the video. The students need to decide which cultural element they are going to describe before watching the video. The students who have chosen the same topic will form a team. After selecting their topics, the students need to pay attention to the relevant content shown in the video and take notes or make sketches for memory aid.

After watching the video, the students will be given 10 minutes to discuss with their group member about what they have seen in the video to prepare their report. Handout 2 (see Appendix F handout 2) will be given to the students before their discussion. The teacher will walk around and check with the students to see if they need help with grammar and vocabulary. After the group discussion and preparation of their report, different groups will meet each other and share their reports with each other. The listeners need to summarize what they have heard from the reporters and write down the key information in a handout (see Figure 5.3) and later submit it to the teacher. When giving the oral report, the students should make sure their description covers the aspects listed in handout 2 and use the given structure appropriately. The oral report should be 1-3-minute long.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>文化元素 [Cultural element]</th>
<th>个人经历中对它的特点的认识 [The characteristics learned in personal experiences]</th>
<th>影片中展示的特点 [The characteristics demonstrated in the video]</th>
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Figure 5.3 Handout for group discussion
Evaluation:

This activity uses a video clip from the YouTube website (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2TRs2s-22tg) as visual stimulus to provide information for students to speak about. The video demonstrates the topical content so that students can use the visual information to discuss and speak around the given topic. There is no vocal commentary in the video but only images and music, which avoids verbal input, so students have the opportunity to create their own discourse.

The group discussion session in this activity also provides an interactive platform, through which students can practice the language communicatively. The suggested structure in handout 2 (see Appendix F handout 2) is considered a model structure for describing-cultural-identity discourse, and includes the discourse cues they should use to connect their thoughts in their discourse. This input is considered an “L2 written rubric”, as indicated in the activity table by Council of Europe (2001). Students give their spoken response according to this given rubric in order to make sure they are using the appropriate discourse structure and their discourse covers all the required information in this type of discourse.

**Activity 6: Museum Docent**

Level: Intermediate high

Technique: Content-Based Instruction, Task-Based Language Teaching

Discourse focus: Descriptive discourse of artistic pieces, interpretative description
PEDAGOGICAL TECHNIQUES

Materials: Video clip (00:10 – 01:23, not including the dance performance) (http://v.youku.com/v_show/id_XMzg1OTUyNDA0.html), an art exhibition in a museum

Prior required procedures:

➢ The teacher shows a video clip to students, in which a professional museum docent is guiding visitors on a tour of a museum.

Procedures:

This is a task-based project for students. They are to do research outside-of-class time and then present their results on one of the art pieces in the manner of a museum docent at an exhibition. In a prior class session, students will be shown a video about how a professional museum docent describes an exhibit and learn how the museum docent organizes her descriptive discourse. Afterwards, the teacher will designate an on-going exhibition in a museum and ask students to choose one of the pieces in this exhibition and then to study the author and the picture’s background information, along with the interpretation of the picture. Students will introduce their chosen pictures by imitating the discourse the professional docent produced in the video after a given preparation period. After two weeks of preparation, students will go to the exhibition together and take turns describing their chosen pictures with their interpretation. Each of their presentations should last no more than 3 minutes. While listening, the audience for each docent student needs to prepare questions about his/her introduction and interpretation of the piece. After each presentation, the listeners are given 2-3 minutes to ask questions or give
comments on the reporting. Every student in this class group needs to ask questions or give
comments at least two times in the whole activity.

Evaluation:

This activity requires students to find content and information themselves through
research. Therefore, it is more appropriate for higher-level intermediate learners of Chinese.
Through learning the content in a previous class session, students can get input from the research
about how descriptive discourse or interpretive description is organized, and about what
discourse cues are frequently used in producing this type of discourse. This situational task can
help learners practice pragmatic use of a certain type of discourse in a contextual situation. In
this activity, the role of a docent in a museum situation helps students learn what discourse cues
they need to use in this pragmatic situation. In addition, the video clip was recorded in a
professional museum docent competition held in a Chinese city. It shows the authentic use of the
discourse features in a Chinese context, which is beneficial for students to learn the authenticity
of the Chinese language.

Comparative discourse

Activity 7: Read and Compare

Level: Intermediate low/mid

Technique: Content-Based Instruction

Discourse focus: Listing comparing aspects, exemplifying comparing aspects

Materials: Handouts (see Figure 5.4 and Appendix G)
PEDAGOGICAL TECHNIQUES

Prior required procedures:

➢ The teacher teaches vocabulary about city culture, elements and related content.

