

TTLO For Credit Artifacts – Boettcher & Conrad, 2021, Chapters 3 and 8 Daniel Thornhill

Chapter 3

The first of the fourteen best practices that resonated with me was the first, **be present**. Prior to reading Boettcher & Conrad's Chapter 3 and [Darby's article](#) from The Chronicle of Higher Education, it had never occurred to me (because our classes are partly synchronous) that some teachers would assume that you set up an online course and then leave it to its own devices. This lack of presence most likely stems from the general disdain for online learning common among teachers across disciplines, which I am guilty of as well at times, truth be told ([Darby, 2019](#)). It's one thing to resent some aspects of online learning; it's quite another to unjustly throw up your hands and take it out on your learners by abandoning them. Thankfully, that has not been my experience here. The TTLO instructor team is **very** present. I have met Shannon and have seen Marlene talk (both at CALICO), but I didn't know the other instructors until beginning the institute, and now I feel like I know them all at least somewhat through the video introductions, explanations, and feedback. The TTLO instructors also embrace the "warm" language style of communication described on the [Accessible Syllabus](#) page we looked at in 3.2.

The next one that resonates is the sixth, asking for feedback early in the course. This is one that we already implement in our program. We ask for informal feedback at the end of each lesson and have the learners complete a survey at the beginning, the 25% point, the midpoint, and the end of our courses (we have so many surveys because our courses have up to 12 times as many contact hours as a 4-credit university course). The TTLO instructor team employs this practice as well; we had a survey in week 1 (I believe) and we have had reflection assignments throughout. Moreover, I have no doubt the TTLO instructors are gleaning information about our thoughts on the course from any source where said thoughts appear.

The third that resonated with me was number 9 (which TTLO has done very well). Few problems are more discouraging to a learner than a course consisting largely of unrelatable, irrelevant content. This is particularly common in language teaching where the instructor's knowledge and preferences are often centered, and the learners have to simply endure it. For instance, how many 19-year-old learners are really interested in Frida Kahlo? Judging from Spanish textbooks and teachers' lesson plans, many of them. I can tell you from experience, however, that this is **untrue**. So, if one of our desired outcomes is for the learners to make **connections** between Spanish and other disciplines (visual arts), we cannot just foist content on them and order them to like it. We have to meet them where they are and then guide them. What artists do they enjoy? And then, which artists in the Spanish-speaking world would they then connect with? Making content choices based on the learner increases the likelihood that they will begin broadening their horizons, that this connection will be made, far more effectively than forcing them to learn about a random collection of artifacts and people drawn from my esoteric interests (and Frida Kahlo is **overrated** – yes, I said what I said).

A practice that is not new to me, but would be new to our program, would be number 2, creating a supportive online community. We are in the process of implementing an interpretation of this idea now. Our plan is to dedicate some online space to a community of practice for each of our languages. We thought about doing it for courses, but our class size is limited to 8 and many of our courses have 4 to 5 students. Moreover, organizing the communities by language will allow less experienced learners the opportunity to interact with more experienced learners, an idea that is key to building a mentorship program, a type of relationship which is already familiar to our learners (Martinez, 2011)

The practice that was new to me that I want to implement is number 10, having a good wrap-up activity for a course. I plan to propose an integrated performance assessment to close our initial acquisition course. This would allow our learners to: demonstrate their listening and speaking abilities in the three modes; walk away with a product or two as a physical manifestation of their ability; and provide us with some insights into the relevance of the material.

Martinez, J.E. (2011). *A performatory approach to teaching, learning and technology*. Sense Publishers: Rotterdam, Netherlands.

Chapter 8

LM Tip 2: Three Techniques for Making Your Students' Knowledge Visible (Boettcher & Conrad, 2021, p. 234)

The interviewer-expert modeling technique is one I plan to implement. This would be an effective way to get our learners into a questioning mindset, as they are more comfortable “monologuing”. More specifically, one of our more proficient learners’ goals is successful *key leader engagement* (KLE), which is successful communication with host-nation leaders to ascertain their needs and how the United States government could possibly assist them. This type of activity would be ideal for KLE topics. I envision beginning this kind of lesson with video content of host-nation key leaders describing their challenges (listening comprehension) and then having the learners compose questions for them based on what they heard.

LM Tip 12: Course Middles and Muddles: Souped-up Conversations to Spark Energy (Boettcher & Conrad, 2021, pp. 266-267)

As the authors indicate, responding to one another’s comments is not natural to many learners. Additionally, as I stated above, our learners are prone to monologuing. Language learning tends to trigger anxiety and perfectionism in our learners, which then lead them to create very elaborate, rehearsed monologues to avoid making mistakes. One of our goals is to break these monologues, so a version of *teaming up for course discussions* might work. I could see having them interview each other on a given topic with questions that escalate in difficulty (by progressively targeting more complicated functions) over two to three weeks. We would have to time it just right to prevent them from overpreparing by providing the questions each day at a given time (at the end of the synchronous session, for example) and requiring the answers very shortly after in

video format (15 minutes after the synchronous session ends). The evaluation rubric would focus on peer feedback and interpersonal conversational (not presentational / monologuing) ability. The instructor would then view the videos and peer feedback and then indicate whether they agree.

LM Tip 14: Experts: A Touch of Spice (Boettcher & Conrad, 2021, pp. 270-273)

Our program has uncommon access to all kinds of experts. One course we ran back in 2011 featured a talk from former Colombian president Álvaro Uribe Vélez, which was quite well-received. We have not had a similar talk since. Returning to key leader engagement, which I described above, I envision having a key leader come to talk (virtually) and having the learners prepare questions. They could practice elaborating and answering questions using the activities I described for Tips 2 and 12 above. First, they would view / listen to media featuring the key leader. Then, they would practice in teams asking and answering questions as spontaneously as possible. Finally, the learners would attend the talk and each ask an appropriate question. To follow-up, the learners could give a summary of the talk and the question-and-answer session.