

Integrating Technology in the Teaching of Advanced Chinese (高年级中文课教学的技术应用)

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Abstract: This article deals with the rationale, design, and implementation of an advanced Chinese course delivered in a distance-learning environment. The course helps students of advanced Chinese develop their language competency and independent research skills through an instructional model that consists of individually directed research, small group discussions, one-on-one practice sessions, and individual presentations followed by peer critiques and Q&A sessions. Various technology tools, such as Zoom, VoiceThread, and an online corpus, are employed to facilitate the entire process of teaching and learning in this type of distance learning course. Based on student feedback and our evaluation of the course at the end of the semester, we feel very positive about the addition of this new course to our permanent Chinese language curriculum.

摘要: 本文旨在探索远程环境下高级中文独立研究课程之设计以及科技辅助的成效。课程主体依循一套学生独立研究-面谈-演练-报告的基本模式, 通过 Zoom, VoiceThread 和语料库等科技辅助手段, 优化远程教学及互动经验。融合了线上同步个人面谈、线上非同步个人报告与同侪反馈、团体论坛, 以及线下辅导课。强调个人独立学习与团体合作, 以提升学生语言表达能力, 并帮助学生提高批判性思维和自主学习的能力。本文亦讨论这种新形态汉语课程的优势, 根据学生的反馈和我们在教学中的反思及学期末教学成果的评估, 我们计划将这门新形态独立研究课程编入我们的高级中文系列教程。

Keywords: Distance learning, advanced Chinese, independent research, technology tools

关键词: 远程教学、高级中文、独立研究、科技辅助

1. Introduction

The field of teaching and learning Chinese as a foreign language (CFL) has come a long way (Bai, 2007; Ling, 2018) and great changes have occurred in the past two decades. We have witnessed a growing interest in Chinese language learning at all levels, from elementary and secondary schools to institutions of higher education (Goldberg, Looney, & Lusin, 2015). The most recent MLA report noted a decrease in Chinese enrollments (Looney & Lusin, 2018) at higher education institutions, but research findings from the American Councils for International Education (2017) show healthy enrollments at the pre-college levels and almost all states in the U. S. have programs that offer Chinese. The increasing number of students learning Chinese at the pre-college levels reflects the general recognition of the growing importance of acquiring Chinese language and culture competence for cross-cultural understanding and effective communication in global affairs. The fact that more and more young learners are interested in learning Chinese has led to larger enrollments in advanced Chinese courses, especially in Chinese programs in higher education.

Despite the fact that interest in learning Chinese is steadily growing and the field is becoming increasingly professional, we still need more research that integrates research findings from relevant disciplines such as linguistics, literature, foreign language acquisition, the advancement of educational technology, and techniques that deal with the teaching and learning of advanced Chinese language competency. We have more experience and have done more systematic research on Chinese language pedagogy at the beginning and intermediate levels, but need to pay more attention to teaching methods and techniques for the advanced levels. This article reports on our efforts to enhance our instructional design of the teaching of advanced Chinese through the effective use of currently available technology.

Educational technology has advantages and limitations as well. There is no doubt that the current technology offers us great potential for enhancing the process of teaching and learning of a foreign language (Bai, 2003; Xie, 2001). Multimedia technology can provide learners with multi-stimulus environments because of its capacity of delivering text, graphics, and audio or videos at the same time. Newly developed conferencing programs, such as Zoom, make the offering of distance learning courses much easier. Xie (2001) argues convincingly for Chinese teachers to face the challenge of new technology and to become the “e-generation’s Chinese language teachers.” He made specific useful suggestions in eight areas where teachers can develop their professional competence in using computer technology to improve their teaching effectiveness. However, most computer application programs or authoring tools are designed for many purposes and often contain more complex features than we need. It requires the collaborative efforts of both IT colleagues and teachers who have demonstrated teaching excellence and know how to integrate technology meaningfully and effectively. Bai (2003) discusses five types of limitations of technology, such as its lack of interactive capacity, its cost, its limited capacity to analyze errors and miscues, etc. He argues that:

“Only after we fully understand the limitations and advantages of the computer technology can we meaningfully integrate it into our curriculum and help enhance the process of teaching and learning. The key word for successful integration of computer technology into our curriculum is problem-solving, i.e. we start with a pedagogical problem. The specific questions we ask when we think of the use of technology are as follows: 1) Can we do better than what we are doing now if computer technology is integrated? What specific pedagogical problem can it help solve? 2) If the answer is yes to the first question, then we ask the next question. Do we have enough expertise and enough time and money to ensure successful integration of the technology in mind? 3) How can we do it and where it fits into our curriculum” (Bai, 2003).

