

CHINESE LANGUAGE LEARNING IN AUSTRALIAN SCHOOLS: STUDENT EXPERIENCES

On March 11 2019, the Australia-China Relations Institute (ACRI) at the University of Technology Sydney (UTS) hosted an event examining the current state of Chinese language learning in Australian schools, with a particular focus on New South Wales, and what avenues for improvement there may be, with panellists drawing on their own experience as Chinese-language educators.

Discussion at the event, '[Aiming high: Chinese language capacity in Australian schools](#)', built on a seminal 2016 report for ACRI by Jane Orton, an expert in teaching and learning Chinese, '[Building Chinese language capacity in Australia](#)', which revealed the lack of Australian students enrolling in Chinese language study. The report found that since 2008 the number of students learning Chinese in Australian schools has doubled to 172,832 – this is 4.7 percent of total school student numbers. But there had been an overall drop between 2007 and 2014 of some 20 percent in the number of non-background classroom learners taking Chinese to around just 400. The report showed that by Year 12 only 4,149 (2.4 percent of the Chinese learners, 0.1 percent of the total student cohort) are still studying Chinese, and that more than half of those who begin Chinese in primary do not continue it in secondary if they have a choice to opt out.

While numbers of non-background speakers taking Chinese as a second language in Australia are still relatively low, educators are working hard to encourage students to take up the language, and continue to pursue it till the end of high school, and after. One of the speakers at ACRI's March event, Kate Wang, Chinese language coordinator at Rouse Hill High School, provided an instructive example in how to make Chinese language learning accessible and engaging for non-background speakers, with her class of language students enthusiastic and passionate about pursuing the language.

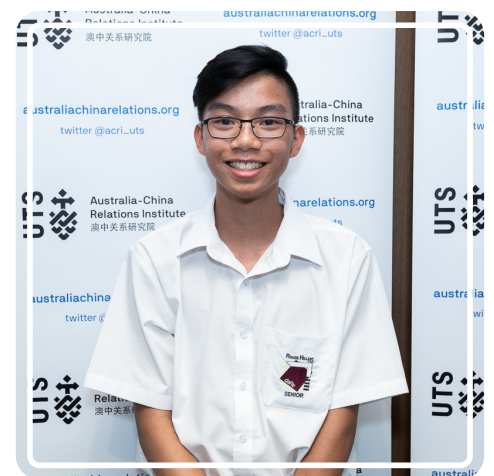
The students of Rouse Hill High School from Years 10 and 12 described their journey of learning Chinese as a second language and what they plan to achieve in the future through their new skills.



ALEXANDRA BEDDIE

Year 10

I have been learning Chinese for about eight years. There are many different reasons why I have continued on with my Chinese studies. The main reason is because I love the culture, but also because I had inspiring teachers along the way. I would love to be able to teach students in Australia about the Chinese culture and contribute to a better understanding of China within the Australian community. I would also love to travel to China and teach English. I would like to teach students about the Australian culture, while I continue to further my Chinese skills.



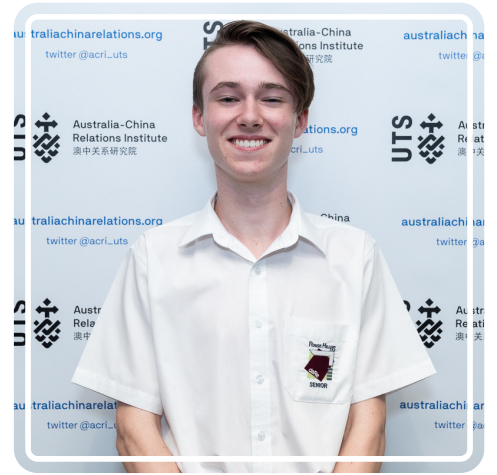
LOGAN BONDOC

Year 10

I have been studying Chinese for nine years and have thoroughly enjoyed learning about the culture and language. Learning Chinese in both primary school and high school has provided me with many different opportunities that have improved my language skills and helped me improve as a person. In primary school, I had the opportunity to visit Beijing, Shanghai and Ningbo, which allowed me to improve my Mandarin and increase my understanding of Chinese culture. In the future, I would like to apply my understanding of Chinese culture and language in my career in animation and digital media. I want to be able to communicate and collaborate with people overseas and China has a growing animation and digital media industry.