➢ The teacher teaches grammatical patterns used to compare two similar or different aspects.

Procedures:

In this activity, students will be provided a reading text comparing two cities (See Appendix G Handout 1). The teacher will lead the students through the reading to find the structure of the discourse, the topic and transitional sentences used regularly in the comparative discourse, and the regular discourse cues for comparative discourse. Then, students will be asked to choose two cities they have been to and compare them by using the linguistic forms and the structure they have learned in the reading. The students will be given 10 minutes to prepare their speech. Another handout (Appendix G handout 2) will be distributed to the students before their preparation. It includes the discourse cues frequently-used in comparative discourse, the structure of the discourse, and some content aspects that the students exemplify while comparing two cities. After preparation, the students will be divided into several groups and report their comparison to their group members. The listeners need to take notes of what they hear from the reporters. After all the students in the group finish their reporting, they need to combine all the taken notes and have a five-minute discussion on which cities they have compared and what similar and different aspects they have compared amongst the cities. They have to write down the information in the handout (see Figure 5.4) and submit it to the teacher later.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>城市 [Cities]</th>
<th>相似方面 [Similarities]</th>
<th>不同方面 [Differences]</th>
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Figure 5.4 Handout for group discussion

Evaluation:

This activity exemplifies how “discourse structure translation”, as mentioned in the guidelines in this portfolio, helps students learn discourse structure through a written model and practice their spoken discourse by using the same structure. The given reading passage indicates a clear structure of comparative discourse, which is considered the L2 written rubric for students to refer to while they are preparing their spoken comparative discourse. This is also an idea to apply the criterion of spoken response to L2 written rubric indicated by Council of Europe (2001) into practice. In addition, the handout with some suggested discourse cues for students’ reference provides some scaffolding for lower-level intermediate students to practice linguistic forms in their discourse, and also to arouse their consciousness about using discourse cues to organize and make coherent and logical comparative discourse. The group discussion after the reporting session is an opportunity provided for students to practice the language in an interactive context.
Activity 8: The Pop Song Battle: China vs. America

Level: Intermediate high

Technique: Content-Based Instruction

Discourse focus: Comparative discourse, exemplifying comparing aspects

Materials: Reading Article (Anonymous, n.d.), Music video clips
(http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XHwFcf2spTk,
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H2zrrWW1kjw,
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7OycJrzHfmC,
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QREi64mD9Fg)

Prior required procedures:

➢ The teacher teaches vocabulary of music genres and adjectives describing music characteristics in a prior class session.

➢ The teacher introduces a reading comparing Chinese and Western music in a prior class session.

Procedures:

In this activity students compare Chinese and American pop songs representing certain types of music genre. The students have learned Chinese vocabulary about music genres and adjectives describing the music characteristics in a previous class session. They have also read an article about the comparison between Chinese and Western music. They can imitate the discourse structure in the article and use the discourse cues they have learned from the reading when they are creating comparative discourse.
In this activity, the students are divided into four groups and pick a music genre they are interested in from the given options, such as rock, hip-hop, soul, and Rhythm and Blues. Then, they sit with their group members and watch and listen to four Chinese pop songs of different genres. Each group should pay attention to the music they have chosen to discuss. Then, the students are asked to compare the Chinese music and the American music in their group discussion. Since they are American students, they already know about their own pop songs. They have to make one example of an American song and compare it to a demonstrated Chinese song. The groups will have 10 minutes for discussion. After discussion, the group picks one representative to debrief what they have discussed to share with the other whole class. The debriefing should be 2-3 minutes long.

Evaluation:

This activity is supplementary to the teaching of a reading article about the comparison between Chinese and Western music. The teaching of this model discourse can help students learn how to organize and produce comparative discourse and learn the discourse cues frequently used in this type of genre. The teacher teaches students the discourse cues in a written discourse and suggests using them in a spoken discourse as well. This reading includes a few key discourse cues that can be used in a comparative discourse. Also, the target discourse cues in this reading are often used in a spoken discourse as well. Therefore, it can be used to teach discourse cues that will be used in oral discourse. In addition, the students see clips of several music clips collected from the YouTube website, so they can also get a visual sense of the delivered music
styles that are influenced by Chinese culture and make their discourse informational by exemplifying the facts they receive from the videos.