With generous support from a grant awarded to "The Five Colleges of Ohio and The Ohio State University Postdoctoral Fellowship and Language Enrichment Program" by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation,¹ we conducted a series of six workshops since April 2017. Our goal has been to identify some of the challenges of advanced Chinese language pedagogy and seek solutions to the problems in order to come up with an enhanced curriculum of advanced Chinese. One of the challenges of teaching advanced Chinese is to meet the diverse needs of students at the advanced levels. We have designed and implemented additional content-based courses to the current curriculum and also explored the possibility of integrating distance learning courses to share among our collaborating colleges. In this article, we report on the instructional design and implementation of an advanced Chinese course in a distance learning format to meet the needs of students who represent a diverse number of academic backgrounds.

2. Integrating Distance Learning Technology into the Teaching of Advanced Chinese

As argued in the previous section, we need to start with the identification of a pedagogical problem and then consider the instructional goals, the elements of the instructional design, and how technology can be used effectively to solve the pedagogical problem. The distance learning course we are to report on in this article was designed to solve the problem of 众口难调 [it is difficult to cater to different tastes] at the advanced level. As the number of advanced-level students increases, there is greater demand in upper level Chinese courses for special needs, i.e. advanced Chinese for special purposes. At a small liberal arts college, we cannot offer the variety of advanced Chinese courses on special topics to meet various needs due to smaller enrollments and lack of staffing. In

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the remaining sections of this article, we will discuss the instructional goals, instructional design, and implementation of a distance learning course for advanced students of Chinese, which enrolls students at two small liberal arts colleges. The immediate benefit of the distance-learning project is that it helps broaden the curricular options at both colleges. We conducted some informal surveys about the effectiveness of the distance-learning course and the reactions are mostly positive.

2.1. Instructional Goals

This upper-level Chinese course aims to help advanced students of Chinese develop their advanced language competency through theme-based language learning and independent research projects in Chinese. The students' Chinese proficiency levels of this course range from Intermediate High to Advanced Low, so it was important that we design learning activities according to the students' individual strengths and individual learning goals. The organizing framework that guided our instructional design is the standard-based language teaching and learning framework developed by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL, 2006). The guiding question we ask is how we can help our students develop their listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills across the three communicative modes, interpretive, interpersonal, and presentational, in the 5 C areas. In the 2012 edition of Performance Descriptors for Language Learners, ACTFL provided a detailed description of those three communicative modes (Table 1).

Table 1 Three Modes of Communication Proposed by ACTFL²

Interpersonal	Interpretive	Presentational
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active negotiation of meaning among individuals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interpretation of what the author, speaker, or producer wants the receiver of the message to understand 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation of messages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants observe and monitor one another to see how their meanings and intentions are being communicated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One-way communication with no recourse to the active negotiation of meaning with the writer, speaker, or producer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One-way communication intended to facilitate interpretation by members of the other culture where no direct opportunity for the active negotiation of meaning between members of the two cultures exists
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adjustments and clarifications are made accordingly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interpretation differs from comprehension and translation in that interpretation implies the ability to read (or listen or view) "between the lines," including understanding from within the cultural mindset or perspective 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To ensure the intended audience is successful in its interpretation, the "presenter" needs knowledge of the audience's language and culture
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speaking and listening (conversation); reading and writing (text messages or via social media) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading (websites, stories, articles), listening (speeches, messages, songs), or viewing (video clips) of authentic materials 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing (messages, articles, reports), speaking (telling a story, giving a speech, describing a poster), or visually representing (video or PowerPoint)

² Retrieved from ACTFL Performance Descriptors for Language Learners, 2012 edition, <https://www.actfl.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/PerformanceDescriptorsLanguageLearners.pdf>, accessed Dec.17, 2018.

In the table above, the first row exemplifies the representative performances of each mode, with a more descriptive explanation given in the second row and sample tasks in the fourth row. The third row summarizes specific skills which learners are expected to possess. For example, the typical performance of the interpretive mode is an interpretation of messages. To be more specific, it is one-way communication with no opportunity for negotiation. The sample tasks include reading articles, listening to speeches, and viewing video clips, which are all authentic materials made for native speakers. To accomplish such tasks, the ability to perceive “between the lines” is crucial. It requires learners to assume the perspective of native speakers, which is the main difference between interpretation and comprehension. In the next section, we will explain how the three modes of communication are developed in this distance learning course.

