

Meiyao Wu-Gilbertson

Being a professional singer and (musician) over twenty years, it was an accident for me to become a music teacher and stepped into the teaching profession instead of staying in the Performing Arts field. After teaching choir in the middle school for four years, teaching students to be better singers and taking them to compete and perform in different competition and concerts, it is another accident for me to step into the teaching field of Mandarin Chinese.

As a musician, I was used to seek for perfect and with high expectation to myself. As a choir teacher and took students to compete and perform, I continued to not only expect me to lead the students and also expect them to be better every day in order to get higher rating in the competition and did good in the performance.

With that note, when I stepped into the Mandarin Chinese teaching profession, I treated my Chinese students the way I treated my choir students. I learned right away that it didn't work that way - that method only worked for music students or those students who want to be better and finding ways to improve themselves - what a culture shock.

For most majority student, I had to adjust my own expectation and not get frustration when that happened - it took all five years of my Chinese teaching period (it might take forever) for me to adjust my expectation and mind set of how I teach and how I treat my Chinese students V.S. my choir students.

After five years of teaching Chinese, I still think teaching choir was (and still is) much easier than teach Chinese. Sometimes, I regret I didn't stay in music field. However, compare with the passion I had with teaching choir and with the passion I have with teaching Chinese, seeing the Chinese students having the Ah-Ha moment after a while of learning Chinese, it made my day...

In the past five years of teaching Chinese, I, from don't know how to teach Chinese at all, attending trainings to improving/sharpening my teaching skill little by little, to NOW, after attending the 2013 UVA Startalk, that I felt I had a guidance and know the path of how/what to do, I think I will have a big jump of how to teach Chinese that will make my students learn Chinese more efficiently.

Attending the 2013 UVA Startalk this year was a right decision for me, and it is the light at the end of the tunnel and the answer that I have been seeking for. It's not that what I did for the past five years was wrong/useless, but I have a better direction and goal to move forward.

I cannot wait to take what I learn back to my classes and implement what I learned and perfect my Chinese teaching skill.