

OPENING CEREMONY

Words from Dr. Shih-Chang Hsin of the International Intercolligate Ph.D. Program)

On behalf of National Tsing Hua University, I would like to extend a warm welcome to all the students joining us in Taiwan. Since the launch of our collaboration with the University of Hawai'i three years ago, we have successfully held the "UHM-NTHU Chinese Flagship Summer Program" for three consecutive years, from 2022 to 2024. We have witnessed significant progress in students' language skills and cultural awareness through this program. This year, as in the past, various departments and institutes at National Tsing Hua University are offering their full support. We believe that language learning should not be confined to the classroom; it should be immersed in the context of everyday life and local culture. To enhance the diversity and depth of the learning experience—and to highlight the unique features of Hsinchu, home to NTHU—we have specially designed a six-week program focused on in-depth cultural exploration in Hsinchu.

This year's program will take place entirely in Hsinchu, known as the "Silicon Valley of Taiwan." As a cradle of talent for the Hsinchu Science Park, National Tsing Hua University offers rich academic resources and a strong foundation in both science and the humanities. In addition to intensive language instruction, we have arranged a wide range of cultural activities, including visits to the TSMC Museum of Innovation, General Village, the Central Market, and the historic Old Town of Hsinchu. These excursions will allow students to explore the local culture and better understand the intersection between industrial development and historical heritage.

We will also take a cultural trip to southern Taiwan to visit notable locations such as Lotus Pond, the Dragon and Tiger Pagodas, and Cijin. There,

students will learn about the history and culture of Taiwan's largest port city. As part of this trip, we will also offer a hands-on shadow puppetry workshop, introducing students to this traditional art form that has flourished in Kaohsiung.

This program not only emphasizes language acquisition, but also aims to cultivate intercultural competence and global perspectives. We are committed to providing students with authentic communicative environments that bridge classroom learning with real-world application. In addition to coursework, students will be paired with local language partners from NTHU, enabling them to practice Chinese in meaningful, interactive settings. Our dedicated instructors and staff are here to support students academically and personally throughout the program.

We hope this six-week experience will not only significantly improve students' Chinese proficiency and cultural understanding, but also ignite their passion for continued language study. We believe these cross-cultural encounters will deepen their appreciation for Taiwanese society and inspire them to become culturally responsive individuals. Ultimately, we hope each participant will leave with a stronger global mindset, cherished memories, and the ability to serve as a bridge between cultures in their future careers and communities.



Students and professors from UHM, language partners, faculty members, and staff from the Global Office at NTHU gathering to take a group photo to commemorate the first day of the program

PROGRAM DESIGN

Words from Min-Qi Chen (Program Coordinator)

Our program is built on a solid foundation of success, and the accomplishments we have achieved over the past three years have provided us with invaluable insights. Our goal is to offer students diverse opportunities to connect meaningfully with locals and explore Taiwan's vibrant culture and rich history. Based at National Tsing Hua University (NTHU) in Hsinchu, our program benefits from a unique setting that blends traditional heritage with modern innovation, offering students a well-rounded perspective on Taiwanese society.

As the program coordinator, I am pleased to share the key highlights of our initiative. To ensure our students' comfort, we have secured accommodations in two hotels in Hsinchu. While on-campus housing at NTHU is limited, we have successfully arranged a one-month stay for students in on-campus hotels. Once students become familiar with life in Hsinchu, they have the option to stay in a conveniently located hotel near a train station, making it easier to travel to other cities. Our commitment is to create an environment that fosters both effective learning and exceptional comfort—an uncommon combination among programs in Taiwan.

To immerse students fully in the local context, we have organized five language and cultural exploration activities—four in Hsinchu and one overnight trip to Kaohsiung. These activities intentionally involve the use of public transportation—including city buses, the MRT, trains, and high-speed rail—with teachers accompanying students to help them engage more authentically with daily life in Taiwan.

Far from being mere tourist excursions, our cultural activities fit within a cultural curriculum aimed to deepen students' understanding of both the language and culture of Taiwan. By foreign influence, and contemporary developments, such as an introduction to TSMC, a global leader in the semiconductor industry. We emphasize interactive, hands-on experiences to motivate students. For example, in a traditional market

activity, students purchased ingredients and worked together to make *rùnbīng* (潤餅), a traditional Taiwanese wrap. At the Kaohsiung Museum of Shadow Puppets, students painted their own paper puppets and experienced firsthand how artists bring these figures to life.

This year, students have engaged more actively with local communities. During our Project-Based Language Learning (PBL) initiative, students introduced Hawaiian culture and taught English to elementary school students at Hu Lin Primary School, while also learning about Taiwanese culture through interaction with Hu Lin students and teachers. Secondly, they observed street signage, interviewed shop owners, and explored how language reflects culture in real-world contexts. A highlight of the PBL component was the return of two students, Katherine and Jen, who previously conducted a project in the General Village area and developed an interactive worksheet. This year, they were invited to share their knowledge, further enriching the program and providing valuable peer-led learning.

Now in its fourth year, the program continues to build on the foundation laid in previous years to offer a more comprehensive and impactful curriculum. However, our pursuit of excellence does not end here. We have reflected deeply on our past experiences and are committed to further refining and enhancing the program for the years to come.



(Left to right) Jacqueline and Chen Laoshi at Cijin

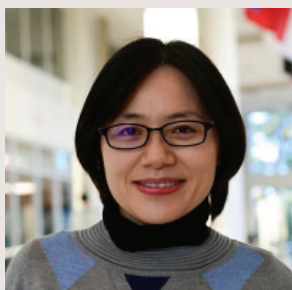


Group photo in front of the Dragon and Tiger Pagodas, Kaohsiung



Jack, Jacob, Owen, and Jen (Left to right) manipulating shadow puppets

CORE COURSES



CHN 204

Lead Lecturer: Shu-Chien Yang

As a language instructor, I recognize the difficulties students often face when learning Mandarin Chinese. In CHN204, I strive to create a supportive, low-stress classroom to reduce students' anxiety and foster a low affective filter (Krashen, 1985). I encourage group discussions and creativity in oral performances, as this allows students to gradually gain confidence in their language skills and learn from one another.

Contextualized activities naturally promote deeper thinking and learning. In Lesson 4, students used real menus to role-play opening restaurants, leading to meaningful conversations between "waiter/waitress" and "customers." In

Lesson 14, students acted as health consultants and clients to discuss wellness strategies after learning about healthy lifestyles. Instead of emphasizing grammar alone, students learn to apply their skills in practical, real-life communication.

My role as a Mandarin instructor also involves fostering cultural awareness and appreciation alongside language learning. I strongly believe that understanding culture is just as essential as mastering the language. By incorporating memes and videos, students encounter everyday slang and practical expressions often missing from textbooks.