2.2. Instructional Design and Implementation

The design of this upper-level Chinese research class aims to assist advanced students of Chinese in developing independent research projects and to help them to reach individual learning goals. Learners go through weekly learning phases to accumulate knowledge and develop language skills necessary for them to complete the research projects and present their findings at the end of the semester. Each weekly instructional phase consists of three major components: 1) an online individual meeting with the instructor; 2) an in-person individual meeting with a teaching assistant, and; 3) an online presentation to their classmates on their work-in-progress, in the form of a symposium, followed by Q&A from their classmates and teacher-led group discussions. Each component requires learners to accomplish different tasks according to individual strengths and academic interests. For example, a learner chose Sino-American relations during Trump’s presidential term as her research topic and identified the *New York Times* [Chinese version] as a useful resource. Every week, she selected a relevant news report as the reading material, studied the material before the individual meeting with the instructor, and then prepared for her presentation. She also rehearsed her presentation with a teaching assistant. In addition to uploading her own presentation, she also watched others’ presentations before participating in group discussion. In the process, learners practice their skills cumulatively in all three modes of communication—interpretive, presentational, and interpersonal, as illustrated in the table below.

Table 2 Components of a Weekly Instructional Phase

Components	Online individual meeting with the instructor	In-person individual meeting with the teaching assistant	Online presentation followed by a group discussion
Primary Goals	1. Discussing materials that learners have studied 2. Discussing the content and	1. Correcting mistakes on PowerPoint slides and scripts of presentation 2. Rehearsing the presentation and	1. Recording the presentation with VoiceThread 2. Answering questions raised by other fellow students.

	structure of the presentation.	improving pronunciation.	
Examples of Tasks (including preparation)	Searching for authentic materials (e.g., news articles, research papers, and videos) related to the research topic; interpreting the main idea of materials; discussing the materials with the instructor.	Preparing PowerPoint slides and scripts of presentation; discussing the presentation with the teaching assistant; rehearsing.	Presenters: Recording the presentation; previewing questions raised by the audience; answering the questions; discussing with the audience. Audience: Watching the presentations; leaving comments and questions; discussing with the presenters.
Communicative modes practiced	Interpretive Interpersonal	Presentational Interpersonal	Presentational Interpretive Interpersonal

For a distance-learning course, the appropriate use of digital tools is the key to success. We integrated the use of various technological tools, such as VoiceThread, that we mentioned in the table above. The next section focuses on how we incorporated two digital tools, Zoom and VoiceThread, in this distance learning course to bridge the gap between the two campuses.

2.3. Implementation of Technological Tools: Zoom and VoiceThread

Zoom is an essential tool for distance learning courses. As a tool designed to provide solutions for online conferencing and webinars, Zoom features many functions which are also convenient for distance learning courses, such as screen sharing, a virtual whiteboard, and Breakout Rooms for simultaneous group work. In the current course, screen sharing and the virtual whiteboard are the two functions primarily utilized. Screen sharing allows participants to view the same webpage or document concurrently, which guarantees that everyone is on the same page. It is also convenient for when the instructor goes through reports or PowerPoint slides with the learners and gives real-time feedback, as illustrated below.

