

Preparing American College Students to Become Future Teachers of Chinese

Kylie Hsu 許凱莉, California State University, Los Angeles

The rapidly increasing demand for teachers of Chinese in both mainstream schools and Chinese schools in America has led to a severe shortage of teachers at all levels of Chinese instruction. This paper introduces a Chinese subject matter program to prepare American college students for a Bachelor of Arts/B.A. degree in Chinese and at the same time qualify them for a post-baccalaureate teaching credential program. Upon earning a teaching credential, they will be eligible to teach Chinese in kindergarten through twelfth grade and adult schools.

This Chinese subject matter program is a prototype in the State of California. It is a rigorous program that consists of the following four areas: a core curriculum of Chinese subject matters, foreign language research training, theories of language teaching and assessment, and early field experience.

The first area is the core curriculum that consists of courses in Chinese language, culture, literature, and linguistics. Students first take three years of college-level Chinese language courses. Once they reach the third-year level, they are also required to take courses related to Chinese civilization and culture, classical and modern Chinese literature, and various aspects of Chinese linguistics, including contrastive analysis of Chinese and English structures.

The next area involves foreign language research. Students learn to use a variety of research methods to conduct original research. They also learn to develop skills in documenting and presenting research results.

The third area deals with current approaches to language teaching and assessment. It emphasizes the communicative approach with technology enhancement. Students acquire an understanding of how linguistic competence and proficiency are evaluated and how technology can be employed in language testing.

The last area of the program provides opportunities for students to gain experience in the teaching field. They observe Chinese language classes in local schools and write reflective journals. Through this field experience, students learn the fundamentals of teaching such as classroom activities and effective instruction and tutoring. Additionally, they gain a basic understanding of foreign language teaching philosophy and design, including the five content standards for foreign language education, i.e., communication, cultures, connections, comparisons, and communities, as published by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL). They are also expected to explain how these standards are implemented in the classroom.

In addition to the above four areas of the Chinese subject matter program, students are required to organize a portfolio that tracks their progress and achievements, shows evidence of their language proficiency, and provides an inventory of resources for teaching career opportunities. The portfolio is an important graduation check before they are granted a B.A. degree in Chinese. Having achieved competency in the above Chinese subject matters, students can then enter a post-baccalaureate teaching credential program where they learn to teach in actual classrooms under supervision before becoming State certified teachers of Chinese.