The students in CHN204 are courageous learners who have chosen to embark on the demanding journey of mastering Mandarin. While adapting to a new environment, they must also keep pace with an accelerated learning schedule. However, their compassion and kindness have become a source of support for each other throughout the summer of 2025. Although each student encountered different challenges early on, their dedication has led to impressive growth and stronger learning habits. This experience and memory will certainly stay with everyone for a long time.

It has been an honor for me to work with each individual in CHN204, and I wish everyone continued success in their future language-learning journeys.

Krashen, S. (1985). The input hypothesis: Issues and implications. New York: Longman.



CHN 204 Lead Lecturer, Shu-Chien Yang Laoshi during the class



CHN 204 Teaching Assistant, Fu-Ru Zhong Laoshi during the culture class



CHN 204

Teaching Assistant: Fu-Ru Zhong

My teaching philosophy is centered on empowering students to actively use the grammar and vocabulary they learn in class to produce meaningful sentences that reflect their own ideas, experiences, and perspectives. I believe language should not merely be treated as a subject to be memorized, but rather as a practical and personal tool for communication. While students may grasp grammar patterns or vocabulary in isolation, being able to internalize those elements and use them fluently in real-life contexts is a deeper and more meaningful challenge. Therefore, my goal as a teacher is not only to deliver content but to guide students in transforming passive knowledge into active, confident speech.

part of language development, and I strive to create a safe space where students feel comfortable trying, revising, and improving.

In terms of classroom management, I aim to establish a learning environment that is both supportive and structured. I prioritize psychological safety, encouraging risk-taking and reducing anxiety, especially for students who may be shy or lack confidence in speaking. At the same time, I recognize the importance of maintaining clear expectations and learning objectives. A comfortable classroom should still have structure, consistency, and accountability. I believe that motivation grows when students see progress, so I work to provide regular feedback and help students reflect on their growth.

Ultimately, my teaching is about helping students build not only language proficiency but also a sense of autonomy and enjoyment in the learning process. I want my students to leave the classroom not just knowing more words or grammar, but with the confidence to use Chinese in meaningful ways—and the curiosity to keep learning beyond the classroom.

I approach this process by emphasizing interaction, contextual learning, and gradual scaffolding. I encourage students to experiment with language in class, apply what they've learned in authentic situations, and take ownership of their learning. I believe that making mistakes is an essential



CHN 204

Teaching Assistant: Yi-Huan Song

As a teaching assistant, my teaching focused on fostering a relaxed yet purposeful learning environment where students could consolidate their knowledge and build communicative confidence. Lessons were designed to include structured reviews and contextualized language use. Emphasis was placed on encouraging

students to speak without fear of mistakes, thereby strengthening both fluency and the ability to express personal ideas clearly. To support long-term retention and real-world application, I occasionally incorporated spontaneous sentence pattern checks outside of class interactions. Effective classroom management was maintained through a balance of positive engagement and focused attention. Students were given ample opportunities to participate, and varied, relatable topics were introduced to prompt meaningful discussions. It is hoped that the course enabled students to enhance their oral proficiency naturally, developing greater accuracy and confidence in their spoken Mandarin.



CHN 204 Teaching Assistant, Yi-Huan Song Laoshi during the culture class

When it comes to my teaching philosophy, I hope it is both meaningful and engaging. In a Chinese language classroom, I always try my best to create an immersive environment where students feel encouraged to use and practice the language, helping them find their confidence. I also provide authentic examples to support their learning. While I sometimes value traditional methods like quizzes—which can seem burdensome—I have to admit they are helpful in reinforcing knowledge. Classroom management, to me, is about building mutual respect and bringing out the best in each other. I believe that when students feel safe,



CHN 404 Teaching Assistant, Yu-Chia Lin Laoshi during the class



CHN 404

Teaching Assistant: Yu-Chia Lin

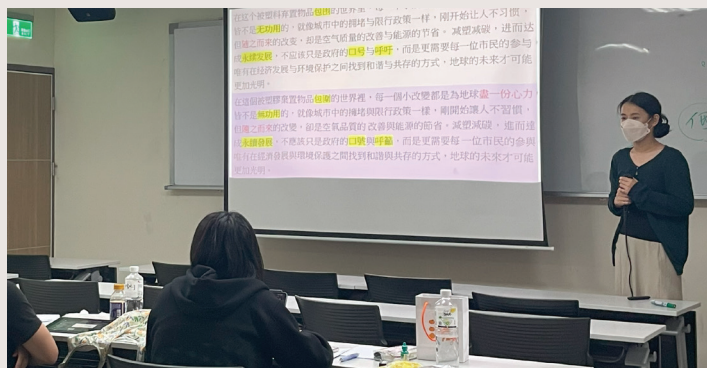
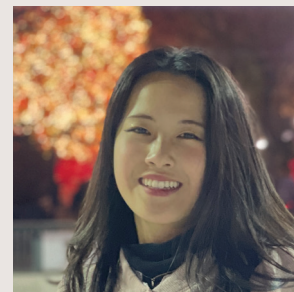
During my tenure as a Teaching Assistant, my teaching philosophy is to create a relaxed learning environment where students can learn Mandarin in a stress-free atmosphere. Whether it is the content in the textbook or the language situations encountered in real life, I encourage

students to connect what they have learned with real-world experience for further understanding and application. For example, when students mention a life situation, I guide them to think about whether they have learned how to use it in a particular lesson or whether they have been added to it by their teacher. In terms of teaching interaction, I insist on “encouragement

Lead Lecturer: Wei-Ya Wang

seen, and supported, they are more willing to take risks and actively participate.

I hope students will not only develop linguistic skills in my class but also cultivate a lifelong interest in language and culture. By creating a welcoming and dynamic classroom atmosphere, it is truly a beautiful thing to see language learning become a joyful and empowering journey for all of us.



CHN 404 Lead Lecturer, Wei-Ya Wang Laoshi during the class

instead of blame”, especially in speaking practice, I will guide students to use their own words to express the correct expression step by step, and then make appropriate corrections. I believe that this approach will give students greater interest and confidence in learning Mandarin. In terms of class management, I also attach importance to creating a relaxed and jovial classroom atmosphere, so that students do not feel alone, but can participate, interact and discuss with the whole class. By listening to others’ ideas and self-reflection, students not only improve their language skills, but also enhance their self-confidence. In a non-native environment, they are more courageous to express themselves and are more willing to engage and communicate with the world.