Activity 9: Pick a Hotel

Level: Intermediate high

Technique: Task-Based Language Teaching

Discourse focus: Comparative discourse, exemplifying comparing aspects

Materials: Reading article (Zhong & Wu, 2007), handouts (see Appendix H)

Prior required procedures:

- The students read the article about the comparison of the travel information provided on different websites for homework before a previous class session.

- In the previous class session, the teacher teaches this article and the related discourse structure to the students.

Procedures:

In this activity, students are paired up and do a role play. One of the students plays a travel agent, the other is a customer. The scenario of the role play is: the customers want to decide which hotel they are going to stay at in Shanghai. The agents will recommend two hotels to them and compare the hotels' price and features shown in the fliers (see Appendix H), and then let the customers make their own decisions. The customers will respond to the agent with their choices and the reasons why they made that decision. When stating the reasons, the students should include his/her comparison of the two hotels. After letting students role play by
themselves, the teacher can chose one or two groups to perform their role-play in front of the class.

Evaluation:

This activity is another example of a situational task mentioned in the teaching technique guidelines. It provides a platform for students to interact with each other and, at the same time, practice comparative discourse in a meaningful situation. Given the handouts, students can use the specific vocabulary materials to make their comparative discourse informational and meaningful. Also, they will be clear what aspects they can compare in their discourse. It will certainly avoid the situation, as mentioned in the interview with the Chinese instructor, that students don’t know they need to compare different content in their comparative discourse.
CHAPTER VI: CONCLUSION

The purpose of this teaching portfolio is to demonstrate pedagogical techniques and activities that can be utilized to improve oral proficiency development with a reinforcement of discourse competence. The findings in the literature review indicated the importance of discourse competence in communicative competence development, and helped me learn how discourse competence can be taught and improved and how current applications contribute to the teaching of discourse competence. The results of the needs analysis manifested that there is need to improve discourse competence among intermediate learners of Chinese, and it is necessary to increase the emphasis on discourse competence practice in oral proficiency development. The results also suggested effective ideas about discourse competence improvement for intermediate learners of Chinese.

After reviewing the literature review and analyzing the needs analysis results, I suggested some techniques for teachers to develop or re-create activities to enhance students’ discourse competence in producing different genres of discourse. I also included several activities developed by me that can be used by the students to practice discourse production in three different genres. The activities can be pulled out into individual lessons (see Appendix I sample lesson plans) in a unit as well as combined to become a specific workshop for discourse competence training.

Nevertheless, there are limitations to this project. First, due to insufficient studies on Chinese discourse structure in different genres currently, this project is limited to showing specific and generic models of Chinese narrative, descriptive, and comparative discourse.
Therefore, further studies on Chinese discourse structure should be added into this portfolio as
they are done to enrich authorized information for the teaching of Chinese discourse. Second, the
activity design and material development targets college groups. As a result, the application of
materials and activities requires a certain degree of maturity in order to be completed
successfully. In this case, the learner population is limited to the college/adult group and the
teaching portfolio does not have a good generalizability of the learner groups. Intermediate
learners in middle school may not find these activities suitable to improve their discourse
competence. Hence, materials development for this portfolio could be expanded further in order
to suit the maturity and thinking ability of young and teenage learners.

All in all, having considered the implications mentioned above, I hope this portfolio can
serve as a foundation for further investigations into the development of discourse competence in
oral proficiency.
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PEDAGOGICAL TECHNIQUES


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Appendix A: The survey for Chinese oral proficiency development

Survey for Oral Chinese Proficiency Development

Would you be willing to help research?

You are invited to participate in research conducted by Yuan Yuri Liu, a graduate student from the Language Teaching Specialization Program at the University of Oregon. This survey is part of a project to complete her Master’s Degree. The purpose of this study is to develop a description of Chinese learners’ oral proficiency development in order to help learners improve their oral proficiency.

All you need to do is to complete this short questionnaire, which should take about 10 minutes. Your participation is voluntary, and much appreciated. Any information you provide will be confidential and your name will not appear or be used in the project. Completing and returning the questionnaire constitutes your consent to participate.

Please feel free to contact me at yliu9@uoregon.edu if you have any questions.

Thank you very much for your help!

1. How long have you been learning Chinese?

   ____ Less than a year

   ____ 1-2 years

   ____ 3-4 years

   ____ More than 3 years

2a. Have you ever studied Chinese in Chinese-speaking regions?

   ____ Yes

   ____ No

2b. If you answered yes in Question 2a,

   1) In which region(s) have you studied Chinese?