RILEY FLAHEY

Year 10



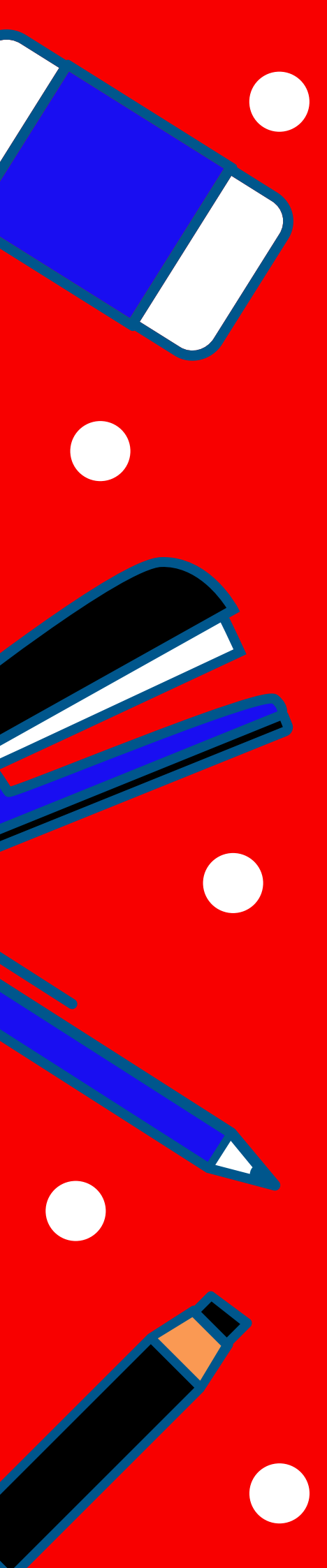
I have been studying the Mandarin language for the last seven years and don't plan to stop anytime soon. The motivation for me to continue studying Mandarin is that I love to learn about different cultures and perspectives, hence why I chose Chinese. Learning Mandarin gives me more opportunities for different career paths in the future. The career I would like to pursue is cyber crime and cyber security because then I can assist in solving and managing security issues within Australia as well as the broader Asia Pacific rim. With Chinese language skills, I can be even more useful in this role.



GLENN MALYN

Year 10

I have been learning Mandarin since year one of primary school and have thoroughly enjoyed it. I have found it very exciting and interesting to learn this second language and I have been motivated due to the impact learning Chinese will have on my future. I believe learning Mandarin could open up new job opportunities for me. Having the ability to translate a language that is frequently used by billions of people around the world could allow me to provide a service to them in a way others cannot. My passion for travel also inspires me to potentially be a foreign diplomat/ambassador, where I intend on helping as many people as possible.



ZACHARY MCLEOD

Year 10

I have studied Chinese since 2011. Having such an extensive knowledge of Chinese culture and language has allowed me to build real-life skills that will greatly assist me in the future. I am aiming to become a paramedic as a future career. Due to the increasing number of Chinese immigrating to Australia, studying Chinese will most definitely allow me to communicate more easily with patients and eliminate language barriers. If a Chinese patient cannot speak English very well, having a paramedic that can speak their native language may greatly help the patient and potentially save their life. Studying Chinese for the extensive amount of time that I have will greatly benefit me in the future.



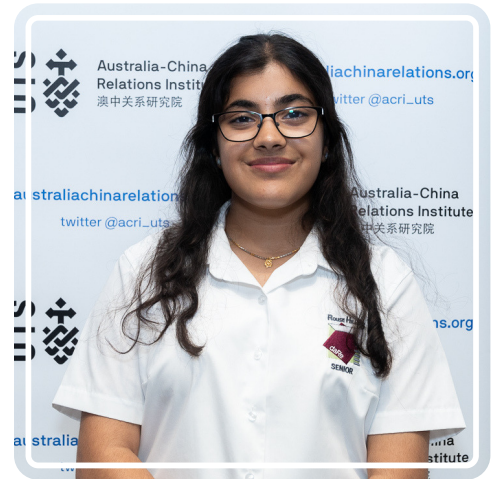
SOPHIE PERRY

Year 12

I am an Australian student who has studied Chinese Mandarin for six years. Throughout the years, I have been motivated to continue my Mandarin studies as a result of my persistent love for the language and culture, the encouragement from my parents and my plans for the future. One main goal of mine is to become a doctor. Due to the ever-increasing amount of Mandarin-speaking individuals in Australia, I believe Chinese would be a great asset to have while working, as it would eliminate any language barrier which could be present. If it is possible, I would even love to move to China for a few years to help the citizens of China with my medicinal skills as well as engaging more diligently in their culture.

MAANYA PURI

Year 10



I have been learning Chinese for two and a half years. My interest in Chinese language and culture has grown, not only through interesting Chinese lessons, but also through extra-curricular activities. I attended the Rouse Hill High School 'China Trip' in 2018 and enjoyed exploring Hangzhou, Ningbo, Shanghai, Xi'an and Beijing. My knowledge of Chinese helped me to remove the language barrier with Chinese peers in our sister school in Ningbo. The China Trip gave me an opportunity to relate to, understand and communicate with Chinese people. In the future, I would like to study biology or engineering as these are the key areas for the future healthy growth of society. I would like to use my Hindi, Chinese and English language skills to bridge the communication gap between my scientific colleagues in the future and assist in problem solving all across the globe.



ANTHONY RADIC

Year 10

I've only been studying Chinese for two-and-a-half years. My interest in Chinese language and culture has grown the more I've participated in fun Chinese lessons and extracurricular 'China Club' activities. In particular, I have enjoyed acting as a tour guide for the Chinese tourists at a wildlife park and participating in Chinese public speaking competitions, such as the *China Bridge Competition*. In the future, I would like to study international politics and law. I am fluent in Serbian and English, and am now learning Chinese. I feel that languages will help me connect with a huge range of people and assist me in serving the community in a public role.