LANGUAGE AND CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

Jhongyang Market

Allison Ebsen

Stepping through the ornate red flat arch entrance to the Central Market (中央市場) felt like stepping through a portal into the living heart of Taiwanese culture. Wandering through a traditional Taiwanese market isn't just shopping – it's finding beauty and appreciation in the natural rhythm of daily life. Since I had woken up and arrived at the market fairly early, I was able to witness the market also waking up and coming to life. I saw countless amounts of fresh produce being neatly and carefully laid out, fresh cuts of meat being prepared, and many shop keepers carefully preparing traditional dishes over hot stoves. As I examined the beautiful ripe mangos at a fresh produce stand, the shop keeper was effortlessly completing transactions with other customers while they also explained the differences between the different types of mangos that they had. The air was warm and slightly heavy, filled with rising steam and an array of savory and sweet aromas from dishes I couldn't quite identify. Yet the true warmth of the Central Market went beyond the food. It could be felt in the sense of connection and community. Customers and shop keepers alike would sometimes greet each other with smiles, voices casual and familiar, like old friends catching up. As I continued through the market, the energy continued to shift again.



Allison introducing items she bought from the Zhongyang Market

At the heart of the market sits a historic temple, the highest ranking of all City God temples in Taiwan. The red and gold temple is beautifully decorated in colorful and detailed dragon motifs, and the smell of burning incense filled the air. Within the temple were many figures wearing colorful and fantastically crafted robes, including the City God, Cheng Huang Ye (城隍爺) who acts as a judge, watching all deeds – good and bad. In contrast to the market's lively bustle, the temple offered a quieter moment of reflection. The tables were covered in various gifts such as food and flowers while people quietly knelt in front and sought guidance. Through my time in the market, I received a reminder that culture is preserved, not only through monuments or large festivals, but also through community and the daily lived experiences of everyday people.



Amanda(left) and Jacob(right) wrapping their Rùnbǐng



Rafunzele(left) and Allison(right) wrapping their Rùnbǐng



Jack cooking chives as one of the Rùnbǐng ingredients

TSMC Museum of Innovation

Jack Hernandez

The museum of the Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company (TSMC) is a nice monument representing the history, product and workmanship of the worlds largest manufacturer of the most fundamental component of all computer hardware. Considering the majority world's semiconductor production is centered in Taiwan, and how crucial this piece of equipment is to nearly every piece of technology that runs the modern world, it is quite significant to be privy to one of the most important epicenters of technology right here in Hsinchu.

Most of the museum presents an ambitious vision for the future, in which technology based on its own semiconductor technology, modelling and production, drives innovation and allows human civilization to raise the limits of what we are capable of accomplishing (as it already is and has). Examples of semiconductor functioning within a multitude of different technologies, such as computers, cell phones, cameras, and other information based electronic devices are displayed chronologically, to demonstrate the generations of technology and how they differed and



Alexis, Owen, Jack, and Jacob(left to right) wearing the AR goggles

improved upon one another over time. This is followed by a sneak peak into the factory settings where the physical devices are made, along with explanations of how they are built from scratch and how they function based on their design and production process. These explanations are available at various levels of understanding, depending on the prerequisite knowledge of the viewer, and can be adjusted to aid in general understanding or focus on minute detail.

After completing a tour of TSMC's history, and consequently the history of the Taiwanese based world semiconductor industry, the museum concludes with a mock interview with the company's founder, Morris Chang. By loading prerecorded interview questions, Dr. Chang will share with the audience his experiences in founding the company and industry, his leadership and management philosophies, his perspective on the company's role in the world, and an inside look at his personal and daily life. Overall, the museum is a fantastic microcosm of what goes into creating computer hardware that we utilize and take for granted on a daily basis, and reminds us of the complexities and nuances that go into creating it from nothing and operating it for every conceivable activity in our lives.



Jack, Jacob, and Amanda(left to right) listening a guided tour in the TSMC Museum

Hsinchu Old City

Joshua Hitchcock

The Old Town in Hsinchu is a very intriguing spot to be. It is a market area, a frequent spot for its religious populous, a historical sight, and part of the metropolis. There's no real separation of these facets of it other than the obvious "fencing off" of each from the other, like the body forming scabs to stop the blood flow. Though obviously the market and metropolis won out. That doesn't mean the others are relegated to be eventually dismantled though, they still persist at someone's behest. In Taiwan they always will; the cities want these aspects to be integrated rather than removed, or even isolated; they want quiet spots flanked on all sides by cars, scooters and vendors wheeling out their goods. I hope I did not sound off putting with that acknowledgment, I deeply love and appreciate this operation. Designing cities like this, to accommodate the idiosyncrasies in its own landscape also lends itself to accommodate the idiosyncrasies in its people; there are very few who would struggle to maneuver here. A care for the culture, a care for the citizens expressed in simply the infrastructure.

My experience at the Hsinchu Old Town was very "familiar" to me; noisy, crowded, smelly, bright, but familiar. And so it was pleasant. Beautiful scenery somehow simultaneously isolating and integrating itself into the urban landscape; mountains of culture refusing to be broken by the rivers of modernity. Statues, temples, old markets; the function never changes even as the people and the land do. And the people will make the most baffling decisions with that land; you'll see outrageous and preposterous things, then like me you won't even flinch at it; get confused at it even being pointed out, hasn't it always been like that? The most wondrous things corral unto themselves so many people who themselves are equally as wonderful. I am thankful to have been able to become familiar with it all.



Joshua(right) ordering a grass jelly drink from the vendor in Mandarin and choosing the drink size



Group of students(left:Jacqueline, Jen, Rafunzele, Amanda) discussing how to order the meatball soup in front of the vendor

Generals Village

Jeno Calara

This year's UHM in Taiwan cohort had the opportunity to explore Jiang Jun Cun (General Village) through a student-led tour guided by returning participants Katherine Kaw and Jeno Calara. In preparation for the tour, the two student tour guides began planning a week in advance. Accompanied by Yi Xuan Song, they revisited General Village for a private tour to refresh their understanding of the site's history and cultural significance. To their surprise, they were taken along a different route than the one they had explored during last year's visit, which helped them reframe their approach and identify key areas for the new students to explore.

Based on this visit, a roadmap of locations was developed to highlight key areas during the tour. They then drafted a script, carefully considering details such as what content to include, how much time to spend at each stop, and, most importantly, how to keep the group actively engaged throughout the experience. The final tour route included Buildings A, B, and C, the Food Forest & Garden, the Air Raid Shelter, and concluded at the General Village Story House.

Overall, the tour was a success. If there was anything they wished they could improve, Katherine and Jeno agreed that they could have more clearly pointed out the locations that were referenced on the tour worksheets. Nevertheless, they were encouraged by the positive feedback received from their peers afterward. Leading this tour was a meaningful experience for both student guides which allowed them to reconnect with a site they had studied extensively for the previous year's Project-Based Language Learning (PBL) project.. Katherine and Jeno were honored to represent Jiang Jun Cun and share its story with this year's UHM in Taiwan participants.



