

**Selected Daily Reflections**  
**2010 STARTALK Chinese Teacher Academy**  
**Gloria Po**

**June 29, 2010**

There is a Chinese saying - "温故而知新 ". It means while reviewing the old skills, you will learn new skills. After the first day of learning, I felt exactly this way.

Today, we talked about curriculum and lesson design.

We started reviewing the standards for foreign language learning - the 5 Cs. Even though I have learned and applied these standards to my lesson plans, there is still a lot of confusion. Thru Tseng laoshi's explanation and the group discussion, a lot of my questions were answered.

"LinguaFolio" is a new topic to me. I think it is very useful for students to evaluate their language ability. I like the "I can.." statements. These statements emphasize on what the language skills students can perform which is very positive and encouraging. I definitely will start using it next school year.

Using target language 100% in classes is always an impossible mission for me. In the beginning of each semester, I always set the goal to use only Chinese. However, I have not achieved this goal so far. I am hoping thru the practicum, I will be learning some techniques to accomplish this mission.

I like the group discussion and sharing our thoughts very much. I think this is a good approach to reinforce our knowledge in teaching. Sometimes I am too comfortable in my old teaching style. Collaborating with other teachers really helps me to get different perspectives. Like what Tseng laoshi mentioned earlier today about "一杯新水" , Sometimes we have to pour old water from the cup in order to get new water.

**June 30, 2010**

Today, Tseng laoshi talked about the theories and approaches in second language teaching. I didn't have a complete picture in mind before today; however, thru discussions and examples, I can recognize the distinctive features of each method.

We had some interesting discussion about L1 and L2 acquisition while mentioned Kreshen's Monitor Model. Some teachers shared their children's language learning experiences with us which are very interesting. In my family, even though my husband and I only speak Chinese with our son, his English is much better than his Chinese.

The activities Tseng laoshi designed to evaluate our understanding of each method were very useful and helpful.

I am exciting about learning the Task Based Language Teaching - TBLT. We used the 7 definition to identify the activities from different text books to determine if they are tasks or exercises. Thru this practice, some confusions I had before were clarified. Now I have good ideas about how to plan a meaningful task.

I am surprised to know that the translation and memorization approach were out of date. I have to admit that I was using the ALM and GTM in my teaching all the time. I think I will justify my teaching philosophy to avoid doing this kind of practice.

I cannot believe that I learned this much in just one day. I felt like an old dog trying to learn new tricks. It's hard but very rewarding.

**July 1, 2010**

It is the fourth day of the program. I felt I have been here for a long time since we have so much fun IN LEARNING. The chemistry here is definitely different from any other training I have attended in the past.

We started the day with a wonderful topic - Brain and SLA. Dr. Ferree started the lecture with a very interesting experiment. This experiment proved that if we focus on the meanings of the words, we will memorize more words. She explained how our brain works in terms of learning. She showed us some brain images that explained as age declined, our brain would work harder. I am surprised to learn that in order to pronounce a language like a native speaker, a baby has to be given some stimulation of that language before 11 months old. I don't know if I misunderstood what she said or it's true. I know we need to learn a language at young age, but never thought it would be that young.

Tseng laoshi's demo on teaching "minnan yu" was the highlight of today. I was raised and grew up in Taiwan, I understand 50% "minnan yu", but I don't speak it. Having a chance to learn it, even only a couple of words were a wonderful experience. It was a great demo. I have fun learning it.

**July 2, 2010**

Now we all know the importance to use authentic materials in classroom. Dr. Tan is a wonderful speaker. She mentioned so many interesting materials and texts.

I like those activities we did. One is about how to associate the culture perspective with the Chinese phrases. The other is using pictures and video clips to design meaningful tasks. The second activity is a useful practice for me. I had only used pictures as speaking presentation assignments. Now I know how to do the backward design and to create a real life task for my students. I don't know if I will be able to do TBLT for every lesson, but at least I will definitely start using this method.

14 hours away for us to do the micro teaching. Teaching in front of other teachers is a challenging task for me.

### July 5, 2010

Zeng laoshi spent all morning to show us some useful websites. I like toondoo the most. It's fun to create cartoons as teaching materials.

Li laoshi, Zhang laoshi and I were the first group to do the rehearsal. Even we spent most of our July 4th holiday to work on lesson plans. I am still not confident on how to teach some of the grammar points without using English to explain. I appreciate Tseng laoshi, Lee laoshi and other teachers that give us so many suggestions. It's a wonderful experience, even I felt a little bit "embarrassing" that I made some silly mistakes. For me, the process is more important than the result. We learned the theory, if we don't put it into reaction, it won't help too much.

### July 6, 2010

Today is my first day of practicum teaching. The objective is at the end of the lesson; the students can greet each other, say some nationalities, know how to ask questions by using "吗" and can count from 1 to 10. Before the class, I am so worried if students can learn that much in 3 hours, especially NO ENGLISH explanation. The class went very well, the students constantly making notes and respond to our questions. I realized that the major difference is because I changed my mind set from "teacher center" to "student center". The students were constantly given the opportunity to get input and produce output. That's why the objective was met at the end.

In Chinese saying - "万事起头难". Now I stepped out the first step, even I made a lot mistakes, I have grasped the idea of alternating teacher's scaffolding and students' performance, then to create a real life task to help students communicating each other. One thing surprised myself is that I didn't use English to explain. (Except that we put too much English explanation on the PPT.) Now I believe that the 100% target language approach works!!! Yeah!

July 9, 2010

With the experience of 1st day teaching, I felt much confident to start my second day teaching experience. The theme for today is hobby and sports. It's fun to teach students with the topic related to their daily life. Since the classroom setting is very relaxed, students' affective filter is low; they expressed a lot of their feelings. I am so impressed to see how much these students progressed in just five days. One thing amazed me is that one of the students, Kou AnDong, he said "pai pai shou, ni hao bang" after Lilian did a wonderful demonstration of how to 踢毽子。I still remember on the first day, that student did not know any Chinese word and was kind of nervous of not understanding what we said. Now he can initiate such a complement to Zhang laoshi, it's really a big jump. I am so proud of him. What a smart kid!

July 10, 2101

I observed Liu laoshi, Lin laoshi and Xie laoshi's teaching today. I am SOOOO... impressed about their teaching. The theme is traveling to China to watch 2010 Shanghai World Expo. With the vocabulary list which is for novice high level students, most of us felt it's VERY difficult to accomplish. But thru their logic thinking and hard working, not only did they make it, but also the students enjoyed it. In the afternoon, they shared their feelings with us which made me cry. We all agree that learning is a long process filled with frustration, hard working and tears. However, once we achieved the goal, all the hard feelings will go away.