

Upon completing my final exam for Princeton in Beijing - Online (PiB), I felt a great sense of relief and sadness wash over me. These past eight weeks (an equivalent of two semesters worth of learning the Chinese language) have been a really rewarding and challenging online classroom experience. Everyday I had to attend two hours of small class lectures (with one to three other students) following up with an hour of individual classes. I had to face learning a new lesson everyday along with daily quizzes and homework assignments (e.g. essays, recordings, or individual research). Every week I also had to prepare for weekly presentations, debates, and tests. In addition, I spent about 25+ hours outside of the classroom studying or preparing for the next lesson and tests. In a span of four weeks, I had already studied one of two textbooks required for the course, and I already arrived at the final exam season.

As fast paced and intense as PiB seems, it taught me that I can also keep up with other students who have been learning Chinese years before I started my journey here at Bowdoin College. PiB has been a wonderful learning experience as I was able to study alongside many great students and learn from some of the best Chinese professors from across five different time zones. It is very unfortunate that we were not all able to meet each other in Beijing, China to experience a more culturally immersive language learning environment, but I am really grateful for this opportunity. I learned to be more confident at writing long 800 character passages (400 characters more than what I was used to), more comfortable with speaking, and more relaxed in expressing my opinion on global and societal issues. The biggest challenge was disciplining myself to strictly speak in Chinese at all times during the program since there was a strict language pledge. However, this pledge greatly helped me to rely on what I have learned and my own speaking abilities.

I know going into the next academic year I will feel more prepared to participate in classroom discussions and write more meaningful Chinese essays. I plan to not only utilize some of my new study habits from this summer, but I also hope I will be a helpful asset to Bowdoin's Chinese language learning students. Learning Chinese is not an easy language that you can listen to and repeat perfectly. I have spent many hours committed to learning how to write characters, practicing tones, and learning the grammar structures. But, besides the practical basics of learning the language, I have also learned more in depth about China's history, Chinese people's way of life, current political and global issues, and much more. The more I study Chinese, the more I learn how vast the culture and history is.

I am very grateful to those who were able to help me participate in PiB's intensive Chinese language learning program. I initially just wanted to find a way to continue my studies throughout the summer since I lost my opportunity to study abroad in China during the academic year. However, the people I have met and the new Chinese speaking friends I have made have really made this experience invaluable to my Chinese language learning experience. Now that I have completed the program, I not only feel better about my Chinese language abilities, but I have also gained a deeper understanding of China's culture and history. By participating in PiB, I have really gained a memorable and helpful language learning experience.