   ___________________________________________________________
2) How long did you study Chinese in each place?

3. What Chinese courses are you taking currently at University of Oregon? (Check all that are applicable.)
   ___ 1st year Chinese
   ___ 2nd year Chinese
   ___ 3rd year Chinese
   ___ 4th year Chinese
   ___ Flagship courses: you are in ___ CHN 420 level, ___ CHN 440 level or ___ content courses
   ___ Other Chinese courses using Chinese as the medium instruction ________ (Course titles)

4. What do you consider your oral proficiency level to be? (Considering any of your oral test results or the level of classes you are taking)
   ___ Novice (___ Low ___ Mid ___ High)
   ___ Intermediate (___ Low ___ Mid ___ High)
   ___ Advanced (___ Low ___ Mid ___ High)
   ___ Superior (___ Low ___ Mid ___ High)

5. Please rate the amount of emphasis on the following skills in your Chinese courses.

   Not at all  Average  Mostly
   Speaking     1      2      3      4      5
   Listening    1      2      3      4      5
   Reading      1      2      3      4      5
   Writing      1      2      3      4      5
6. At this moment in time, in what skill(s) do you feel you need the most improvement?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>No need</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>The most</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Speaking</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7. In terms of your oral proficiency in Chinese, how confident are you in your ability to do the following tasks?

**Word reading**
- Can’t do
- Somewhat
- Can do

**Text reading**
- Can’t do
- Somewhat
- Can do

**Sentence making**
- Can’t do
- Somewhat
- Can do

**Greeting dialogues**
- Can’t do
- Somewhat
- Can do

**Self-introduction**
- Can’t do
- Somewhat
- Can do

**Topic discussion with group members**
- Can’t do
- Somewhat
- Can do

**Narrate what you often do on weekends**
- Can’t do
- Somewhat
- Can do

**Describe the techniques of your favorite sport**
- Can’t do
- Somewhat
- Can do

**Compare American food and Chinese food**
- Can’t do
- Somewhat
- Can do
Present your understanding on a topic related to your current major

Can’t do  Somewhat  Can do

8. In order to improve your oral proficiency in Chinese so as to be able to complete the tasks listed in Question 7, you would like to put more emphasis on: (Check any that are applicable)
   ___ Drilling more language forms, grammatical expressions and vocabulary
   ___ Participating more in group discussions on different topics in classes
   ___ Having more task-based learning, such as presentation and debate activities
   ___ Learning more academic content in Chinese that is related to your majors
   ___ Others: _______________________________________________________________________

9. If you checked more than two in Question 8, which two do you consider most needed for your improvement?
   a) ______________________________________
   b) ______________________________________

10. What speaking activities do you frequently experience in your current Chinese courses?
    ___ Group discussion/task
    ___ Pair conversation/task
    ___ Occasional presentation
    ___ Speed-reading
    ___ In-class writing
    ___ Grammar drilling
    ___ Dictation
    ___ Role-play
    ___ Others: _______________________________________________________________________

11. What type of speaking activities do you think are most helpful for you in improving your oral proficiency?
   ___ Topic discussion
   ___ Group debate
   ___ Presentation
   ___ Situational conversation/Role-play/Simulations
   ___ Communicative task in real-life situations
   ___ Others: ____________________________________________

12. What are the difficulties that you encounter when you are trying to produce oral discourse in Chinese, for example when you try to: compare two different items, introduce a sport activity, or elaborate your understanding on a certain concept?
   ___ Grammatical patterns
   ___ Functional expressions
   ___ Academic/formal vocabulary/Terminology
   ___ Setting up the appropriate discourse structure for different purposes
   ___ Pragmatic use of the second language (i.e. using language appropriately in a given situation for a specific purpose)
   ___ Others: ____________________________________________
Appendix B: Interview questions (Chinese instructor)

1. What, in your opinion, is the Chinese oral proficiency level range of the students in your class according to the ACTFL guidelines for speaking?

2. What skills do you emphasize while teaching each of your courses?

3. What teaching approaches/techniques do you most often use to help students improve oral skills?

4. What components in communicative competence do you think are most important to focus on for oral proficiency development of the students at the proficiency levels you teach: grammatical competence, fluency, pragmatic competence, and/or discourse competence? Why do you think each is important for oral skills improvement?

5. (If the instructors do not mention the importance of discourse competence for oral proficiency development) How important do you think is discourse competence to the development of oral proficiency?

6. What do you think should be involved in teaching discourse competence in the oral context?

7. If your students are preparing for the OPI test, what competence/skills would you reinforce to help them improve their speaking performance?

