

June 21, 2018

Discussion on F2F & virtual demo video clips

This week Tseng Laoshi had two online sessions with us. I had been very curious about online teaching with the questions like how to build up the teacher-student rapport, how students stay attentive and how to pair up students for a role play or a dialogue. With those questions in my mind, I watched the teaching demos. One is F2F, and the other two are virtual through Zoom and Nearpod.

In the first video, what I learned and need to improve most is the richness of the target language input, which tapped into the student life. When I teach a new structure, I usually have students watch a flipped video clip I made beforehand, and have them complete a quiz of translation or multiple choice through google forms. Then, I give students some examples including a question and an answer through Powpoint slide show with some picture clue when they come to class. Those sentences are sometimes not related to their life. They simply learn the structures. I will let them read after me and role play with their partner, followed by an interview or survey to practice the structure. After that, they will have a page of homework containing translation or reading.

After watching the videos, I think I need to try to get to know about the culture and student life here and come up with more meaningful input, like Cai Laoshi, of the structure since they students will have a better chance to improve their interpretive skills, and therefore the other two skills. That will also help the class flow more seamlessly. I will give more choices in homework for students to make according to their learning styles. That will also require more collaboration with my colleagues like in Startalk UVA which can be a luxury when I go back to my school where there is only one Chinese teacher and in which I usually am exhausted with instructional strategies. Besides, I would add in the questions for those sentences containing a verb, 得, and an adjective as a compliment because some students of the age group that I teach simply can't understand or visualize the question through listening. I will also add in some picture clues to address different learning needs.

Also from Cai Laoshi's virtual teaching video, I found the language input is equally rich even though the activities on Zoom only are time-consuming without Nearpod. I like the roles she assigns to each participant in the student activities to engage everyone. For instance, the third student tells the left-over amount of the money after listening to the other two students carry out a dialogue. That part is what I usually have to skip in order to save time in class. But I think that is one of the strategies that keep student stay attentive online.

Not like Zhong Laoshi, Cai Laoshi hasn't built up the teacher-student rapport with the three students. That is what I will come across even though we have access to some of the student information. But both sides need to get used to each other like pronunciation and tones, and teaching and learning sstyle.

I equally benefit from the video clip by Zhong Laoshi. I enjoy the logical relation between those activities in which the learner achieves a latter goal based on the fulfillment of the former. I learned how to integrate Nearpod activities like quiz, handwriting characters, typing characters, and Collaboration into Zoom through a cellphone. It greatly shortens the time for individual or pair work in that all students can work at the same time and their answers will be uploaded onto the screen simultaneously. The new function Collaboration eases the limit of the virtual learning and make it more accessible especially for learners who process knowledge through group work.

Meanwhile, if I were Zhong Laoshi, I would add in a sentence structure like 不但...而且... to describe taste of food throughout the video. I would also add the part of vegetarian choice of food into the dialogue ordering food and have students come up with a dialogue that includes it. Nevertheless, this week ends up as an exciting learning experience for me.

June 30, 2018
Online teaching

As we discussed about three basic tools in designing online teaching materials for this summer, we need PowerPoint, Zoom, and Nearpod. They are not new to me, but it is way different to use them than in F2F classroom, especially when developing PPT slides. Online teaching needs to be more time-efficient with the limit of the resources which we could turn to when needed in F2F instruction.

I am a visual learner. When I develop F2F PPT slides, I would like to make them pleasant to the eyes, not to say fancy. But Dr. Gao told us to make it as plain as possible to avoid unnecessary visual impact on the learner. That make sense and I will follow accordingly to achieve efficiency in both lesson planning and instruction.

Regarding the signs, I used to find typical icons online because they are symbolic. Sometimes, I forgot to add citation. Then, I was told to either take a picture of my own or to find an icon online which I still prefer, but remember to add citation to the icons. That was a good reminder.

Then we discussed about some picture clues chosen for PPT slides. The pictures are reminded to be relevant to the content that we intend to communicate to the students. That sounds simple but not easy since the one we could find online doesn't always match what I need for the content. With that in my mind, I will try to find the best match.

Even though the two weeks of online sessions came to an end, but it is a beginning for me to plan lessons and teach with those redirections.

July 3, 2018

Role of teacher in online classroom and structured output strategies

Before this morning, I am not very sure about what blended learning is like, in which F2F takes about certain portion like 75% of total instructional time and online teaching 25%, for instance.

In terms of online teaching, current statistics witness students mostly learn by themselves through watching interactive video and have online session with teacher once a while. We discussed about the role of the teacher in virtual class. In most cases, someone argued (Tseng, Startalk 2018), currently, teachers are "like coaches as they are not responsible for teaching materials. They only grade assignments and answer students' questions". Unfortunately, "Complete or heavy reliance on self-learning for online language courses is doomed to failure. Frequent quality interaction is key to success for F2F, blended, and online learning." (Tseng, Startalk 2018)

My mind was opened by the key Tseng lasoshi came up with- F2F virtual classroom which features quality language input and output, and quality interaction. That is what I am seeking to learn and improve.

