

Weiting Tseng is a Taiwan Teaching Intern from Taiwan. She is teaching in the Chinese Flagship Program. Below she highlights her reasons for learning English and discusses why Americans should also learn another language.

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

A: I come from Taichung, Taiwan. I studied in the Department of Foreign Languages and Literature when I was in university. Now I am a graduate student at the National Chengchi University, majoring in Teaching Chinese as a second language. My research and teaching interests include Chinese language teaching, corpus linguistics and pragmatics.

Q: When did you start studying English?

A: I have been learning English since the first grade.

Q: Why did you want to learn English?

A: After coming to the United States, many Americans would curiously ask me: "Why did you want to learn English?" In fact, this was not my choice. In Taiwan, everyone starts learning English in elementary school. English is a compulsory subject for high school and university entrance examinations. Therefore, in addition to school English classes, most Taiwanese students also go to language school after class to strengthen their English abilities because English abilities play a very important role in our future careers.

Q: What was something difficult about learning English?

A: In Taiwan, many people learn English for exams. The school curriculum also pays special attention to the ability to read and write. The practice of conversation is particularly lacking. Therefore, many Taiwanese can get high scores in written tests, but they can't say a word when they meet foreigners. They are afraid that they are not speaking perfect English. However, the most important thing to learn a language is not to know many words and grammar, but to communicate with people from different cultures through the language. I think no matter what language you learn--not just English-- the most difficult part is not being afraid to make mistakes.

Q: What other languages do you speak?

A: In Taiwan, besides Mandarin, we also have our own dialects. The dialect my grandparents speak is Taiwanese, so I can communicate in Taiwanese. Moreover, I also took French and Korean courses in high school and university.

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

A: In many countries, in addition to the mother tongue, learning a second or third language is very important and even necessary. Especially English, learning English in many countries is not an option. In this globalized society, we will have great opportunities to cooperate or compete with people from different countries, languages or cultures in the future. Furthermore, language

can not only broaden one's worldview, but also help us learn about different cultures and understand what is happening in the world outside the country.

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

A: I am a Chinese teacher. I am very passionate about teaching, and I would like to learn more about different cultures and exchange different views through language. I want to go to many different countries; the United States is one of them. I hope that I can experience a different life here and increase my teaching abilities at the same time. I really enjoy my life here, and also enjoy teaching and interacting with students.

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

A: Learning a language takes place not only in the classroom. Try to combine the language with your major and integrate the language into your life. Use the language to think, communicate and express your opinions. Find a learning method that you like and become a lifelong learner.