Jeno and Katherine(left to right) giving other students a tour about the General Village



Owen exiting a Japanese-era air-raid shelter in the General Village

Jacqueline Hanna

Visiting the General Village in Hsinchu was such a cool experience. It used to be a village where military generals and their families lived, but now it's turned into this artsy, creative space with little shops, cafés, and galleries. Many of the original buildings—15 of them—are still standing, which gives the whole place a really interesting mix of old and new. It's super calm and cozy, with lots of spots where you can wander around or just sit and take everything in.

One thing that really stood out to me was how the traditional architecture has been kept and given a new life. I loved seeing these older homes filled with art, handmade goods, and even just quiet places to chill. There is also a garden at General Village. It's not huge, but it's beautifully kept, with lots of greenery, flowers, and shaded spots to relax in. It adds to the peaceful vibe of the place and makes it easy to forget you're still in the city.

What made the visit even more meaningful was having some of our classmates guide the tour. It was honestly so fun seeing them take the lead and share their project from the previous year. Hearing them talk about their projects and why they chose certain topics gave me a deeper appreciation for the place. You could tell how much effort they put into it, and it made everything feel more personal and connected.

If you're ever in Hsinchu, I'd definitely recommend checking out General Village. It's not packed with tourists, so it's a nice break from the busier parts of town. It feels more like a local community than a tourist spot—and that's what makes it so special.



Alexis (front center), Jacqueline (front right), and Joshua (second from left) listening to a tour presented by their peer



Amanda (left) and Allison (right) working on the worksheet created last year

PROJECT-BASED LANGUAGE LEARNING (PBL)

Hu Lin Primary School

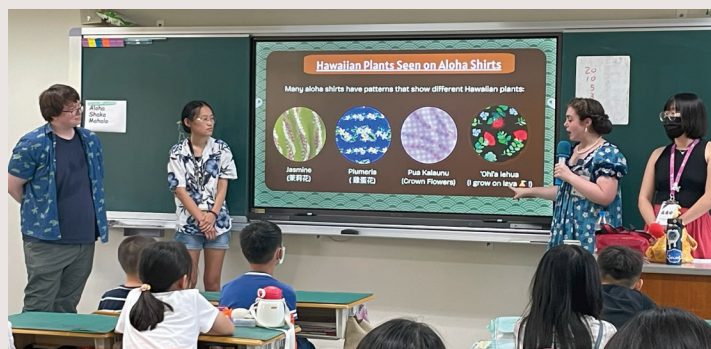
Led by 501 Fu-Ru Zhong Laoshi, 502 Yu-Chia Lin Laoshi
503 Yi-Huan Song Laoshi

“Hands Together” Activity: Connecting with Local Students at Hu Lin Primary School, Hsinchu

As part of our Project-Based Language Learning (PBL) initiative, this activity goes beyond language learning to foster meaningful interactions between students from the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa (UHM) and local Taiwanese students. This year, we partnered with Hu Lin Primary School, located in the Xiangshan District of Hsinchu City, to implement the “Hands Together” cultural exchange activity. The main objectives of this program are to involve UHM students in youth English education in Taiwan and to provide opportunities for them to share their own culture and language with the students of Hu Lin Primary School.

During the first visit to Hu Lin, the fifth-grade students introduced themselves and their campus in both English and Mandarin. To warmly welcome the UHM students, each class—501, 502, and 503—prepared different icebreaker activities. Class 501 recreated a traditional Taiwanese night market in the classroom, where UHM students played classic games and sampled local snacks. Class 502 organized drawing games to review English vocabulary, while Class 503 invited UHM students to play table tennis together.

Throughout the second and third visits, UHM students engaged in hands-on teaching and interactive learning with the local students. They



Joshua, Allison, Amanda, and Katherine (left to right) sharing their Hawaiian shirt designs and patterns

introduced elements of Hawaiian culture, supported English learning through group-based tasks, and participated in various forms of cultural exchange. Through creative tasks and shared activities, UHM students not only contributed to English instruction but also gained deeper insights into Taiwan’s educational environment and everyday culture.

This cross-cultural experience allowed students from both sides to build meaningful connections and foster mutual understanding. By linking UHM students with local youth, the “Hands Together” activity not only aligned with the goals of Project-Based Language Learning (PBL) but also brought the objectives of the Huayu BEST Program into action—creating a vibrant space for language exchange, intercultural dialogue, and shared growth.(Minqi Chen)



Group photo of all students and teachers from Hu Lin Primary School, UHM, and NTHU



Katherine doing an icebreaker activity with Hu Lin Primary School students

501

Presented by Katherine Kaw, Joshua Hitchcock, Amanda Spicola, Allison Ebsen

The UHM-in-Taiwan Summer Program incorporates multiple community outreach initiatives into its curriculum. One of them is a partnership with Hulin Elementary School in northern Hsinchu. Through this partnership, UHM students assist teachers at Hulin Elementary in teaching English to 5th graders. We were assigned to groups and tasked with creating educational and engaging lessons aimed at fostering cultural exchange through second-language education. Given that we are from Hawai'i, we were asked to highlight Hawaiian culture and history in our lessons.

My group chose to teach students about aloha shirts and Hawaiian food. In our first lesson, we taught about the history of the aloha shirt. We introduced various endemic Hawaiian animals and plants that are often

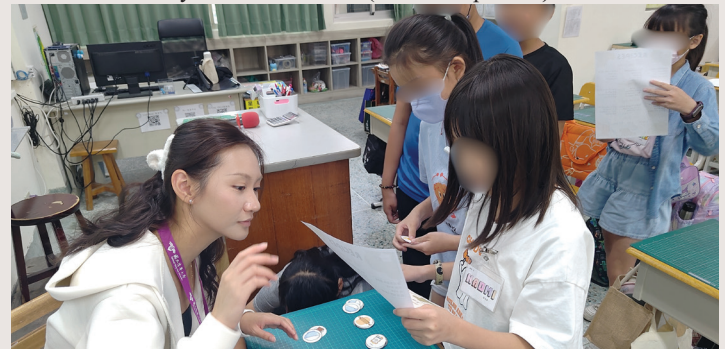
featured on them. The lesson concluded with an interactive activity in which the children designed their aloha shirts. It was lovely to see how the students channeled their creativity into their creations. Our second lesson focused on Hawaiian food, specifically fruits, and drinks. We delivered this lesson through a "call-and-response" format, where we showed the students pictures of fruit and drinks they had been taught and asked them to name them. To encourage student engagement, I brought Hawaiian cookies and fruit jellies to be handed out to students who answered correctly. At the end of the lesson, we had a "March Madness" style ranking contest, where students selected their favorite food by shouting the food's name. They were very passionate about their love of oranges, strawberries, and chocolate.

