



 INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE

 NAME

CHENG YU

 LENGTH

SIX MONTHS

 PROGRAM

UNIVERSITY OF OREGON  
AMERICAN ENGLISH INSTITUTE



# Counting Opportunities: Lessons in an ESL Classroom

Studying English as a Second Language (ESL) creates opportunities. Cheng Yu, a Deaf alumnus from China of the University of Oregon (UO) American English Institute, can count quite a few that came to him as a result of his language learning.

Because he studied ESL, Cheng got a Psychology degree at the University of Oregon. He served as a research assistant, and now has the possibility of going on to graduate school.

He also gained a lot of personal benefits from ESL. He made lots of new friends both from the United States and around the world. He now can access knowledge, which otherwise would have been inaccessible, and he has a much broader outlook on the world.

Cheng didn't always think that study abroad was an option for him, coming from humble circumstances and not speaking English well. That changed when he learned that a friend with his disability managed to study Engineering Science at the University of Toronto in Canada.

"I was shocked, University of Toronto is one of the best universities in the world. So, I think, I can do this too if she can do this."

His family were also supportive of his goals to study in North America. He paid for a large amount of his U.S. education with the money that his parents had saved for 20 years so he could go to university.

Being deaf and using a cochlear implant, Cheng did not always find it easy to study another language. Hearing what teachers were saying, and listening to the soundtrack of a film could be difficult. When he originally came to the United States, he spoke very little English, and it took him some time to connect with his new American community.

The UO Accessible Education Center (AEC) worked with him on finding a notetaker, who would listen in on the classes over Skype, and send him a transcript of what was discussed at the end of each class. If he couldn't understand something still, he would approach professors during their office hours.





Whenever he watched movies, Cheng used English or Chinese subtitles in order to follow along with the dialogues. Whenever he saw a word that he had never heard of, he paused the video to look the word up in the dictionary.

Cheng finds that of all the people that supported him during his ESL studies, he has been his own best supporter. His English certainly has improved by keeping a positive attitude, but being patient with himself regarding his accent and about the mistakes he has made has enabled him to develop the confidence to speak without fear or shame.

“After I started using my English skills to speak with Americans, I noticed it was easier for me to study in my classes!”

Now that he has completed his studies at the AEI, Cheng went on to enroll as a full-time UO student where he is finishing up a degree in psychology. He hopes to one day engage the deaf community on designing better cochlear implants or to become a teacher of deaf students.



**Study English at the American English Institute!**

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