Interview with Cong Dong

- Doctoral student at Ewha Womans University, South Korea
- CIFLTE alumna - TCSOL New York One-Year Program (2017-2018)
- CIFLTE instructor - TCSOL New York One-Year Program (Practicum I, Fall 2019)

PART I - IMPRESSION AND TAKEAWAYS FROM TCSOL PROGRAM

What was your education and career background? What brought you to TCSOL Program?

I was studying for my doctoral degree at Ewha Womans University in Korea when I applied for TCSOL One-year Program in New York. I have taught Chinese as a second/foreign language for many years by then. However, I would like to improve my knowledge and teaching skills through professional training in TCSOL Program. Moreover, I was interested in Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) - the biggest featured approach of this program as well as one of the most popular approaches at frontier.

What were some of your important takeaways from TCSOL Program?

My two biggest takeaways are related to two main courses of the curriculum: Chinese Educational Linguistics taught by Professor Liu and Acquisition, Pedagogy, and Assessment taught by Professor Han. The former enabled me to actually "know" my native language - Mandarin Chinese, and have the grammatical knowledge to explain some common questions. In the past, I might just tell students: "That's how native speakers say it. You just memorize it and you are good." Now I can tell the reason why we use measure word ge (个) with week (星期) and month (月) but not with year (年) or day (天). Examples are numerous. On the other hand, the latter helped me reshape my teaching philosophy from the perspective of Second Language Acquisition. As a language teacher, it is very important to understand how adults learn and what factors may have influences on them before designing a curriculum objectively.

How has your study in the TCSOL program influenced your teaching? Have there been changes in your teaching since you graduated?

Of course, there are impressive changes. For instance, in terms of teaching of reading, I used to read by myself and my students just listen. Now I apply the theory and approaches of TBLT to class. I will assign different reading tasks to different students in order to motivate every individual to have personal thinking and learning. By this means, the students also tend to reach the learning objective more easily.

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PART II - ACADEMIC INFLUENCE OF TCSOL PROGRAM

Tell us something about the publication of your paper

The Final Project of TCSOL Program is to design a curriculum of a teaching unit according to a Chinese textbook. My group spent a lot of time and resulted in a detailed 60-page report. Soon after graduation, we came up with the idea: Why not submit the paper for publication as we have put so much effort in it? Fortunately, we succeeded and were invited to present at the 17th New York International Conference on Teaching Chinese later. We were glad to be there and share our research with Chinese teachers from all over the world.

Does TCSOL Program have any influences on your academic interests?


PART III - EXPERIENCE OF BEING AN INSTRUCTOR OF THE PRACTICUM COURSE IN THE TCSOL PROGRAM

How did you react to the offer of Instructor of Practicum from CIFLTE?

I received the invitation and offer from CIFLTE in summer to take the position of instructor of Practicum course for 2019 Fall semester. I was very surprised and full of expectation to teach. It was a great honor for me to have this opportunity and I really appreciated it.

What do you consider as your greatest achievement of teaching for this semester?

Time flies. I can’t believe it is almost the end of this semester. I think the best thing for me is that I solidified my knowledge that I learned during my study and had a deeper understanding as I taught it. My co-teaching partner, Rainie, is very nice and helpful. The students are hardworking and eager to learn. I am really lucky to have them and to be encouraged to improve myself seeing them shine around me. Thank god let us meet!