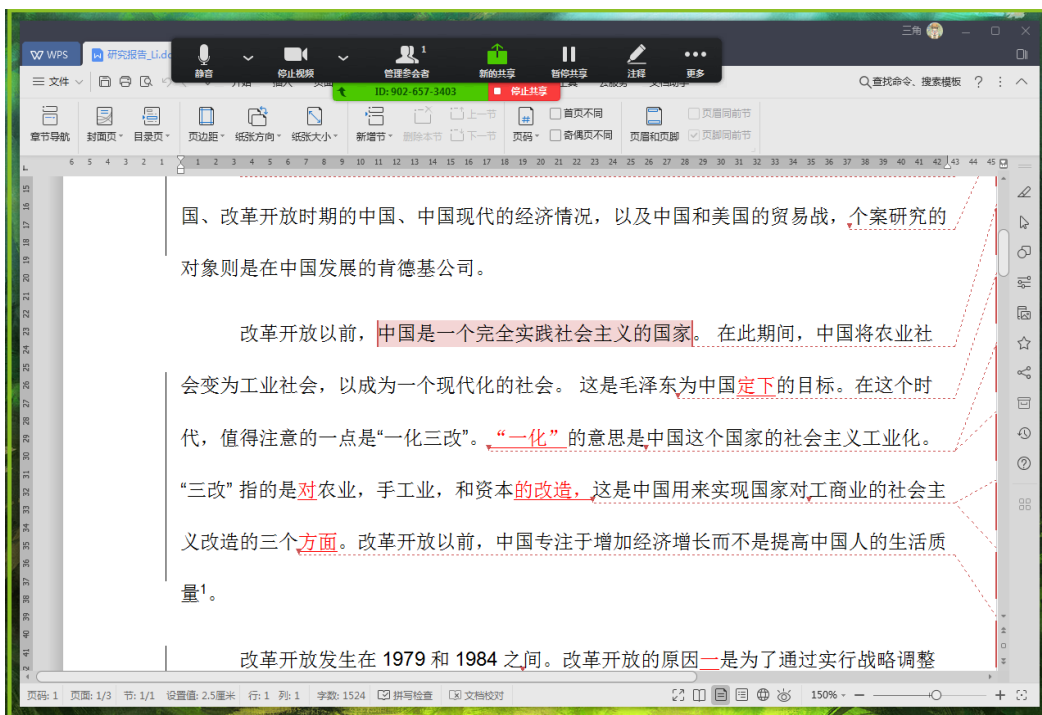


Figure 1 Using Screen Sharing to Discuss a Learner's Report (the outer green frame indicates the software being shared)

The virtual whiteboard can be utilized in either individual or group sessions when the instructor invites every participant to contribute to the group class discussion. In the example below, the instructor started a group session by activating the virtual whiteboard and inviting learners to provide some keywords that they remember after watching others' presentations. Participants can either type or draw their answers. They can choose different colors to avoid confusion. With the virtual whiteboard, instructors can design more collaborative activities in a distance learning environment. The following figure is an example of how the virtual whiteboard is used in this distance learning course.

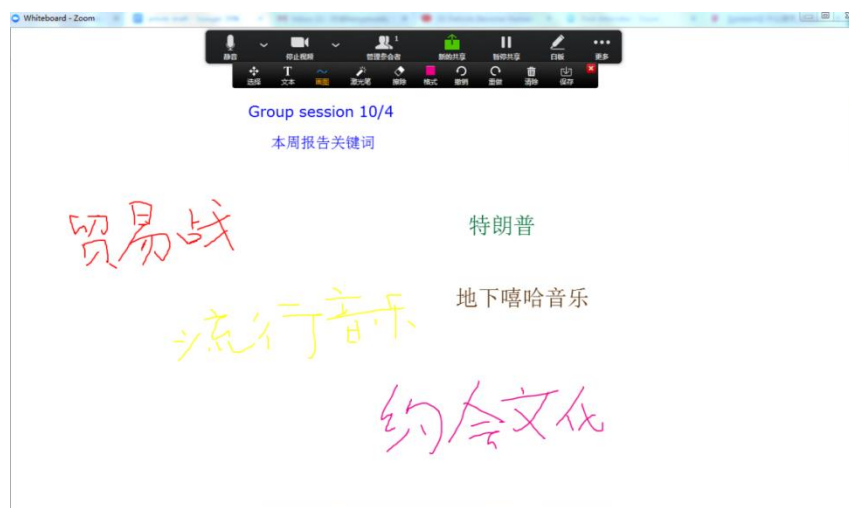


Figure 2 Using the Virtual Whiteboard to Brainstorm Keywords of Presentations

VoiceThread is another useful tool we regularly used for the distance learning course. It allows users to record their presentations, either audio or video, and share them with others on the VoiceThread website. Since users can do their recordings slide by slide, it is relatively easy for them to redo a particular section if they feel dissatisfied. As for the audience, they can leave their comments and questions on any slide while listening to the presentation instead of waiting until the end of it. Thus, the presenters can potentially receive more feedback compared to on-the-spot presentations. Researchers in different fields have explored the use of VoiceThread in creating a sense of community in online learning (Delmas, 2017), developing oral proficiency of a second language (Dugartsyrenova & Sardegna, 2017), and promoting collaborative learning (Fox, 2017). However, the use of VoiceThread in learning Chinese as a foreign/second language has yet to be explored. In the current distance learning course, VoiceThread helps ensure high quality, especially the clarity of students' presentations, which can be affected by an unsatisfactory Internet connection. Compared to traditional class discussion, our students spend more time practicing what they wanted to say because they want to show their best on the computer screen for others to view.

Below are two screenshots of a presentation on the trade war between China and the United States recorded by two students. This pre-recorded VoiceThread presentation showcases how the discussion is conducted asynchronously. The research topic chosen by this group of students for this semester is the economic development of China after the implementation of the reform and opening-up policy. For this specific task, they searched for materials related to the recent trade war between China and the United States and made a draft of their presentation for their teachers and classmates to critique. Then, they met with the instructor and teaching assistant to improve the quality of the presentation before they presented their work to the whole class through the use of Zoom. The instructor focused on content and overall structure, while the teaching assistant focused on language-related issues, such as pronunciation and tones or their command of grammar and text structures. After they finished recording their presentation, it was shared among the group, which consists of students from two colleges, the instructor, and teaching assistants. The group members watched their presentation before the group session and left their comments and questions on the screen of their VoiceThread presentation. Thus, the time of group session can be more effectively used as presenters have an opportunity to preview the questions and think about the answers beforehand. Another advantage of using VoiceThread is that the presentations can be easily archived. Learners can review their previous presentations to decide what they can include in their final poster presentation.



