Standing in a Higher Position of Life

by Yongxia Xiao

Someone said there would also be poems in the distance besides the common routines in life. That’s why I came to SDSU of US all the way from Shandong, China, as a visiting scholar. It was a wonder to be a student in US in my forties, for I had been dreaming to have such an experience since years ago. As a girl from a poor family in the village, I cherished every opportunity in my life although I had been a slow walker, yet I never walked backwards.

Receiving challenges from childhood in the way to flourish myself through learning, I have devoted myself to becoming a teacher for more than 20 years. During the career journey, I experienced the hesitation of becoming a good teacher, the disappointment of the teaching methods used in language learning, as well as confidence bolstered by continuous learning experiences, in which the journey has not been made in vain, especially the one in the LARC where I found the new higher position of life.

As for the study in LARC, there was a beautiful story and I should thank many persons. I should mention my family who
supported me a lot since I began to change the life position through learning continuously in different periods of my life. I should mention Professor Liu Lirong who is the key person that made it possible for me to come to SDSU. That was the first time for me to learn abroad and I had no more experience for things like preparing for the application materials, appointment for interviews, living abroad and even booking flight tickets. When my friend recommended me to Professor Liu, I thought it would be easy to come to SDSU, but it turned out that I needed more work and extra things besides the invitation letter. Anyway, I finally succeeded in applying for the permission of LARC of SDSU through the “relation” of Professor Liu. How lucky was I! I should mention many friends during the journey. After I got the DS2019, I was urgent for me to prepare for all the things I needed before I came here. I didn’t get the exact information about my apartment, my Chinese phone, and I lost myself totally with my Chinese credit card, which forced me to respond randomly at the beginning of the journey to America. There were a lot of persons who helped me to go through all of these. I should mention my colleagues who concerned and encouraged me in many different ways. I should mention many friends who helped me to settle down very soon and get familiar to the life in San Diego.

The life in America and the culture I experienced made me more confident and independent. In LARC, I gained new knowledge about language teaching and learning which would enrich my teaching skills greatly in the future, among which the most important was the experiment project of STARTALK. I have read a lot of the research materials online and I have paid more attention to the TELL project, in which there are many creative thinking hypotheses used in the language teaching and learning. To do it well, we should challenge from two domains, that is, the student’s aspect and teacher’s aspect. I noticed almost every research group trying in the two aspects and they have achieved some experimental data in different angles, in which some have formed new theory directions. In LARC, they also undertook some research tasks such as Lesson Plan Generator, Computer Assisted Screening Tool, Project Global Officers, Southern Area International Languages Network and LARC-STARTALK. Besides the research results, I appreciated their attitude to do things better. Being patient and doing things before discussing thoroughly will be a good way to do work. Learning the materials online and taking some training meetings helped me to understand the words deeply by Chris “one thing at a time”.
In order to observe the English classes, I also attended the IEC program for a period of time in ALI, where I collected the practical experience to be a student and to be a teacher. As a teacher, those new digital devices used in the classroom surprised me and assisted me to broaden the combination of the research in linguistic area and other ones such as pedagogy, education technology and arts and so on. As a student, I immersed myself in the group learning style and team building games, which enhanced my English and my communication with the international students.

In a word, I can use such words to summarize my learning journey that are “one point, two lines and three harvests.” Briefly speaking, one point was I opened the door to learn abroad for a longer time in my school, which would be an experience for my colleagues to go on the journey. Two lines were that I was one point in the lines of Yantai and San Diego where I hoped I could be some help in the friendship between them and that I built the relationship between LARC of SDSU and Business Foreign Languages Department of Shandong Business Institute where there would be more communication potentials in the world language teaching and learning. Three harvests were friends, new skills and courage. I made a lot of new friends besides the old ones who gave me a lot of help during my stay in America and I would remember them during my life. I learned many new skills there which would put forward to my language teaching and research. I collected more courage to be in a higher position in my life, which endowed me to think the life, the work, the family, the cooperation in a new wide vision. Thank LARC, thank SDSU, thank all in my life! I will try my best to stand in my higher position of life with all I have yielded.