

Experiential Reflection (student sample)

Take a Snapshot

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Place: Panda Mandarin **Date/Time:** Jan 14 12:30 PM – 4:15 PM

The first class was a voyager class for students who were at the beginner level with little knowledge of Mandarin. There were two girls and three boys in the class. The students were 6 - 8 years old, and they all had taken classes last term at Panda Mandarin. The class was a review class in that the teacher led the students to review the textbook from chapter one to chapter three. The teacher mainly used Mandarin during class to communicate with the students. She only used English to explain instructions for the activities or to communicate with the students who had understanding issues.

The teachers used the audio-lingual, grammar translation, and communicative language teaching methods in this class. For adopting the audio-lingual method, she used flashcards that do not have pinyin as a visual tool to introduce the characters and the numbers. Then, she asked every student to repeat after her. Then, all students repeated the characters one more time with the teacher. While the teacher was adopting the audio-lingual method, it was noticed that students sometimes lost their attention. For instance, they started to look around or roll around on the playmat while repeating the characters with the teacher. However, once the teacher introduced the game activity, students' study interests developed, and they tended to pay more attention. For instance, the teacher used flashcards to play a guessing game with the students. She showed a tiny part of the character, such as a Chinese radical, and the students were required to

guess the character and speak up. When they made mistakes, the teacher asked the student to repeat the word after her one more time. With the support of the game activity, the teacher used the audiolingual method more effectively.

After the teacher used the audiolingual method to introduce the knowledge of chapter two, the corresponding activity adopted the grammar-translation method and became more advanced. For instance, the teacher used English to say the greeting "认识你很高兴" (Nice to meet you). Each student was required to put the flashcards of Chinese characters into the correct order. As students worked on this activity, they responded less to the teacher as they seemed to have more difficulties working on it. In this case, the teacher used body language and hints to support and guide students to complete the activity successfully.

Lastly, the teacher ended the class with another activity similar to the "hot potato game." The teacher and the students stood in a circle; one person stood in the middle of the circle. Then, the person who stood in the middle would cover his/her eyes and call "停" (stop) anytime. Other people passed around the flash card, and the person who held the flashcard at the "stop" moment needed to say the character on the flash card out loud and went to stand in the middle to be the stop person. Students seemed more engaged and active in speaking Mandarin in this activity.

After observing this class, adopting the audio-lingual method with the game activities was very effective. Students showed higher learning motivation, participation, and willingness to try to use Mandarin to communicate with others. I would introduce a game activity that adopted the communicative approach. For instance, a role-play

activity that contains simple conversations. The script could be designed by using characters from chapters one to three. By doing that, the student may better understand when and how to use these sentences in daily life for communicative purposes.