Figure 3 Presenters Attached a Vocabulary List by Adding Comments to a Slide



Figure 4 Audience Raised Questions Related to the Current Slide

2.4. Formative and Summative Assessment

The current distance learning course includes an evaluative system that consists of formative assessment and feedback in addition to the conventional summative measures for final course grade. The goal of establishing such a system is providing consistent assistance to the learners as they prepare for their final projects—a poster presentation. The requirement for the final project is introduced to the learners at the beginning of this course, and they are completely aware of the fact that they could not complete the final project and the poster presentation successfully unless they follow the step-by-step instructional guidance and improve their language skills by working through the smaller tasks cumulatively. If we compare this course to a game, the final project would be a formidable enemy who is extremely difficult to defeat, while the learners would be protagonists of the game, who need to gain stronger power to conquer that enemy through accomplishing various quests, such as interpreting the main ideas of authentic

materials and recording presentations. Along the way, the learners might become confused about what to do and how to improve themselves. Therefore, formative feedback is necessary. Learners get formative feedback in both oral and written forms. As mentioned before, learners regularly meet with the instructor and teaching assistant. During those individual sessions, they can receive oral feedback from the teaching team, which helps them elevate the quality of their presentations. They can also gain feedback from other fellow learners regarding which part of their presentations is difficult for the audience to understand. Since the presentations reflect the learning outcome at the end of each learning phase, the learners receive more systematic written feedback after they finish a presentation, including the discussion section in group sessions. The written feedback is meant to provide a comprehensive overview of learners' performance and provide formative feedback to improve students learning. The table below illustrates how we assess students' performance, but it needs to be used more and improved to generate more accurate information as a formative assessment tool.

Table 3 Sample Rubric for Written Feedback

Category	Outstanding	Satisfactory	Decent	Unsatisfactory
内容 Content	Demonstrate comprehensive knowledge of the topic.	Demonstrate good understanding of the topic.	Shows good understanding of parts of the topic.	Shows lack of understanding of the topic.
语音、声调 Pronunciation and tones	Speaks clearly and correctly almost all (95-100%) the time.	Speaks clearly almost all (90%) the time. Contains errors but with few patterned errors.	Speaks clearly most (85-90%) of the time. Contains some patterned errors.	Low level of comprehensibility due to constant errors of sounds and tones.
词汇、语法 vocabulary and grammar	Able to control structure, vocabulary, cohesive devices with sporadic errors.	Employs vocabulary and grammar structures with occasional errors, but almost no patterned ones.	Employs vocabulary, expressions, and structures with patterned errors that may obscure meaning.	Employs vocabulary, expressions, and structures with many errors that obscure meaning.
理解能力 Comprehension	Able to accurately understand and answer almost all questions posed by classmates about the topic.	Able to accurately answer most questions posed by classmates about the topic.	Able to accurately answer some questions posed by classmates about the topic.	Unable to accurately answer questions posed by classmates about the topic.

Figure 5 below is an example of written feedback that learners receive after a presentation. Instead of points (e.g., 100, 90, 80, etc.) or grades (e.g., A, B, C, etc.), learners get a rating for each category listed in Table 3. For example, this learner received “outstanding” for pronunciation because only a few mistakes were made throughout the whole presentation. Comprehension is also “outstanding” because the discussion part went smoothly, with the learner properly elaborating on her points. However, she received “satisfactory” for content because her presentation did not reflect a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter of her research. She also made some statements with insufficient explanations. The primary purpose of the formative written feedback is to raise learners’ awareness of their strengths and weaknesses in each aspect of their presentation, such as pronunciation, structure, and content, that should be improved in their future presentations.

The special task is another crucial feature of this evaluative system. It is designed to push learners to fix their urgent problems because they must finish their tasks and report the results back to the instructor to claim the “completion” of a learning phase. The tasks are assigned based on each learner’s specific performance during that week and listed at the end of written feedback. Most tasks aim to help learners improve the quality of their presentations. For example, in Figure 5, the learner’s special task is adding a slide according to the instructor’s feedback as a final revision of her presentation. To finish this task, the learner has to revisit certain slides and arrange them in a more reasonable way. The task can also raise her awareness of similar issues in the future. The learners may also receive other types of tasks, which aim to regulate their learning behaviors. For example, some learners are required to leave at least one comment on each of the others’ presentations, usually because they forget to do so during a particular week. The special task is an essential component of this formative evaluative system because it creates a situation in which the learners must fix their existing problems before proceeding to the next learning phase. Moreover, it helps learners develop better learning behaviors and reduces the number of recurring mistakes.

