

Self-Reflection of Snow(Xue) Song

1. June 21, 2018

This is the second week of UVa STARTALK online training, we had some practical experiences related to technology of online teaching. Gao laoshi introduced the platforms--- Zoom and Nearpod that are going to be used this summer.

As far as I am concerned, online teaching is on one hand, confined by the absence of real presence, it is more difficult to establish personal relationship; on the other hand, the creation of a virtual reality can bring students into the culture in an immersive way. I believe when I am doing online teaching, I need to pay attention to the relationship between me and my students, as well as relationships among students. My goal is to reinforce the emotional attachment and make good use of the technologies to present a culturally authentic world to my students.

Materials and activities are two significant elements when we prepare for an online course. I think the key is to keep the authenticity of the material and increase the interpersonal, interpretive and presentational features of activities. For example, when we talk about visiting a place in China, the practice could be introducing student's hometown or their favorite cities. By using Zoom and Nearpod, the three models of communication can be better illustrated. Zoom can help students to establish personal relationship and practice interpersonal skills by making dialogs, pair work and role-play. Nearpod is an effective tool that exams students understanding of the materials and the ability of problem-solving. Both of the tools can be used to

practice presentational skills by sharing their opinions and thoughts through activities.

2. July 2, 2018

Today is the first day of Onsite Training, many principles and analysis are introduced and made to bring me to a more realistic online environment. In the morning, Tseng Laoshi gave more pedagogical level instructions. To achieve effective teaching, we should obey the standards and organized curriculum according to themes; always remember our class is student-centered; to push out productive output, we as instructor are ought to provide comprehensible input in target language; furthermore, language teaching should be integrated with culture and content in authentic materials; lastly, students are mean to be assessed with performance-based assignments.

In the afternoon, I knew more about students and discussed some of our teaching demos with everybody. I find group discussion is a good way to make things clear. In particular, by discussing videos with the help of criteria, we find more things that worth noticing in Online teaching. For example, we found out that most teachers tend to be nervous when there is silence between or during activities, and that can lead to meaningless instructions, which can be confusing for students and break the flow of teaching. It is a matter of changing old habits as well as getting fully prepared before classes started.

3. July 3, 2018

This is the second day of Onsite Training, the arrangement is more interactive since we started to discuss our own teaching demos. I do feel my teaching video is a mirror for me, there are something that is missed when preparing and I also see something in a different angle. From the perspective of technology, I did not expect that Zoom can change views according to the change of speakers. It is really novel and convenient, because it helps viewers to focus on the topic when replaying the video. I also did not take the volume of the inserted videos into consideration. Another difference between live recording and replaying of the video is the inconsistency of Zoom recording and Nearpod transmitting. So, to be safe, it will be better not to change the view or try change as less as possible in the real classes.

By watching my peer teachers' videos, I learned a lot. Their teaching style, mastering of the tools, designing of the content and activities are the main points that I will review and try to learn more from.

In the afternoon, Tseng Laoshi emphasized the importance of error correction. By reanalyzing Cai Laoshi's face to face teaching demo, I learned to correct students' error more effectively. In the past, I did not realize the different levels of error corrections and have always correct students with sheer guts. After learning these skills and having the consciousness, I will try to apply these into practice.

4. July 9, 2018

Today is the first day of Online Teaching at University of Virginia STARTALK Program, it is also my day of teaching. I was excited but also a little nervous. I do believe after the preparation with Day 1 group, rehearsals with my teaching partner and our Master teacher, I should be able to deliver my teaching materials confidently. But teaching is never just getting fully prepared without students, so only after Day 1's teaching, did I really feel relaxed and start to reflect my teaching. I believe personalized and differentiated teaching is the key to be with students. Consequently, I modified my PowerPoints and made two versions for my two sessions. Students from the first session are more outgoing and are able to have more high-level output. So I provided less scaffolding for them, leaving them more room to develop details. Boys from the second session are a little bit shy and nervous. They are highly-motivated, fully-prepared good students, while because they are from different classrooms, they may feel less comfortable taking Chinese in an immersion, communicative class. Though they tend to give the answer from the text book, which shows their efforts and make them feel safe, I still encouraged them to share something about themselves and show care to the answer about them. It is also a transition for myself.

After teaching of Day 1, I gradually started to understand the real meaning of back-ward design and communicative language learning. To achieve what students can do outside the classroom, we are ought to provide them sufficient but not overwhelming information and testify it by doing performance test. During the whole process, we approach students in a personal and authentic way, giving them chance to provide new information in a properly practice framework.

5. July 11, 2018

Today is Day 3 of UVa STARTALK. Students participated in the Chinese Bridge Singing Competition and went to Wangfujing to enjoy classic Beijing snack and beverages virtually. As time goes by, I can feel our efforts of arranging teaching materials in a natural way. Our goal is to create the scenario that help students to output naturally instead of showing a certain grammar pattern in different situations, which is the principal I used all the time in the past. Thinking backwards, the old pathway has no difference with grammar-translation method. The most significant difference is that we create various situations for students. However, just like the commonly recognized fact that we should not use linguistic terms when trying to answer students' questions, people are not machines that can remember the response to every scenario correspondingly. Consequently, the most important thing I have learned from this program is that we always need to present the language in a logical and authentic way. Teacher is the bridge between authentic language facts and students as live, differentiated individuals.

To achieve this, I think I need to practice more about the design of the class and the skill of asking questions. By preparing one lesson with six other peer teachers and our Master Teacher, Zhong Laoshi, I know more about the meaning of backward-design and assessment first. If a teacher's mind wanders around when preparing, the efficiency of teaching and learning will be greatly reduced. The balance between having a clear and achievable goal (can-do and assessment) and brainstorm of teaching approach is my motivation of moving forward, as a designer, an evaluator and a teacher. The skill of asking questions is a matter of pedagogy as well as experience. But more importantly, the

starting point of asking the questions. Is it meaningful or communicative? This is the question I have always asked myself since the first day of onsite training and it works really well. I really appreciate everyone I meet and everything I learned from this program, thank you very much.

6. July 18, 2018

Today is my last day of teaching at UVa STARTALK. When looking back, I barely believe what I have learned from this program. My teaching philosophy is modified by these five weeks. I used to believe content-based teaching and according to my understanding, that is to create as much scenarios as I can to help students use one grammar pattern in different situations. It is true that students may understand the pattern better, but they will always have difficulty apply it in real life. Here I learned that our role is not the trainer who give rules to guide people to swim, but the life guard who swim with learners in a real pool.

I remember one of the sentence from our Morning Share Meeting, "Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire." I think most teachers will agree with W.B. Yeats quote, but how to achieve it is the problem faced by all. Xiao jin laoshi gave a perfect example today. As her students are higher proficient, she created more opportunities for them to express rather than negative listening. Instead of telling students what are "Wenfangsibao", she simply checked student understanding of the meaning and pronunciation before waiting for open questions from students. This is what I have always lacking of, the patience and awareness for students to explore. There indeed was a student asked what is a "Ink stone". Again, she did not give the answer, but wait for his classmates to provide an explanation first. After that, she briefly described the usage to make sure that everyone understands it.