

See Thyself in Drama or Do Mechanical Pattern Drills? On Performing CFL/CSL in the Initial Stage

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Shakespeare is performed, read and studied in most parts of the world today. Likewise, second language teaching is conducted in most parts of the world today. Should the latter also be performed, in addition to being read and studied? My answer is an emphatic “Yes,” but what about at the beginner’s level when one has only studied half a dozen Lessons of Chinese as a foreign/second language (CFL/CSL), and with only a hundred or so so-called “formidable” Chinese characters? My answer is still positive.

Pattern drills for the early stages of language practice are widely seen in every second language textbook, especially in CFL/CSL. However, as for how pattern drills can be practiced and reinforced, and then become part of the learner’s second nature, that is truly an art. Are there alternatives other than the often tedious and silly textbook exercises?

This presentation is based on several humorous dramas created by myself, using limited words in the first half of New Practical Chinese Reader I. It will examine the aim, effectiveness and findings of this pedagogy, and will try to explore the theories along with samples of dramas. It will conclude that the patterns that can relate to students’ own lives or to those in society at large in performance are much more beneficial than if they are merely practiced mechanically in class.