10.18 Presentation

Pronunciations and Tones: Outstanding
 Slide 4: 躲 (duo3) 避 (bi4) ; 自 (zi4) 我, 低 (di1) 俗
 Slide 5: 掌 (zhang3) 控 (kong4)

Content: Satisfactory
 Good content and structure. I have two suggestions:
 1. You mentioned three ways to avoid censorship, but I was not sure whether “自我审查” counts as one way to do that. It would be clearer if you have a slide entitled “回避政府审查的方式”, on which you can list all three ways, and then proceed to explain each of them with three separate slides.
 2. In both your introduction and conclusion part, you mentioned that your main topic is “政府利用嘻哈音乐获得支持”. However, you spent half of your presentation to explain how to avoid censorship. That is very confusing.

Vocabulary and Grammar: Satisfactory
 Slide 1: “什么的” is too casual for a formal oral presentation. You can use “之类的”
 Slide 2: “马克思是对的” → 《马克思是对的》; “一带一路”的节目 → “一带一路”的战略; 中国政府的传统美德 → 中国政府倡导的传统美德; 习近平总统 → 习近平总理
 Slide 3: perspective: 角度
 Slide 4: 躲避政府审查 → 避免受到政府审查

Comprehension: Outstanding

Overall: Satisfactory

Your special task for next week:
 Per my first suggestion under “content”, please add a slide before/after that on 自我审查.

Figure 5 An Example of Completed Formative Feedback Form

3. Integrating Technological Tools in the TA sessions

The TA session is a face-to-face, one-on-one discussion after students complete their on-line lecture class with the course instructor. The in-person individual meetings aim to help students improve their Chinese language control, such as their pronunciation and tones, helps foster correct use of words, grammar, and text structure, and gets students to focus on the correct usage of language at the advanced level. In addition, the one-on-one sessions also help students develop their independent learning strategies. We design and implement tasks to increase the interaction between the TA and students. The TA is a facilitator of effective learning rather than only a provider of input or a grammar

checking machine. During the 30-minute class, the teaching assistant helps students polish their writing by giving students corrective feedback on their presentations and providing them with online tools, such as BCC corpus and Sketch Engine³ corpus, to facilitate students' learning of strategies on how to improve their advanced Chinese competency effectively.

3.1 Incorporating the Use of a Corpus in TA Sessions

Several scholars have advocated using corpora to aid language learning (Bernardini, 2004; Leech, 1997; McEnery, Xiao, & Tono, 2006; Yeh & Zhang, 2018). By using a corpus, a student can look up a word's precise denotation and connotation through the use of tools such as concordances, and compare its usage in different linguistic or pragmatic contexts (Leech, 1997, p. 8).

Yeh and Zhang's study (2018) suggests that the use of a corpus helped students improve their storytelling abilities. The use of a corpus allows the student to understand semantic and pragmatic features, and also grammatical characteristics, such as the common collocating words based on the context in which the word is used. For instance, when the two students were preparing their presentation on the US-China trade war, they learned how to use the corpus tool to improve their successful choice of words to describe the wave of tariffs by searching "Verb+tariff" in BCC corpus to find the appropriate collocating verbs. In Figure 1, the corpus shows a list of examples of using "tariff" as an object, such as "canceling the tariff" [取消关税], "levying the tariff" [征收关税], and "lowering the tariff" [减少关税]."

The screenshot shows the BCC corpus search results for the query 'V关税'. The search bar at the top contains 'V关税' and a '搜索' button. Below the search bar, there are navigation links for '文学', '报刊', '多领域', '微博', '科技', '古汉语', and '篇章检索'. The search results are displayed in a table with 7 rows, each containing a result number, a link to the full text ('全文'), and a snippet of text. The snippets show various contexts where '关税' is used, such as '取消关税', '征收关税', and '减少关税'. On the right side of the results table, there are icons for '收藏' (favorite) and '手机' (mobile).

Figure 6 Inquiry *Verb+tariff* in BCC corpus

Clearly, the corpus is a great tool for students to independently improve their vocabulary control and learn the contextual forces upon word choice. However, students

³ c.f. <http://www.sketchengine.eu>

often still need a TA's guidance to learn how to extract from the concordance and discover words from the corpus' data. This is why Leech (1997) stresses the importance of teaching students the ability to use or "exploit" corpora. McEnery, Xiao, and Tono (2006) continue this line of thought by saying that knowing how to use a corpus enables students to independently develop their own studies or research. Once students master the necessary knowledge and skills, language study "may become student centered" (p. 83).