I was very impressed by the students and the learning environment of Hulin Elementary. The staff were very kind and hospitable, the students engaged and attentive, and the mosaic-laden campus meticulously clean. What struck me the most, though, was the time dedicated to creating art. The library is filled with student artwork, and I was told that art is part of the core curriculum at Hulin Elementary. As someone for whom the arts were an integral part of their education, it made my heart glad to see the school place such emphasis on student creativity. Filling a space with art and creating room for its creation is so beneficial for growing minds, and I am delighted to see that Hulin Elementary understands that. (Amanda Spicola)

502

Presented by Jenő Calara, Rafunzele Yap, Jacqueline Hanna, Jack Hernandez

While teaching at Hulin Primary School, I realized I had a strong motivation to teach children and work with them. Apart from my major in Second Language Studies and teaching of languages, I had experience teaching all age groups ranging from children to adults. The age group I always enjoy teaching is children at the elementary school age. My favorite part about teaching the students at Hulin Elementary School, especially in Room 502, was their motivation to learn. From the very first day we taught at the school, I felt increasingly inspired to teach young children because I loved seeing them try their best in everything they did. The students in Room 502 were very hardworking, kind, and helpful towards one another. Whenever a classmate had trouble, another classmate would reach over to help or explain to them, which fostered community and cooperation with one another. My favorite part about teaching at Hulin Primary School was getting to see the students learn. The biggest thing I have learned in my past experiences teaching is: as long as your students are able to take away one thing from what you taught them, you have succeeded as a teacher. And so, the most rewarding part about this experience was seeing the kids' smiling faces as they learned English from us, even when they were having difficulty. This not only showed how persevering and hardworking Hulin Elementary's students are, but also their best representation of their school's mascot, the Tiger, which symbolizes strength, courage, and leadership. I greatly enjoyed teaching the kids at Hulin Elementary and hope I get the chance to do so again in the future. I hope that they will continue to grow in their studies and maintain their confidence and motivation to learn no matter what obstacles they may face. (Rafunzele Yap)



Hu Lin Primary School students asking Rafunzele questions using the worksheet

503

Presented by Jacob Alfrim, Alexis Norwitz, Owen Gong, Kristi Zeng

Originally, before going to Hulin Primary School, I thought, "How am I going to teach these kids, and can I even do a good job?" I've had zero prior experience in teaching, so to say that I was nervous was an understatement. Thankfully, with great teamwork from my group mates Lexi, Kristi, and Jacob, my nerves were relieved ever so slightly. However, on the first day that we had to teach, the nerves came right back and I was so anxious. I kept on thinking, "What if the kids hate me, what if they don't like our introduction, what if they can't even understand me". But as we were walking to class to go through our introductions, one of the students, Shaun, came up to me so confidently and said, "Hi, my name is Shaun. What is your name?" After that it felt like all the anxiety I was experiencing right before that just blew away. I felt his curiosity and his willingness to learn. After that, everything went smoothly for our group, and they even remembered my name! Asking, "What's my name", and having all the kids scream "OWEN! OWEN! OWEN!" was so rewarding, like all of our hard work paid off. My group mates and I alike, truly wanted to try and teach them to the best of our ability. So we revised our old lesson plans to make it as fun and interactive as possible, even staying back late to finish some of the arts and crafts projects for the kids. It became more of a privilege than a compulsory assignment; something that we looked forward to. Although it was brief, I feel like I can understand just a smidge of why teachers do what they do. What originally felt like a frightening burden, became a positive experience and a very valuable memory for me. (Owen Gong)



Kristi interacting with a Hu Lin student during the painting activity

PROJECT-BASED LANGUAGE LEARNING (PBLL)

Linguistic Landscapes

Yi-Xuan Song Laoshi

Project Overview

This project-based language learning (PBLL) activity took “signs” as its central theme, guiding students to explore the cultural landscape around them and uncover the historical and cultural meanings behind shop signs. At the beginning, students felt unsure about the task, and the process of taking photos of signs around Hsinchu’s City God Temple was created a sense of uncertainty. However, as they continued observing and reflecting, they gradually identified signs that caught their interest. From there, they dove deeper into analyzing the text, images, visual styles, and historical background, eventually completing their project with a clearer sense of direction.

Through field visits and interviews with local shop owners, students developed cross-cultural communication skills and gained a better understanding of everyday life and local culture in Taiwan. The process of organizing and analyzing their findings also helped strengthen their ability to structure information and express ideas clearly. Repeated practice in giving oral presentations further improved their public speaking skills and boosted their confidence.

This project combined classroom learning with authentic exploration, allowing students to experience both language growth and cultural insight. It was a meaningful and rewarding learning journey filled with discovery, creativity, and personal development.

Memorable Challenges and Moments

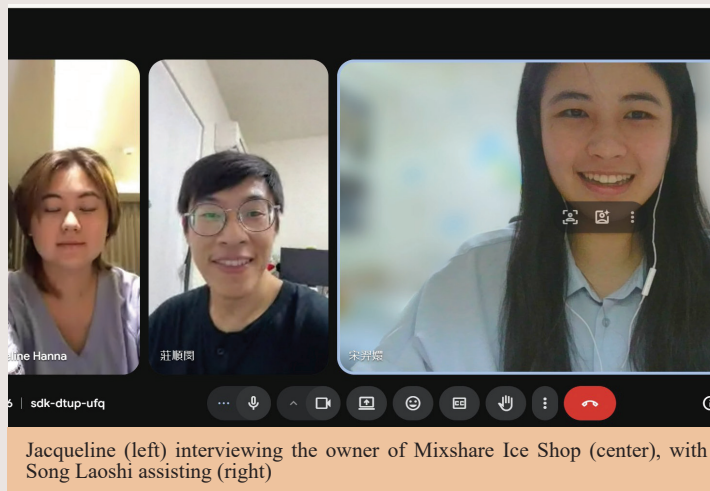
Of all the stages of the project, interviewing shop owners proved to be one of the most challenging—and memorable—experiences for the students. From early-stage research and question design to the actual interview, every step tested their preparedness, adaptability, and communication skills. Two students even had to switch to online interviews due to a typhoon, adding extra layers of technical and interpersonal difficulty. Still, they learned how to think on their feet and adjust their plans when things didn’t go as expected.

One especially memorable interview took place at 814 麗香冰店 (814 Li-Xiang Popsicle Shop), where the owner showed genuine warmth and kindness. He answered every question with patience, brought out old photographs to share the shop’s history, and even treated the students to popsicles afterward. As we were leaving, he ran out to add something he felt he hadn’t explained clearly—an act that left a deep impression on the students and offered a heartfelt example of Taiwanese hospitality.