Regarding meaningful and communicative drills, I thought I got what it meant. And I found I truly got it until after Tseng Laoshi clarified it through examples this morning. A drill with an given answer makes it

meaningful, while a drill through which students need to find out the answer makes a communicative one.

I am so glad to learn the six types of activities for structured input through going through an example for each. Tseng always teaches through modeling. At first, I didn't quite get which role we play during presentation, the teacher or the student. When I revisit them after class, I got it and found they are effective, meaningful, communicative strategies for structured input, especially those ones that I haven't used them on purpose as meaningful input. I used interview a lot. In the future, I will try matching as a review while use binary option, supply information, selecting alternative, survey, ordering and ranking when teaching a new structure. I am amazed how seamlessly each step builds up one another to push out the intended output. I enjoyed them most for today.

July 4, 2018 Wednesday

Mini demo reflection and error correction strategies

I was lucky to work with Feng Laoshi on the mini teaching demo peer review. I learned a lot from her. First, she suggested us to come up with a PowerPoint for the presentation on Wednesday. Then, it was amazing to see the chart she developed to contrast and compare the teacher input and student output on the video clip and to hear her analysis about its quantity and quality.

When doing error correction in teaching, I think it is important to take learner's affective filter into consideration and recast the correct sentence to protect student motivation. We watched one video from Cai Laoshi and the other three from 2017 Startalk. For me, it is easy to watch and critique other teachers' videos but challenging to consciously apply the best practices of structured input with effective elicitation questions, pushing output, and error correction.

To improve teaching efficiency, I decide to make a list of those strategies and keep it handy while planning. I need to ask communicative questions which tap into student's personal experiences to elicit their output in sentence and paragraph levels rather than simply in words. So, I need to move from questions based on the text to those about themselves or people around them. I need to be mindful that I should not steal student talk time and should limit Teacher talk time within 50% of the total instruction time. When error occurs, I prefer recasting the correct answer, but depends on student readiness for error correction.

All those mentioned above made a meaningful Independence Day for me.

July 8, 2018

Lesson planning

So far, we have completed our lesson plan for day 1 and started planning lesson 3. What I learn most is how to develop a journey of lesson, full of communicative questions for students to enjoy with me. Student can relate to their life and make connections. I learn it through group planning, discussion with colleagues and lead teachers, rehearsal, reflections, and from advices from Tseng Laoshi.

Regarding authentic materials, I realized that what make the authentic snacks of Beijing and culture specific soft drinks when I was thinking about how to present them in front of the learners. As I am looking for them, I found they are not simply limited in the two snacks rolling donkey and green bean and teas, but they are constantly developing and enriching. Even though they are not the key structures

of the lesson, but it greatly helpful for the students to have a look at the menu, even if it is a simply one, to have a brief idea about how many options and variations of tea or juice are offered in a snack bar in China. With that, learners can easily relate to the drinks, snacks, and tea they can find in US. And they can have a glimpse how life of the Chinese people in food culture.

July 11, 2018 Wednesday
Day 3. Singing and Chinese snacks

I really enjoyed my teaching on Day 3 today of both singing and talking about traditional snacks in Beijing.

Regarding preview and review, all four students were well-prepared, especially the two students of the second session. I enjoyed their oral and written homework and appreciate their hard work. I am thankful for the support from the student/teacher program teachers and coordinators before, during, and after the program. They oversee technology setup, the student orientation, opening ceremony, preview and review assignments, etc. Without their contribution, the students will have a hard time during class. If I go back to the school of my own, I would need to get all those ready beforehand all by myself, which is time and effort-consuming.

All the learning objectives are attained with all instructional activities completed satisfactorily. I found myself started to enjoy each session as a journey instead of as a mechanical lecturing. For a teacher, it is easier to motivate and engage students through tapping into the student life and sharing that of our own. Rather than lecturing through memorizing what we planned, we guide our student by asking them questions step by step and elicit their answers in the target language.

One of my student commented that he got hungry when I asked about the popular snack in Beijing at the beginning of the class. That greatly reduce their affective filter and make learning more approachable and enjoyable. When he told his hobbies, I was amazed at his response “我除了喜欢唱歌，还喜欢拉中提琴和弹吉他” since he just learned Chinese for about two years, but he likes it.

During the session, all four students were shocked that we would sing the song during the class at first, then they will go to a singing competition, there was a singer before them, they were the last to show up on the stage, they won the first place, and lastly, they went to a snack restaurant to celebrate. Likewise, the students might give unexpected answers which might shock us. But we need to listen to them and guide them back to the right way to fulfil the objectives of the lesson. In all, this made another memorable day for me.

July 19, 2018

All in all, I really enjoyed this well-structured journey piloted by Tseng Laoshi, regarding our group lesson planning, learning from the lead teachers and colleagues, virtual lecturing, growing from my mistakes, meal time small talks, staying in a common lodging area for two weeks, and growing from inside out as a human being. I understand Tseng Laoshi should have worked so hard to overcome all the challenges to make it possible for us. Thank you from the bottom of my heart.

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