Bernardini (2004) focuses on corpus-aided discovery learning. In corpus-aided discovery learning, teachers do not present the rules to students, but guide students to explore a range of examples from corpora so as to discover the characteristics of a linguistic phenomenon. As mentioned earlier, Yeh and Zhang (2018) successfully apply this method to improve student's storytelling abilities. Their corpus-based instruction on discourse-linking *jiu* (就) consisted of four 50-minute classes. Each teaching unit included five steps: warm-up and review, awareness-raising, analysis, production, and assessment.

While discovery learning can be valuable in our independent study class, improving students' problem-solving and autonomous learning skills are especially important in TA sessions. Based on the goals of the independent study session, the ability to improve independent study and the role of the TA-sessions (i.e. to solve problems), and considering Yeh and Zhang's five step method, we formulated the following instructions to support successful "exploitation" of these technological tools.

In this case, we first noted the students' difficulty in finding the exact expressions to talk about the current tariff situation between the United States and China. Our TA designed learning tasks to help our students develop the ability to use the corpus tool to explore the semantic, grammatical, and pragmatic features of the key word "tariff [关税]."

During the one-on-one or group discussion sessions, our TA provide step-by-step guide to help students develop the ability to look for the answers on their own. For example, when students tried to describe the tariff they produced sentences like "have lower tariffs" [有更低的关税], "President Trump makes the tariffs higher than before" [特朗普让关税比以前高]. They use grammatically correct sentences but inappropriate expressions to express their intended meaning. In order to improve their word usage, the teacher shows students how to look for the word in a corpus and discuss how to retrieve the useful information from the mass language data bank that the corpus provides.

Another example was to help an advanced student of Chinese with his independent research paper. He tried to describe the development of Rock-n-Roll music in Mainland China and Taiwan. However, in the process of describing the characteristics of the music, the student did not have adequate vocabulary, and therefore repeatedly said "*qingsong de yinyue*" 轻松的音乐 [light music] and "*bu qingsong de yinyue*" 不轻松的音乐 [not light music]. In the first chapter of the book *Teaching Collocations*, Morgan Lewis points out that in order to turn students into advanced learners, it is a teacher's job to point out more precise or concise options to improve a student's performance (Lewis,

2000, p. 22). To enhance precision, Lewis' preferred method is collocation, because, as elaborated in chapter three by Jimmie Hill, "the way words combine in collocations is fundamental to all language use" (Hill, 2000, p. 53). In this case, using Sketch Engine to look up collocates of the word "yinyue" 音乐[music] can give the student a wide range of adjectives describing music's timbre, such as *youyang* 悠扬[melodious] and *huankuai* 欢快 [cheerful].

A_Modifier				
美妙 ... 美妙的音乐	轻快 ... 轻快的音乐	耳熟能详 ... 耳熟能详的音乐	震耳欲聋 ... 震耳欲聋的音乐	唯美 ... 唯美的音乐
动感 ... 动感的音乐	好听 ... 好听的音乐	纯粹 ... 纯粹的音乐	奔放 ... 奔放的音乐	愉快 ... 轻松愉快的音乐
悠扬 ... 悠扬的音乐	激昂 ... 着激昂的音乐	典雅 ... 典雅的音乐	高雅 ... 高雅的音乐	澎湃 ... 激情澎湃的音乐
动听 ... 动听的音乐	凝固 ... 建筑是凝固的音乐	忧伤 ... 忧伤的音乐	强劲 ... 强劲的音乐	雄壮 ... 雄壮的音乐
优美 ... 优美的音乐	柔和 ... 柔和的音乐	高亢 ... 高亢的音乐	活泼 ... 活泼的音乐	轻缓 ... 轻缓的音乐
欢快 ... 欢快的音乐	动人 ... 动人的音乐	感人 ... 感人的音乐	演奏 ... 演奏的音乐	轻松 ... 轻松的音乐

Figure 7 Inquiry of adjective modifiers of *music* in Sketch Engine

3.2 Learning Semantic, Pragmatic and Stylistic Features from Context

It is important to make students aware of the influences that contextual forces exert on the usage of words. Even though a word or a sentence might be grammatically correct, it might be inappropriate pragmatically due to lack of in-depth understanding of the word or sentence structure. When facing pairs or groups of words that are seemingly synonymous, students may have difficulty finding the exact word to express their intended meaning. In this case, the teacher can help students learn how the seemingly synonymous words differ through the use of a corpus, which helps to differentiate similar words by showing the actual collocations. For example, a student did a presentation on the development of the Chinese economy and wrote the following incorrect sentence