Teacher’s Reflection

As the teacher leading this PBLL project, I also gained so much throughout the process. In the beginning, many students were confused about the idea of photographing signs. Step by step, guiding them to choose a topic, ask meaningful questions, and refine their work as they progressed. Watching them move from hesitation to focused exploration, from vague ideas to confident presentations, reminded me of the power of guidance and the value of learning through experience.

My role went far beyond delivering knowledge—I was there to support, encourage, and walk alongside them. Whether it was helping them clarify their research focus, adjusting interview plans, reviewing their questions



Jacqueline (left) interviewing the owner of Mixshare Ice Shop (center), with Song Laoshi assisting (right)

and slides, or cheering them on as they practiced their presentations again and again, I saw them grow with every challenge they faced. This teaching journey reminded me once again that when students are given ownership of their learning, they can achieve much more than we expect. As a teacher, witnessing their growth and being part of that process is truly one of the most meaningful rewards of education.

Jacob Algrim

“Linguistic landscapes” (LL) is a recent and burgeoning area of study within the field of sociolinguistics and discourse analysis which focuses on language and other semiotic systems in use in particular spaces, especially public places. As such it seeks to answer the What? Who? and When? with an important added focus on the Where? of language use. In this year’s UHM in Taiwan program, the methods and goals of this area of study were implemented as part of an innovative Project-Based Language Learning (PBLL) curriculum in an intensive study-abroad context.

Many researchers within the field of LL research have observed in their own contexts of study that important observations about a community can be made through analysis of the ways that language and other communicative repertoires are used in public spaces. Some examples of observations made in the field include the social prestige of certain linguistic/cultural sub-groups relative to other sub-groups within a shared multilingual, multilingual community; artifacts of historical and cultural discourse perpetuated and preserved in permanent signage; and evidence of different power structures within a society. The implementation of LL methods in a study-abroad context allows the opportunity for language students to be



Jacob (right) asking the owner of a traditional herbal pharmacy (left) about the shop’s history.

cultural researchers capable of making their own discoveries—engaging their own agency to determine the content of their learning based on personal real-world experiences.

The design of this LL-PBLL learning opportunity divided the students into three groups of mixed Chinese-language abilities, with each group focusing on a different area in the city of Hsinchu: 1) National Tsinghua University Night Market; 2) the area around Chenghuang Temple; and 3) Zhongyang Market. During initial site visits, students gathered photographic data of store fronts and their signage; this data was then categorized by local teachers and some important elements were presented to students to aid them in choosing several specific businesses to focus on for deeper investigation. After choosing businesses and engaging in some online research, individual students designed their own interview protocols and contacted businesses with the help of their teachers to set up an interview time. Having made an appointment, students visited the businesses and conducted their designed interviews in Chinese, recording them as visual/audio data for further analysis, and from which to draw learning points to include in a final presentation.

In my personal project, I selected traditional Chinese medicine shops as my focus and conducted interviews with two heritage owners of such shops. The designs of their store signs as well as the content of the interviews reveal that they are trying to achieve a balance between preserving the tradition they have inherited, while also innovating to meet the modern lifestyle and way of thinking. This theme seems to echo through related themes in my classmate's findings as well, such as a traditional popsicle shop which creates new modern flavors, but has stated that the traditional red-bean flavor is still the best-seller; and the way that another shop sign emphasizes that their products are handmade, perhaps harkening back to

the quality and care of traditional methods of production prior to massive automated factories. It comes through clear that Taiwan is very much a modern culture, but one that remembers and treasures the heritage from which they are constantly emerging day-by-day.

The design of this curriculum had students making their own choices for learning focus and engaging in authentic interactions with the goal of situated cultural learning, all the while furthering their abilities in the four skills of their target language (reading, writing, speaking, listening). While this as an early implementation of a new pedagogical strategy and thus at times lacked clear structure and coherency (particularly for lower-level learners who could not read signs as they photographed them), it shows promise as a method for engaging students in choosing their own learning content from authentic experiences and making personal discoveries for an interesting and fulfilling language-learning experience.



Jacob (left) and Allison (right) interviewing the owner of 814 Shop (center)

Yu-An Li Laoshi

A Journey into Hsinchu's Central Market

As part of our PBLL project, our group set out to explore the names and signs of shops in Hsinchu's Central Market. We started with on-site observations, selected interesting examples, and then interviewed shop owners to learn more. Along the way, students discovered how store signs carry not just words, but local culture, history, and personality. The goal was to help students better understand the unique ways language and culture show up in Taiwan's traditional markets—and to compare that with what they've seen in their own countries.

One highlight was how creative and meaningful the signs were. For example, “新弘觀毛線行” translated Mandarin into Taiwanese “phòng-se” which means “yarn” in Taiwanese, showing both local roots and language influence. “風城麵店” uses Hsinchu's nickname—“Windy City”—to highlight local pride. Students also saw traditional naming like “林家肉圓” “蔡記肉粽” that reflects family heritage, and symbols like a giant bagua on a fortune-telling shop's sign. Compared to the clean, often all-English signs in the U.S., Taiwan's market signs were full of personal style and cultural meaning.

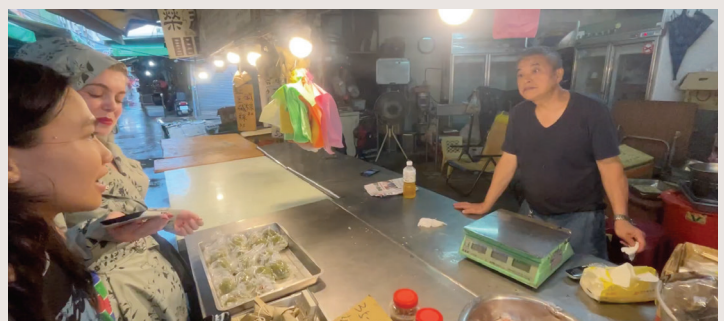
For me as a teacher, this project was more than just a language activity—it was a cultural adventure. We saw our students use their Mandarin skills to explore, ask questions, and connect authentically with people. It reminded us that when learning is rooted in the real world, it becomes meaningful, memorable, and fun.



Jack (left) experiencing a fortune-telling session at Zhongyang Market.



Amanda (right) engaging in conversation with the owner of a yarn shop (left) at Zhongyang Market



Kristi (left) and Amanda (second from left) asking the owner of the ròuzòng (rice dumpling) stall (right) questions at Zhongyang Market

PROJECT-BASED LANGUAGE LEARNING (PBL)

Linguistic Landscapes

Fu-Ru Zhong Laoshi

Overview of Course Design and Implementation

In this course, I was responsible for designing and leading a language landscape project focused on the NTHU night market. The course adopted a Project-Based Language Learning (PBL) approach, aiming to guide students in exploring Chinese naming conventions, character formation, and the use of homophones through signage commonly seen in everyday life. In doing so, the course sought to enhance students' interest in learning Chinese, deepen their understanding of character-based language and cultural practices, and develop their ability to reflect on linguistic differences between Chinese and English—especially how Chinese characters can simultaneously convey meaning and sound, often inspiring creative wordplay.

