

## **AURA Post-Project Report**

### **Jackson Neagli, Summer 2017**

I utilized my AURA grant to subsidize the cost of tuition at Middlebury College's Summer Chinese Language School. During my two-month term at the Chinese School (June 26th through August 18<sup>th</sup>) I spoke only Mandarin Chinese, in accordance with Middlebury's famous "language pledge."

Middlebury Chinese students are divided into five levels (1, 2, 2.5, 3, and 4) based on their Mandarin proficiency at the start of the program. I placed into level three, the largest of the five levels, with around 40 other students. The coursework at Middlebury was extremely rigorous. Class began each morning at 8am with a two-hour large group (20 student) lecture. After a 10 minute break, classes continued until noon with small group (5-6 students) drill and discussion sessions. After lunch, each student engaged in 20 minutes of one-on-one drill with one of the nine level three instructors. After over four hours of in-class instruction and one-on-one drill, students began their homework, which generally required hand-writing a series of sentences making use of the grammar structures we had covered during that day's lesson. After homework had been completed (usually about an hour), students would begin to preview (预习) the next day's lesson. Lesson preview entailed studying and memorizing the new vocabulary and grammar structures (sometimes upwards of 80 per day) to be utilized in the following day's lesson, and answering a series of open-ended discussion questions pertaining to the subject matter covered by the lesson. Previewing for a lesson proved to be substantially more difficult than completing the homework that would be assigned for it the following day, and often took upwards of three hours. Between class, homework, preview, and preparing for weekly assessments, I often found myself working 10 hours per day.

In addition to daily homework and preview assignments, Middlebury Chinese School students also completed weekly assessments. Each weekend, we were required to hand-write essays of up to 1,000 characters on topics that corresponded with the previous week's lessons. Every Monday we would complete a written test, also based on the four lessons covered during the previous week, and every Tuesday we would complete an oral test (an interview or presentation), during which we were required to use a certain number of new vocabulary words and grammar structures. For the second half of the program, every Thursday's one-on-one session was devoted to the discussion of current events. To prepare for our Thursday one-on-one session, we were instructed to select an article from a Chinese newspaper, and come prepared to summarize and discuss the article. Finally, level three students also completed two exams, both of which were oral presentations on topics of the student's choice. For my midterm exam, I presented on the Hong Kong Legislative Council's passage of an education appropriations bill, and for my final exam, I presented on the value of using themes in Chinese State media coverage to study Chinese governance, which has been a focus area of my research at Rice.

While the Middlebury Chinese School's coursework was certainly rigorous, the most challenging aspect of my two months at Middlebury was, without question, the program's immersion component. All Chinese students lived in the same dormitory, and ate meals in the same dining hall at the same time. With the exception of emergencies and the occasional phone call home, interpersonal interactions were conducted exclusively in Chinese. While frustrating at times, Chinese immersion forced me to absorb a large number of words and grammar structures to which I would not have otherwise been exposed in a classroom environment.

The most important takeaway from my Middlebury Chinese School immersion experience has been the vast improvement in my spoken Chinese ability. Before completing the Middlebury program, though my spoken Mandarin was fluent (in the sense that I could speak quickly and naturally), my tones were often incorrect. At Middlebury, my tones were constantly corrected by our exceptional instructors, both in and out of the classroom. After one month at Middlebury, my intonation had grown by leaps and bounds, and my final presentation was almost completely free of pronunciation errors.

I am very grateful to the Chao Center for awarding me the AURA grant, and enabling me to continue pursuing my dream of Chinese language fluency at Middlebury. I am also extremely appreciative of the generous support of the Gee Family Association, without which my Middlebury experience would not have been possible. I hope to continue my study of Mandarin this fall with a private tutor in the Houston area, and make a push for fluency before matriculating to law school next year.



Middlebury Chinese Language School's summer 2017 Cohort

## 2017 三年级课程表

## 第七周

8月7日—8月11日

时间	星期一:周考 BB-L6-L9	星期二:BB-L10		星期三:BB-L11		星期四:BB-L12		星期五:看电影 请准时到 AXN219 8:00-11:50 看电影+讨论
	交作文 周考: 笔试 AXN 219	第一班	第二班	第一班	第二班	第一班	第二班	
8:00-8:50		大班		大班		大班		
9:00-9:50		大班		大班		大班		
10:10-11:00	准备口试	小班操练		小班操练		小班操练		
11:05-11:55		小班讨论		小班讨论		小班讨论		
12:00-1:00	午餐							
1:20-3:00	一对一口试	一对一		一对一		一对一 新闻报告(4)		
课前课后的 准备与 复习	*预习→ BB-L10	*预习→ BB-L11  **BB-L10 作业→ 明天第三节课文		*预习→ BB-L12  **BB-L11 作业→ 明天第三节课文		*BB-L12 作业→ 明天看电影前文  **明天的电影是为我们 下周一的影评课做准 备, 所以一定要到。		*预习→ 影评课 **下周一没有周考及 口试, 但是有 OPI  @作文→ 下星期一交给大班老 师

@作文 (800 字左右):

1) 请从下面三个话题中选一个当做你的作文话题: a. 社会问题 b. 文化冲突 c. 你的人生目标/意义

2) 请选择 L10-L12 中的生词及语言点一共 15 个, 用在你的作文里, 用了的生词和语言点要划线 underline; 3) 注意作文格式

\*大班教室—AXN 爱心楼

第一班: 爱心楼 219 第二班: 爱心楼 220

\*小班教室—Forest East 森林楼东

1 班: 森林楼 105 2 班: 森林楼 106 3 班: 森林楼 107 4 班: 森林楼 108 5 班: 森林楼 109 6 班: 森林楼 110 7 班: 森林楼 111

老师值班答案-- 时间—晚上 8:00-9:30 教室—森林楼 108, 109, 110, 111

三年级网站: <http://blogs.middlebury.edu/chineseschool2011-3/> (2011 年建立的网站)

## A Weekly Schedule for Level 3 Students at the Chinese Language School

大班课	Lecture
小班操练	Small Group Drill
小班讨论	Small Group Discussion
一对一	One-on- One



Back porch of Forrest Hall,  
the Chinese School Dormitory