8. What suggestions do you have for teaching intermediate learners discourse competence? What techniques and materials would you use to improve this competence?
Appendix C: Interview questions (research director)

1. What do you think the results of the OPI test tell us in terms of the test takers’ speaking performance?

2. How valid do you think the OPI test is in assessing students’ speaking skill?

3. What do you think the test takers need to improve according to their testing results?

4. According to the ACTFL guidelines for speaking, what do you think intermediate speakers should do or learn to meet the criteria? What aspects do you think the speakers who have been evaluated at the intermediate level need to improve in order to meet the advanced-level criteria?

5. What specific components of communicative competence do you think intermediate-or-above-level speakers need to improve to enhance their performance in the OPI test?

6. (If the researcher does not mention about discourse competence in Question 5,) What do you think the role of discourse competence is in developing oral proficiency?
Appendix D: Handout in Activity 1

A Fun Fact for the Week

Requirements: Learn the way of narration in the recording, and please narrate a fun story that you have experienced or you are going to experience in the week by imitating the example in the recording. You have 5 minutes to prepare the story. During preparation, please consider the following questions and include the information to those questions in your narration. You may also use the discourse cues provided below. Your narration should take at least 2 minutes.

Questions:

1) What did/will you do this week?  
2) When did/will you do it?  
3) What happened/ will be likely to happen in this event?  
4) Why is it a fun thing to you?

You may use these in your narration...

I want to talk about...

This week, I did something very fun.

At first... And then... At last...

I feel this is very interesting, because...

You can also use these...

I think...

This week, I did something very interesting.

At first... And then... At last...

I feel this is very interesting, because...
Appendix E: Slip handouts in Activity 2

1. Please narrate one of the most interesting things that have ever happened in your travel experience.

2. Please narrate one of the worst things that have ever happened in your travel experience.

3. Please narrate one of the most memorable things that have ever happened in your travel experience.

4. Please narrate one of the most awkward things that have ever happened in your travel experience.

5. Please narrate one of the happiest things that have ever happened in your travel experience.
Appendix F: Handouts in Activity 5

Handout 1: distributed before watching a video

Please read the following questions, then watch the video. After that, think about how you would answer these questions. Please consider these questions and put your answers into a 1-2-minute oral report. The topic is describing your selected cultural elements associated with what you have seen in the video.

1. Have you learned anything relating to your selected element in your personal experience?

2. What have you seen in the video that relate to your topic?

3. What are the characteristics of the element shown in the video? Please describe 1-2 respects.

4. Please be specific with an example from your personal experience that proves that what you have seen in the video are or are not witnessed by you from your experience in Chinese culture.
Handout 2: distributed before group discussion

请你在做口头报告，描述这个文化元素时，参考以下的报告结构：[Please refer to the structure listed below while you are describing the element:]

1. 我今天要描述的文化元素是……。[Today I am going to describe a cultural element, which is ...]

2. 在我以前的个人经历中，有关这个元素，我的了解是……。[In my personal experience, I have learned about this element...]

3. 在影片中，我看到了……它有……的特点。[In the video, I have seen... and they have characteristics such as ...]

4. 关于影片中所展示的元素，在我个人经历中，有/没有看见相似的情况。比如说，……。[In my personal experience, I have/have not seen the similar situation. For example...]

Appendix G: Handouts in Activity 7

Handout 1: reading material

Instruction: Read the following paragraph first. After reading, please underline the topic and transitional sentences and find the content that are compared in this reading.

美国城市匹兹堡和南京有很多相似之处。比如说，从地理上看，匹兹堡也位于东部，附近也有江河，而且周围也有很多山。匹兹堡很安静气候特点也比较相似，夏天很热，虽然不是“火炉”，但气温有时也很高。另外，匹兹堡和南京一样，也以重工业文明，比如说，两座城市中都有很多工厂。不过，这两个城市也有不同的地方。拿人口来说，匹兹堡就比南京少的多，有将近200万人，只是南京的四分之一。(Zhang, 2009, p. 246)
Handout 2: suggested discourse cues

Instructions: Choose two cities that you are familiar with and compare them by using a similar structure demonstrated in the reading. You can also use the following sentences as your topic or transitional sentences in your speech.