The project unfolded over six sessions. In the first session, students were asked to walk around and take photos of signs they found interesting. While their language proficiency was not yet strong enough to fully interpret the signs, teacher scaffolding helped students begin to construct analytical frameworks. Before the second session, I categorized their photos into two main groups: “interesting + culturally relevant” and “commonplace signage.” Students then selected three signs of interest to analyze further. The following sessions involved name analysis, interview question design, cultural interpretation, and linguistic reflection. In the final session, students compiled their insights into a written script to present their findings as the final outcome of the project.



Katherine (right) and Rafunzele(left) discussing the script for their presentation

“I don’t care if the name scares you—my chicken is delicious, and that’s all that matters.” He also noticed that the store opens later in the day and suggested that the “devil” might symbolize temptation, especially at night. He concluded, “The food is unhealthy, but I still want to eat it.” His multi-layered interpretation—from semantics to branding and cultural metaphor—demonstrated thoughtful integration of linguistic and cultural understanding.

Teacher Reflection

The most valuable takeaway for me was witnessing how students built on the frameworks I provided and developed insights that went far beyond my expectations. Although I initially anticipated which types of stores students might choose and how they might categorize them, their actual selections and analyses revealed many unexpected and insightful perspectives. By combining their personal experiences, cultural backgrounds, and newly acquired language knowledge, students produced organically rich and meaningful outcomes within the learning scaffolds I designed.

Beyond my role as a Mandarin instructor, I have long been interested in the intersection of language teaching and cultural comparison. This course reaffirmed my passion for such work. While I may not have the opportunity to travel the world myself, through my students’ perspectives and their interpretations of their own native cultures, I am able to gain fresh and diverse understandings of language and culture. This continual rediscovery is one of the most fulfilling aspects of being a language teacher and remains a core motivation in my teaching practice.



Alexis(left) and Owen(right) working together to revise their script on a laptop

Highlights of Student Learning and Classroom Observations

One of the most rewarding aspects occurred during the fifth session, when students demonstrated a clear grasp of the logic behind how store names are crafted in Taiwan. They noted that wordplay, phonetic puns, and stylized character design were common strategies in naming. Students not only identified representative examples but also eagerly compared them to naming practices in the United States, commenting on how “clever” and “fun” Taiwanese store names are. Although I didn’t explicitly emphasize cross-cultural comparison in the lessons, students naturally reflected on how linguistic and cultural conventions differ, showing a high level of cultural and linguistic awareness.

For example, one student chose the store name 三顧茅廬麻辣滷味 (Three Visits Spicy Braised Snacks). With the help of scaffolding, she came to understand the historical reference to “three visits to the thatched cottage,” which symbolizes patience and sincerity. She then linked it to the slow-cooking process of braised food, interpreting the name as a clever metaphor: “Good food is worth the wait.” She remarked that this kind of wordplay would be difficult for a foreigner to understand without background knowledge, but for Taiwanese people, it is witty and humorous—a culturally specific message for local customers.

Another student selected 惡魔雞排 (Devil Fried Chicken). After analyzing words like “devil,” “evil,” and “sinful,” he proposed that the owner chose “devil” deliberately to convey confidence: “It’s like the owner is saying,

1-ON-1 LANGUAGE PARTNERS

Yu-Cheih Chang

This is my first time being a language partner with someone who is learning Chinese as a second language. Although I wasn't quite sure what to talk about at first, I gradually adapted and became friends with my language partner after just a few meetings. I think this is mostly because my partner speaks Chinese quite fluently, which made our conversations smoother. Even though we were both a bit shy in the beginning, as we shared more about ourselves, we started to know each other better. Since we seldom have misunderstandings when communicating, we have been able to chat more naturally and comfortably each time we meet. During our conversations, we discussed our life experiences and the things we're both interested in. We discovered some similarities between us, as well as differences in the cultures of Taiwan and Hawaii. Take riding scooters as an example—in Taiwan, scooters are the most common form of transportation, and wearing a helmet is required by law. If people don't wear one, they're considered to be breaking the law. However, in Hawaii, there doesn't seem to be a strict rule requiring riders to wear helmets. This surprising difference definitely made us realize how cultural norms and safety regulations can vary greatly between places. There was another time when we were hanging out in a clothing store, browsing through clothes that had just been displayed. She asked me whether T-shirts in Taiwan usually have English words or phrases as part of their design. That's when I realized it was true—about 80 percent of the shirts in the store featured English text. Interestingly, she told me that in America, you can also see shirts with Chinese or Japanese characters as part of the design. What's even more, some people even view these characters as a form of art and get them tattooed on their bodies.

From these conversations, I believe that both of us gained a deeper understanding of our different backgrounds and got to know each other better. Also, I think her Chinese has improved a lot compared to when we first met. Although it's a pity that we only had this short summer to spend together, I truly hope she can gain a lot from this special learning experience.



Katherine (right) having dessert with Chang, Yu-Cheih(left), an NTHU language partner



Lin Ying-Yu (left), an NTHU language partner, and Kristi(right) posing for a photo during the one-on-one language practice session

FaceTime! And her sister shared a funny thing with us, it was my pleasure to chat with them. We also have had a plan to eat 麻辣燙, because she had told me she loves it very much, so I arranged one day to enjoy it. Unfortunately, when we arrived there, it did close! Oh my gosh!!! It was my fault, I was so sorry for that.....I arranged a wrong day.....However, we changed our plan! Haha, I had plan B, which was eating 粥大福! I recommended her 川味麻辣鍋燒意麵, she said it was spicy but delicious, so did I. Both of us were sweating a lot, because it was quite spicy. It was a great day. I was grateful that she had a nice meal with me! Actually, it was my first time to have a meal with a foreigner! Moreover, we walked to her hotel together. During the route, she didn't need GPS, because I knew the location, I basically was her personal GPS. Haha!

To me, Kristi is not just my partner in this project, she is definitely my friend! I greatly appreciate this opportunity to make a foreign friend and to help this foreign friend improve her Chinese. This is indeed an opportunity that I cherish greatly.

Ying-Yu Lin

During this summer vacation, I joined a project that were chatting with students from the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa in Mandarin Chinese. My partner is Kristi. She is nice, cute and interesting. She shared lots of stories with me, for example, what kinds of activities do Americans enjoy, how her family communicates in a combination of English, Cantonese and Mandarin. And what kinds of movies does she like, how many anime does she watch. These are all interesting, I think it was fun to chat with her.

