

Sloane Wang is a Fulbright Language Teaching Assistant from Taiwan. She is teaching in the Chinese Flagship Program. Below she discusses her personal and academic background. She also shows that bilingualism is necessary in today's professions.

Q: Where are you from? Also, tell us about your academic and professional background.

A: I am from Taipei, Taiwan.

I majored in journalism at Fu Jen Catholic University. During my second year in college, I stepped into the industry and started my career as a contributing editor for international news. I reported in Mandarin Chinese for Taiwanese readers on news events such as the 2020 US presidential election, the Covid pandemic, the 2019–20 Hong Kong protests, and Brexit.

Besides working in the press, I interned in PR/communications positions: one in the Taipei Performing Arts Center, in which I wrote press releases and social media content for the artists, and the other in the pharmaceutical industry. I researched HIV/AIDS policy in Taiwan to draft an advocacy position paper. I also did project management and ghostwriting to support internal/external communication inside the bilingual office in Taipei.

Q: When did you start studying English?

A: I started when I began first grade in elementary school. I was 5.

Q: Why did you want to learn English?

A: When you are a Mandarin speaker from Taiwan, learning English is not an option. You have to learn English as your second/third language.

But when I got older, especially in high school, I was so motivated and ambitious to be a better English speaker. I love American ballet, musical theatre, and movies. You can only have access to the latest information by reading the news and following the celebrities/performers on social media - and that's all English.

Now, I continue learning English, because it gives me a front-row opportunity to meet and communicate with people from all sorts of backgrounds and cultures.

Q: What was something difficult about learning English?

A: It's not particularly about learning English, but any language - no matter how high your proficiency is and how much hard work you put in, you still make mistakes every single day. It makes learning English really difficult for me. It can be exhausting and it kill your confidence. After learning English for almost two decades, I still stumble to find the right word and correct myself when I speak. I am not able to write with freedom and fluidity in the way I write in Chinese. All of this gives me insane insecurity that I am always not good enough.

However, someone once told me, “You won’t be perfect when learning art. And language is definitely an art. As a native speaker, I am still learning English every day.” So, in this never-ending learning journey, you will embrace the fact that you are going to make mistakes, and you deserve to feel frustrated, but you will keep your head up the next day - this is the pep talk I give myself when I go home every day. I highly recommended it!

Q: What other languages do you speak?

A: My first language is Mandarin Chinese, and I can understand Taiwanese but I am not fluent. Taiwanese is a local language in Taiwan that elderly people still use.

Q: Why is it important for Americans to study another language?

A: Learning a language empowers you to build a new perspective on the world. When you learn a language, you are also getting to know the culture and people who are shaping the language. You will have millions of questions in your head - why do they celebrate this festival? Why is there is a direct translation of this new word you are learning in English? Next, you will start thinking about your background and tradition deeper. When you know other people more, actually, you understand yourself even better.

The whole experience will make you a global citizen with compassion and cultural awareness, and that opens many doors for you in surprising ways.

Q: Why did you decide to come to the US?

A: I grew up with the influence of Hollywood movies/TVs - my earliest memory about the US is watching *Grey’s Anatomy* with my parents as a little kid. Since I was a journalist, I had countless bylines in the so-called “US news”. I considered myself really knowledgeable about the culture and politics here; however, I’d never been to the country. I believe there are hidden details that you can’t understand unless you experience them in the actual culture.

That’s why I pursued a Fulbright grant to come to the US. In addition, it gives me an opportunity to bring the unique stories, cultures, and language from Taiwan that go beyond the textbook to the students here.

Q: What advice do you have for Americans who want to learn another language?

A: Don’t hesitate! It’s never too late. Learning a language is indeed scary but incredibly rewarding. Be curious about the culture of the language you are learning - watch the movies, listen to the songs, make the traditional food. Finding your connections to the culture will keep you excited and support you through the moments you almost want to give up.