

STATEMENT OF GRANT PURPOSE

██████████, Taiwan, English Teaching Assistantship

As an ETA, I will use the hands-on experiences I've had teaching in my hometown of Los Angeles and apply those skills when I assist teaching English to students in Taiwan. I am active in USC's language exchange program which pairs native English speakers with native Mandarin speakers. Starting in 2020 and continuing today, my partner, Queenie ██████████, and I meet for one hour each week to teach each other about our native cultural experiences. Through the nuances of language and social interaction, what started as a course requirement has blossomed into genuine friendship. Along with cultural discovery, my relationship with Queenie has exposed me to common translation errors, pronunciations faults, and phrasing missteps that may occur in any English classroom in Taiwan. This interaction has prepared me to address native Chinese speakers' shortfalls when learning English and equipped me with solutions to share with Taiwanese students. While my tutoring exchange with Queenie makes me confident that I can teach English wherever I am placed in Taiwan, my experience teaching elementary and middle school students in urban Los Angeles compels me to teach a similar demographic.

I learned the important pedagogical principles of empathy and flexibility while teaching third grade students at the Alexander Science Center in Los Angeles, California. Through USC's Joint Educational Project (JEP), every Wednesday afternoon I taught 25 students an hour-long lesson on the topic of Violence Prevention and Social and Emotional Learning. By modeling vulnerability in open discussions, I fostered a classroom where students felt comfortable sharing their thoughts and feelings. As a Chinese language learner myself, I understand the difficulty of learning a second language and how the classroom can make students feel uncomfortable. Applying the skills I learned at the Alexander Science Center, I will build a safe classroom environment, by supporting students via one-on-one sessions and encouraging students to practice English together. Communication between teacher and student and between classmates will generate a positive rapport in the classroom and an engaging environment.

For three years, I have also been a tour guide for Tommy's Tours, a USC Admissions Center organization, which provides 50-minute campus tours to elementary and middle school students. This experience has allowed me to interact with hundreds of school-aged children. The most demanding aspect of the tour is adapting to each new group of students. Every tour, I gauge the student's past college exposure and adjust my script to fit the group's overall knowledge. This disparity poses a challenge because some students already know college concepts while others do not. To accommodate the entire group, I engage students by transitioning to a "Q&A" session. This approach allows students who know about college to share with the class, while ensuring all students get exposure to the concepts.

I will apply this same tactic as an ETA in Taiwan to address the common disparity in English proficiency in classes. Cram schools, locally known as buxiban (補習班), are private after school tutoring centers that specialize in English and other subjects. Cram schools create an education discrepancy in many classrooms in Taiwan because only some students have access to this resource. To manage this unevenness, I would allow more accelerated students to answer questions aloud, thereby exposing all the students to the concepts. To boost the confidence of students who might feel embarrassed, particularly as tutored students continue to dominate the discussion, other forms of media will be introduced. Providing open-ended activities, such as an art project on American culture requires a range of skills: creativity, handwriting, grammar ability, and oral proficiency that will challenge students equally. Using this method, tutored and non-tutored students can work together fostering an inclusive classroom environment.

PERSONAL STATEMENT

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Before my grandfather immigrated to California, he would transport freight from his small town of Sahuaripa to Hermosillo, Mexico. In 1949 it was common to travel from one town to another with the truck drivers. My grandfather would always allow young kids from the surrounding small towns to climb onto his truck to “go for a ride.” They nicknamed his truck ‘La Alegría de los Pobres’ meaning ‘The Happiness of the Poor’. In his autobiography, *Salió Bien* (translation: ‘It Turned Out Well’), he recounts several stories where he drove kids and neighbors from Sahuaripa to all the surrounding towns during their fiestas to celebrate each town’s patron saint. Through his personal story of perseverance, I have come to understand local and global connections.

When my grandfather decided to uproot his life in Mexico and move to America, he experienced great difficulty in trying to understand the English language. Though challenging, my grandfather eventually became bilingual in both English and Spanish, and he has long preached that language is the key to global connectivity. It was my grandfather’s philosophy that inspired my own appreciation of language and prompted me to study the world’s second most dominant language, Mandarin Chinese. While I have no Chinese heritage, as a freshman in high school, I enrolled in my first Chinese course, and I have studied the language ever since. I demonstrated my dedication to Chinese during my first year of college when I enrolled in Chinese class at College of the Canyons at night, due to the fact that the university I was enrolled in full time, CalArts, did not offer Mandarin courses. Eight years later, my initial interest in the Chinese language has transformed into a broader fascination with Chinese culture and aspirations for a future career in international policy.

I was first exposed to the political tensions between Taiwan and China during my travel to Beijing in high school. A companion on this language immersion trip was a Taiwanese citizen. Yet, in Beijing, she presented a Chinese government-issued identification card. Here, I learned that China would not recognize her Taiwanese passport. This experience marks the start of an overarching interest in the academic study of Taiwan and China.

Once I transferred to USC, I enrolled in the course, Politics of the People’s Republic of China, where I studied the dynamic relationship between China and Taiwan, and how the United States policy of “strategic ambiguity” impacts the competing countries. It was in that course that I was first introduced to *Taiwan’s Bilingual 2030 Plan*. In 2018, Taiwan adopted a policy to become a bilingual English-Mandarin Chinese nation by 2030. Taiwan’s goal towards bilingualism equates English proficiency with the nation’s overall competitiveness. I understood this aspiration as the same principle of global citizenship that my grandfather has long encouraged me to value.

As a future legal and governmental affairs professional, I strive to represent the United States of America as a leader in cross cultural communication. With my knowledge of Chinese history coupled with my travel experience to China, I am compelled to select Taiwan as a Fulbright ETA to learn about Taiwanese culture independent of China and bring back to the United States a holistic view of one of the fastest developing regions in the world. My cultural curiosity, ambition to learn Mandarin, and expertise as an educator aligns with Taiwan’s broader goals. Just as I strive to be bilingual, I hope to help Taiwanese students achieve their bilingualism goal. As a Fulbright ETA, I will contribute to Taiwan’s bilingual education system not only by teaching English but by sharing American culture and ideas, thereby improving Taiwan’s relationship with the United States and Taiwan’s position in the world.