Kristi always told me she was tired, wanting to sleep. However, she was full of energy when doing one-on-one with me. There was one time, she suddenly asked me if I wanted to chat with her sister! I laughed so loud; it was so funny. Surprisingly, I really chatted with her sister through

FaceTime! And her sister shared a funny thing with us, it was my pleasure to chat with them. We also have had a plan to eat 麻辣燙, because she had told me she loves it very much, so I arranged one day to enjoy it. Unfortunately, when we arrived there, it did close! Oh my gosh!!! It was my fault, I was so sorry for that.....I arranged a wrong day.....However, we changed our plan! Haha, I had plan B, which was eating 粥大福! I recommended her 川味麻辣鍋燒意麵, she said it was spicy but delicious, so did I. Both of us were sweating a lot, because it was quite spicy. It was a great day. I was grateful that she had a nice meal with me! Actually, it was my first time to have a meal with a foreigner! Moreover, we walked to her hotel together. During the route, she didn't need GPS, because I knew the location, I basically was her personal GPS. Haha!

To me, Kristi is not just my partner in this project, she is definitely my friend! I greatly appreciate this opportunity to make a foreign friend and to help this foreign friend improve her Chinese. This is indeed an opportunity that I cherish greatly.

I-Shan Lin

Time flies—Owen has already been in Taiwan for a month. I still remember our first meeting. It was a bit rushed, but we exchanged small gifts: I gave him some famous pineapple cakes from Taipei, and he gave me a California mug. Both of us were a little awkward at the beginning. He seemed relaxed, but neither of us really knew what to say. We started with some basic questions—where we live, who our family members are—and suddenly, he asked me if I had a girlfriend! I was a bit surprised, because I thought people in the U.S. usually avoid personal questions like that. Later, he told me that he had just learned the word “girlfriend” that day, so he wanted to try using it. That made me laugh.

Over the past month, we've done so many things together—eating ice cream and douhua at Jucheng, hiking around the campus, and chatting about all kinds of topics. I've seen Zhao Heng(Owen) make great progress. At first, he could barely understand me unless I spoke very slowly, but now he can follow my normal speaking speed quite well. He always asks about words he doesn't understand and quickly puts them to use. His attitude toward learning is really impressive, and it clearly shows in his improved Chinese. I believe Owen will take home not only better Chinese skills but also great memories. I hope he will remember all the fun things we did together and visit again in the future.



Owen(left) posing with Lin, I-Shan(right), an NTHU language partner

REMARKS AT THE CLOSING CEREMONY

Words from Dr. Song Jiang (Program Director)

As of today, July 18th, the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa (UHM) finished its Mandarin Chinese Summer Immersive Program at National Tsing Hua University (NTHU), marking the end of six weeks of intensive study. The students' graduation presentations showcased their learning accomplishments, highlighting their progress and growth. I believe this six-week study abroad will be a deeply rewarding and memorable experience for everyone involved.

This year, our program welcomed 12 students, all of whom established clear learning goals from the beginning. The rigor of this program is unmatched for many, and their classroom performances, exam results, oral presentations, community services, and research projects clearly show significant improvement in language skills, cultural understanding, critical thinking, and research abilities using Chinese as a medium.

Over the past six weeks, students have also made significant strides in their personal and intellectual development. They faced challenges and difficulties, yet also celebrated successes in overcoming these hurdles. I am genuinely impressed by the bravery students have shown on this journey of personal growth. It is heartening to see students living harmoniously, making new friends, and forging deep friendships.

Compared to previous years, we launched three new initiatives this year. (1) Thanks to the best Chinese scholarship we received from the Global Affairs Office at NTHU, this scholarship enabled us to visit classrooms at Hulin Primary School, teach three English classes, interact with local teachers and students, and, most importantly, contribute to the communities in Taiwan. (2) This year's project-based language learning (PBLL) focused on the theme of "store signage," a vital part of the linguistic landscape, language, and culture learning. This initiative aimed to guide students in exploring the historical context and cultural meanings embedded in everyday visible cultural landscapes, turning shop signs, billboards, and advertisements into language and learning objects. Through fieldwork and interviews, students enhanced their intercultural communication skills and deepened their understanding of local culture. Data analysis and repeated presentation practices further developed their organization, expression, and confidence. (3) We added one-on-one language partner sessions

this year. Each of our students was paired with a language partner recruited from different majors at the university. This arrangement not only expanded the language exposure for our students but also enriched their social interactions and strengthened friendships with their university peers.

The success of completing this six-week program could not have been achieved without the dedicated efforts of our distinguished teachers. Our teaching team, primarily comprised of certified Chinese language teachers and master's students in Chinese language teaching, began with an online training and program preparation session led by a University of Hawai'i at Mānoa professor weeks before the program's start. Throughout the program, continuous class observations, feedback sessions, and coordinated lesson planning among the teaching team proved effective in achieving our educational objectives and ensuring the quality of each lesson. I believe these six weeks have also been a period of growth for our teachers, who not only had the opportunity to implement their teaching philosophies but also gained firsthand experience in Chinese language instruction and a deep understanding of the professional standards expected of Chinese language teachers.

The smooth implementation of the program could not have been possible without the significant support from the NTHU's Global Office and the International Intercollegiate Ph.D. Program, ranging from teacher recruitment and program planning to instructional implementation and logistical support. I express our gratitude to the president and teachers from Hulin Primary School for their efforts in fostering the exchanges. We are proud to be a collaborator of Hulin Primary School and are committed to continuing our efforts and deepening our cooperation.

Similar to the past three years, I sincerely thank the two key figures who made the smooth planning and successful completion of this program possible: Professor Hsin Shih-chang and Program Coordinator Ms. Chen Min-Qi. As the local organizer, Professor Hsin actively collaborates with various school departments to ensure the program's success and communicates with teachers to maintain the program's quality. The Coordinator Chen Min-Qi, who has been the indispensable project manager for the past three years, continued her outstanding work in project planning, teacher management, cultural visits, course advancement, student life management, and organizing the opening and closing ceremonies. Furthermore, the program is grateful for BEST Scholarships from the Global Affairs Office at NTHU and the Alice & JP. Wang Scholarship from UH for providing funding for all students who participated in this summer's program. This year marks the fourth consecutive and fruitful attempt of the UHM-NTHU Summer Program, since its inception in 2022, with further enhancements and improvements in all aspects of the program. After the program concludes, we will collaborate with NTHU and the Center for Chinese Language at UHM to review our experiences and evaluate the outcomes. We look forward to continuing this program next year, celebrating its fifth anniversary. We hope to refine the program further and deepen the collaboration between UHM and NTHU.



Group photo taking in front of the historical gate at Cijin



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