* 国家创造了委员会，进行经济体制改革的总体设计。

to mean "the country established a council, and started the design of the economic system reforms." In this sentence the correct verb for "to establish" would be *chengli* 成立 [to establish, to found) and not *chuangzao* 创造 [to create]. Our TA guided the students to compare these two words by showing them the usage difference in Sketch Engine. In the screenshot below (see Figure 8), the left-side collocates are more closely related to *chengli*, such as *xiaozu* 小组 [group]s and *weiyuanhui* 委员会 [committee, council]; the right-side collocates to *chuangzao*, such as *tiaojian* 条件 [condition] and *jihui* 机会 [opportunity]. After observation and discussion guided by the teacher, students can infer

the rule that when talking about establishing an organization, it is correct and appropriate to use *chengli* (成立).

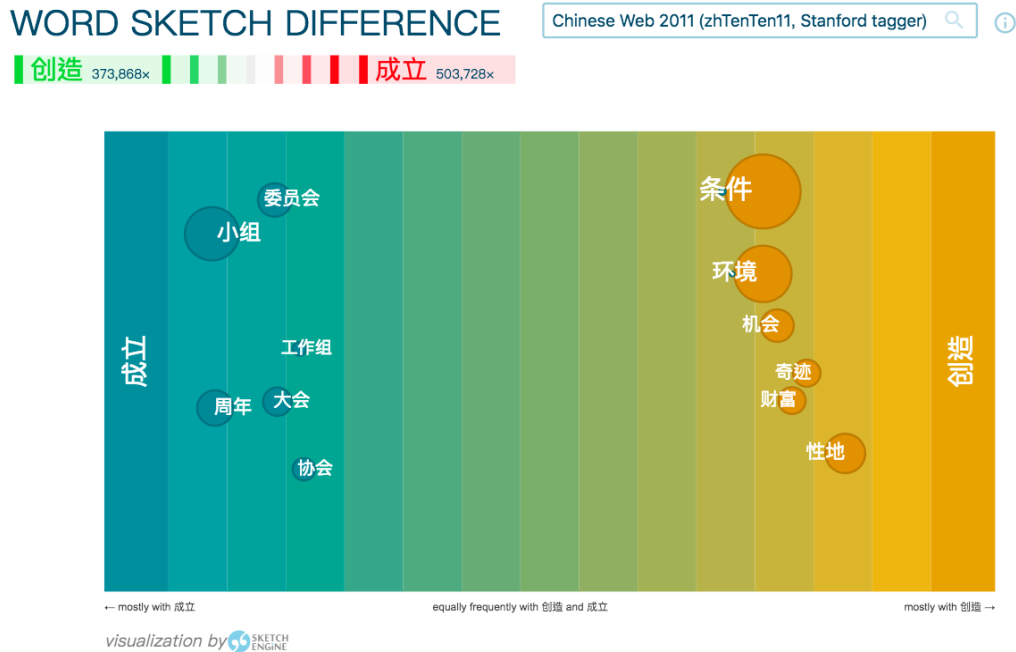


Figure 8 Comparing and Contrasting “chengli, chuangzao” Visually in Sketch Engine

3.3 Corpora as a Tool in Effective Lesson Planning

A corpus is a handy tool for teachers when they prepare their lesson plans. For instance, it allows teachers to extract authentic examples of the usage of a lexical item, which provides a more objective view of language use than that of pure intuition or introspection. In addition, the corpus can also retrieve good dictionary examples and help teachers select the optimal usage examples. Teachers can also get statistical information from corpora that provide informative evidence for accurate word choice. It can successfully help teachers be more confident in advising students on word usage because of the informative evidence on the word’s semantic features, contextual forces, and Chinese’s regional variations.



Figure 9 Authentic examples of “Trade War” on the Chinese Web 2011, Sketch Engine

4. Conclusion

This article is a report on our efforts to enhance our Chinese language curriculum by designing and implementing a distance learning course that meets the diverse needs of students of advanced Chinese. This upper-level Chinese course aims to help advanced students of Chinese develop their advanced language skills across the 3 communicative modes, interpretive, interpersonal and presentational, and develop their analytical, critical and creative thinking skills through project-based learning. Based on our regular reflections among the teaching team members and our conversations with the students at the end of the semester, we feel very positive about the addition of this new course to our Chinese language curriculum. We have decided to make this course a permanent element of the advanced Chinese curriculum and plan to explore more opportunities to work collaboratively with institutions beyond the OH-5 colleges in the future.

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