A与B在有些方面很相似。

A与B在某些方面有所不同。

In your speech, you should at least compare three aspects between the two cities. They should be some respects with similarities or differences. For city topic, you could compare food, lifestyle, demographics, language/dialects, industries, culture, transportation, and so forth. Please be specific with examples for each respect. You could use the following structure to compare each respect:

从……上看，A与B的相似/不同处有……。比如说……。

那……来说，A比B……，比方说……。
上海花园饭店 http://www.gardenhotelshanghai.com/cn/stay/syukuhaku_plan.html

住宿价格（每晚）：

豪华园景双床房 ¥ 1,380
小套房    ¥ 2,300
豪华套房    ¥ 2,500

酒店设施：

中央空调    语音信箱
卫星电视    浴室内浴袍、吹风机、体重计
无线网络    电热水瓶
小酒吧    日式浴衣
保险箱

客房服务：

客房内提供24小时客房送餐服务，请参阅送餐服务菜单。

洗衣服务：

花园饭店（上海）洗衣房配有先进的洗衣、熨烫设备，可承接各式衣料，各种款式衣物的湿洗、干洗、熨烫等服务。我们以优惠的价格、周到的服务竭诚期待您的惠顾。

用车服务：

饭店车队备有各类车型，为您出行，接送提供最便利的服务。

住宿信息与价格:

豪华套房 ¥4800

有独立的会客厅和卧室各配有独立卫生间。房内摆有涉及饭店历史的古董器具。

行政房 ¥2280

新装修，40平方米的大床房，商务功能齐全，多媒体电脑，24小时管家式服务。

名人房 ¥1680

50平方米双人大床，曾有名人住过（如爱因斯坦、卓别林、罗素、前总统格兰特等）。

可宽带上网。

豪华大床房 ¥1280

30平方米，新装修，大床，内有宽带上网。
Appendix I: Sample lesson plans

Lesson plan 1: Activity 1

Level: Intermediate low

Class size: 12 people

Materials: handouts (see Appendix D)

Class time: 50 minutes

Objectives:

➢ Students will be able to get appropriate language and structural information from a model narrative discourse and use it to narrate their own interesting stories.

➢ Students will be able to use a few discourse cues that are often used in narrative discourse to introduce a story, report the process of happening and summation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Procedure</th>
<th>Material</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3 min.</td>
<td>· T introduces the topic “Fun Facts for the Week” and, using her own recording, talks about her fun fact for the week.</td>
<td>Audio clip</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 min.</td>
<td>· T goes through the recording with students and teaches them what discourse cues they should use to introduce a story, report the sequence of events, and summarize.</td>
<td>Audio clip</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 min.</td>
<td>· T distributes the handouts to the students and gives instructions for Activity 1 “Fun Facts for the Week”.</td>
<td>Handouts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 min.</td>
<td>· Ss have 5 minutes to prepare their stories, using the information in the handouts.</td>
<td>Handouts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Lesson plan 2: Activity 7

Level: Intermediate mid

Class size: 12 people

Materials: handouts (see Appendix G)

Class time: 50 minutes

Objectives:

➢ Students will be able to find useful discourse cues in a given model reading.

➢ Students will be able to use the model discourse structure and discourse cues to compare two cities that they are familiar with covering at least 3 aspects.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Material</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10 min.</td>
<td>· Ss have 10 minutes to read the passage and complete the reading task.</td>
<td>Handout 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 min.</td>
<td>· T guides Ss through the reading and explains how to use the discourse cues found from the reading passage in a general comparative discourse.</td>
<td>Handouts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>· T explains what discourse cues should be used to list aspects while comparing two items and what discourse cues should be used to exemplify the similarity and difference in comparison.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 min.</td>
<td>· T distributes Handout 2 to Ss and gives instructions for the spoken task.</td>
<td>Handout 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>· Ss have 10 minutes to prepare their speech.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 min.</td>
<td>· Ss are divided into groups of three and each of them has no longer than 2 minutes to share their comparison of two cities to the other group members.</td>
<td>Note</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>· When one student is reporting, the other two members should take notes of what cities and aspects she/he is comparing.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 min.</td>
<td>· Ss stay in their original groups and discuss to summarize what cities are compared in their group and what aspects of those cities were talked about, according to their notes</td>
<td>Notes,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>handouts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PEDAGOGICAL TECHNIQUES

| · Ss write down the information they have discussed about in the given handouts. |
|---|---|
| **8 min.** | · Each group has one representative to report what cities they have compared. At least two compared aspects should be covered in his/her report. Each group reports no longer than 2 minutes. The listeners consider which 2 cities they would like to visit the most and write down their reasons on a piece of paper. · After reporting, Ss vote on which 2 cities they would like to visit the most. |
|   | Notes |