

CHNS 3101

Service-Learning

Reflections

2023 Fall

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About CHNS 3101 Advanced Chinese Service-Learning

This reflection presents students' enriching journey in the CHNS 3101 Advanced Chinese Class, emphasizing the integration of advanced language skills with community service. Throughout the semester, our class engaged in Chinese Class Teaching and Mentorship with the Cambridge Center for Chinese Culture, applying their linguistic abilities to facilitate language workshops and cultural exchanges.

This experience not only allowed our students to immerse myself in real-world applications of Chinese language but also fostered a deeper understanding of cultural nuances and community engagement.



About CHNS 3101 Advanced Chinese Service-Learning

What did our students learn?



Cultural Empathy

Enhanced their sensitivity and respect towards diverse cultural perspectives.



Practical Language Application

Gained hands-on experience in using advanced Chinese in real-world situations, significantly improving their linguistic skills and communication abilities.



Community Engagement

Actively participated in community service, teaching them the importance of social responsibility and the impact of their contributions to society.

Student Reflections

What did our student say about their Service-Learning experiences?



Student Reflections - Paris Graff

I volunteered at the Cambridge Chinese Cultural Center every Sunday for my advanced Mandarin class. I was a teacher's assistant in a 2-hour Mandarin class for kids ages eight to twelve. I helped the teacher grade homework and keep students focused during class. I really enjoyed this TA experience. I loved getting to know the students and the teacher in the class I worked with. The students and teacher were always very kind to me. This experience also helped me improve my Chinese. It was good to have extra practice time. I also learned about Chinese culture like holidays and traditions.



Student Reflections - Thanh Huynh

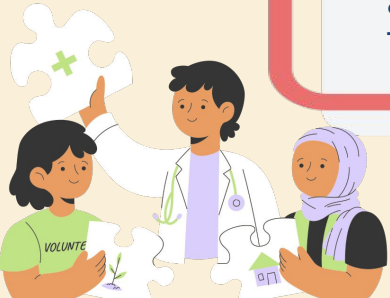


When I started being a TA at CCC, everything was unknown and new to me because I didn't know how to help students understand Chinese when Chinese is not my first language. I came to class not usually, but when I was in class, I always tried to speak up something, so the students could be more encouraged and motivated to speak Chinese. My participation in the class does not only help me learn more Chinese vocabularies and typically common daily-use Chinese words, but it also improved my Chinese speaking skill to be more fluent, which I value the most. Although going to CCC took me a long time to commute, but what I learned from being a TA there has been compensating me back.



Student Reflections - Praagna Kashyap

During my TA experience I enjoyed being able to learn alongside the students while also being able to help them, thus benefiting both the students and myself. I also enjoyed interacting with all of the students, and through them I was able to improve my own Chinese speaking and listening skills. Our teacher was also very nice and made sure to include us (Paris and I) in all of the class activities. One aspect that was challenging was that when grading homework, I sometimes came across questions where I wasn't sure of the answer, but as weeks went by I got better at grading. Overall, being a TA was a positive and beneficial experience.



Student Reflections - Aydan Kearns

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CCCC was a great opportunity to not only give back to my community but also be able to learn a lot through being in the classroom. I have a good amount of experience in terms of teaching, so I enjoyed being able to be a teacher's assistant. Education is such a vital part of our future, and being able to contribute something inspirational to the youth. It was wonderful to see all these incredible students spending their Sundays actively participating and being present while learning Chinese. A lot of these students probably didn't want to wake up early on Sunday, like me, but they all held a good attitude and did their best. I think that being a TA was good in making me feel out of my comfort zone. I had to learn how to be more comfortable with speaking Chinese, which took a while, but I'm deeply grateful for all of the small talk conversations. I think overall, the experience was definitely worthwhile, as I got more hands-on experience in how native Chinese people talk and be able to help the teacher's workload, making their life a little easier.

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Student Reflections - Trish Le

I enjoyed participating in the Chinese classes with the students and seeing what they were learning since it reminded me a lot about the Vietnamese classes I had as a kid. It made me regret stopping those classes once I moved when I was younger. I found a lot of the text the kids were reading in the higher-level Chinese classes very interesting and cute and I liked learning the childhood songs and poems in the preschool Chinese class. I think what was challenging was not knowing some vocabulary, so it was tough to communicate with others sometimes in Chinese. I think because of that also though, the experience was able to improve my Chinese as I learned new Chinese vocabulary with the students.



