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Final Report

I first received a Blakemore Refresher Grant to study intensive mandarin Chinese at the ICLP in Taipei for the fall quarter of 2004. I wrote a long report about that experience, which transformed not only my level of Chinese but my whole approach to learning and using the language. Although I made more progress than I thought possible during that short time, I finished with an awareness of how much I still lacked and a wish that I had studied for a whole year rather than just a quarter. I quickly tried to correct that, applying for a Fulbright Research Grant and for another Blakemore Refresher Grant. I received both and so studied intensive Chinese at the IUP program at Tsinghua for summer of 2006 and then stayed in Beijing until summer 2007, conducting research in affiliation with Peking University.

My experience on the Blakemore Refresher Grant was similar this second time. Once again, I found the demands of the program at the limits of what I could do. I studied all of the time for the summer and still felt like I was barely keeping up. Once again, the progress of my Chinese was amazing (to me least!), but once again I also realized I had further to go than I had thought.

I had two courses, each of which met twice a day for an hour each time. My “core” class was “Thought and Society” [*Sixiang yu Shehui* 思想与社会]. It was similar to the *Talks on Chinese Culture* I had studied at the ICLP and was used there as well as the next course in the sequence. The vocabulary, texts, and grammar were all fairly academic. The topics were specific enough to be interesting. The group class had three students including myself and the teacher was excellent, particularly in getting us to use the new sentence patterns. I also met alone with a teacher for this course. She was also excellent. One of the areas in which my Chinese most improved was in my use of tones, and the main reason for that improvement was this teacher’s insistence on correcting me every time I spoke. The second course was based from a Chinese talk show, “Frankly Speaking” [*Shihua Shishuo* 实话实说]. It was primarily a listening course and the most distinctive aspect was that the text we would discuss was not given in written form until after the lesson. To prepare, there was no option but to listen to it (over and over and over again). The area in which my Chinese most progressed was in listening comprehension, and this course was the main reason for that. Every week or so I would hear something and realize that a week before, I would not have understood it. Although there are still many things I fail to understand, that is now mostly a problem of

