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Chapter 10

This chapter speaks our minds. I heard similar comment and questions from our classmates as well. Fortunately I already have answers for many of the questions based on my teaching experiences. I understand their doubts and puzzles. The reason of why they have such concerns may tie to their confidence level of teaching and understanding of TBLT approach. I consciously know that I understand the merits of TBLT approach and I know how to appreciate it. Based on my teaching experience, I rationally believe in TBLT. Participating in TCSOL program enables me re-analyzing and reflecting what did I do in my class in the past. I had taught in a public high school in Arkansas for three years. I was one of the first batch of licensed Chinese teachers in Arkansas public school system. Since the program was brand new, I had enough freedom to teach. Back then I only had read some books mentioned TBLT approach but never really understand how does TBLT work exactly.

Merit 1 - Motivation: My school was a public high school in a poor city, with 75% students eating free lunch. Some of my students concern about where to sleep at night, some of them need to avoid a group of local, young gang members, and a couple of them were pregnant sitting in my classroom. I realized that studying Chinese was their last concerns. With this group of students' lack of motivation, classroom management was a big issue. I knew I should find a way to engage them. I understood why they did not care, they should not, if life was tough and learning was meaningless. I tried to give them the meaning of learning. I wanted them to experience the pleasure of learning and the pride of achievement, and TBLT helped me. I ordered *Integrated Chinese* and *Follow me to learn Chinese* for my school. Followed my

instinct, I used the textbooks topics to line up my activities. Around the words and grammars I designed communicative activities. Now I realize that many of them were tasks and many of them actually were focused tasks. We danced to learn tones; we made our own Chinese chess sets and had our competition; to learn radicals, we collaborated with chemistry classes, 160 people, made a huge Chinese periodic table displayed in the hallway. I did all kinds of tasks from year one to year three, students grew from zero to intermediate level. Many of them stayed in my class for three years. I noticed that I had less discipline problem than many other classes. My students actually care and enjoy learning Chinese. I have several of them are studying Chinese as a minor in college now. One of them received a full scholarship offered by the Chinese program in the graduate school in University of Hawaii. My point is the learning outcome was very cheerful. I believe that TBLT was the secret key. Given in my situation, I think TBLT greatly helped me to motivate my students.

Merit 2:Who can TBLT teach: As I have mentioned above, I used TBLT to teach from zero to intermediate level. My answer is absolutely TBLT can teach all language levels. About **Merit 3:What can TBLT teach:** the first day of the class, I sat down with my students and tell them: you guys decide what our classroom rules are. They talked to each other, they debate, we share personal stories and we agreed. Finally, they came up with “respect, honesty and responsibility”. During the process, I had chances to introduce Chinese words “尊重，诚实，负责任”. They remembered these words from day one in class. I am very positive that TBLT can be used to teach almost everything, including classroom disciplines, let alone preparing for testing. After all, life is a task and we do it all the time.

Another major merit: When I was in graduate school I was studying Chomsky’s TG grammar. I learnt a word: generative. After studied TBLT, personally, I feel that TBLT is a generative teaching approach in nature, the words meaning may not necessarily exactly the same. Task types are limited, but using one type of task you may generate many task variables. TBLT has

an open attitude towards implementation. It also enables teachers to recycle the tasks in different notions.

About lack of time: After years of practice, I think to design a task will be much easier, besides, materials and tasks, they are recyclable. However, I do think we need a TBLT Chinese textbook. Classroom teachers are very busy and tired; I would appreciate that a considerate textbook could save me tons of time of planning. Hence, I have a bold dream since I was working in Arkansas. I am very much committed to TBLT approach and the main reason for me to participate in TCSOL Program is to find guidance to develop my own TBLT teaching materials. I call it teaching materials because, in my vision, a TBLT textbook is not just a text, it should involve authentic multi-media materials, documentaries, recordings, websites etc. After I had finished my teaching in Arkansas, I went back to Beijing; I spent 2 years of working in the media and film field. I learnt how to shoot, how to record, how to edit and I built up connections of film community. Now I am about to graduate from the program. I feel more confident in practice and more supported and guided by theories. After I return to Beijing, I will combine my skills together and fulfill my bold dream step by step. I know that TBLT is not perfect, neither am I. I will learn from practice and reflect constantly.