Student Reflections - Ariana Mechem

I enjoyed having the opportunity to practice my spoken Chinese as well as improve my listening abilities in an environment that forced me to speak and listen to Chinese. At first, I struggled with understanding conversations with the fast speed the teachers speak and I was a little overwhelmed, but as time went on, I could feel my listening skills improve as I could understand and translate the conversations the children were having with the teacher. I loved singing with the children and helping them practice their writing and reading while also learning new words and sentence structures myself. I was better at recognizing words in fast conversations and was able to pick out the main concepts of conversations even if I wasn't able to understand the details. I learned how to use certain characters to make new important phrases. The teachers are all wonderful and the children are amazing, and we all improved immensely in one semester



Student Reflections - Vedant Mundhra

Being a TA for the Level 9 Chinese class at CCCC has been a very gratifying experience. I love how we've built a strong community, helping each other get better at the language. However, juggling different skill levels among students can be tricky. Still, dealing with these challenges has made me better at adapting and communicating. My Chinese has gotten a lot better too. Helping out with questions and chatting with the laoshi has given me a real-world grasp of the language that textbooks don't quite capture. I loved finding random words in workbooks to look up and try to understand the meaning and the radicals behind characters. Overall, being a TA has not only helped others but has also boosted my own Chinese skills. It's been a great experience all around.



Student Reflections - Hudson Small



This semester I felt very grateful to be included in this experiential learning. The CCCC was very welcoming to us and kind throughout the entire time. I have been told, "To learn the language, you must learn the culture". This CCCC TA experience let us be involved and learn more about Chinese culture while pushing us to be the best students we can be. Most weekends, we explored through public transit issues to get there but it was worth it every time. I have always been especially challenged with listening comprehension, and at CCCC, I was able to practice what I needed to most. Mandarin is a beautiful language and I felt proud to be a part of its teaching, in any capacity.



Student Reflections - Jodiah Toney

The TA was a wonderful experience for me. It was the first time I was able to become a part of such a community where I could improve and learn more about the Chinese language and culture. Although for me personally, there wasn't much to do during class, I was able to use this extra time to work on my listening and reading skills. The teacher I was paired up with, spoke in Mandarin the whole time with her students. Even the students themselves were at a high level, but this encouraged me to follow along with their conversations and assignments during class. This experience really helped me adjust to the normal talking speed in Chinese and helped me with my overall learning.



Student Reflections - Alexander Vihlen

Embarking on my journey as a Teaching Assistant (TA) at CCCC presented a unique challenge: aiding students in learning Chinese, a language not native to me. Initially, navigating this unfamiliar territory was daunting. My irregular class attendance, however, did not deter my eagerness to actively participate whenever present. Striving to inspire and motivate, I made it a point to contribute to discussions, a practice that significantly enhanced my Chinese vocabulary and colloquial language skills. Most importantly, it dramatically improved my fluency, an achievement I deeply cherish. Despite the lengthy commute, the invaluable linguistic and personal growth I gained from this experience far outweighs the inconvenience, making every trip to CCCC a rewarding investment in my educational journey.



Student Reflections - Daniel Zhao

Serving as a Teaching Assistant at the Cambridge Chinese Culture Center for the level 8 Chinese class was a very rewarding experience. I will admit, at the beginning of the semester when we found out about our service learning partners and our role as TAs there, I was a bit apprehensive of trying to juggle volunteering at a location 1 hour each way every Sunday outside of class on top of my many other responsibilities. The time however proved to be a formative experience and dedicated time where I could sharpen my Chinese skills and learn alongside the students with the teacher.



Student Reflections - Daniel Zhao (Continued)

Surprisingly, rather than making me feel even busier, the long Sunday windows set aside for being a TA helped me destress from the business and stress of everything else going on this semester. That's not to say there weren't challenges that I encountered along the way. I felt a bit unqualified being the TA for the level 8 class given that the students were much better at Chinese than I was. Many of the words and phrases in their homework were unfamiliar, but this proved to be an opportunity for me to be intentional and learn. My listening and speaking skills were already decent, but my writing and reading skills have always been subpar. This experience flipped that fact on its head and I am very proud to say that I have become much more well rounded in my Chinese proficiency and feel more connected than ever to my roots. Overall, I am very grateful for the ways in which the experience has pushed me to refine my Chinese skills, foster a passion and desire to keep learning, help me gain an appreciation of my heritage and culture, and see tangible and promising growth and progress in my Mandarin.

