My exchange year at Fudan University in Shanghai, China

As a complement to my Bachelor’s program in Chinese at Uppsala University, I spent two semesters studying at the Chinese Language Program at Fudan University in Shanghai. The program consisted of language courses focusing on different aspects of language usage, such as ‘speaking and listening’ and ‘intensive reading’ and were conducted entirely in Chinese. This immersive teaching method enabled me to really improve my Chinese at a much higher pace compared to classes back in Uppsala. Along with living in China, these 10 months became both a linguistic and cultural immersion which taught me so much about China I could never gain insight into back home. Apart from my studies, I had many opportunities to travel around China, and experience variations in culture and life in different parts of China, much thanks to the stipend granted to me which gave me the freedom to not worry about expenses, and take full advantage of this amazing opportunity.

Academically, this opportunity has solidified a lot of the knowledge I learned from my previous semesters back in Uppsala and continues to enrich my Chinese studies as I am now reaching the end of my Bachelor’s. Learning Chinese in China and getting exposed to Chinese in natural and daily life contexts, has allowed me to learn how Chinese is really used in real life. As someone aspiring to potentially continue with a Mater’s in Chinese language and eventually work with literary translation, this is essential.

This exchange has been essential for me to really gain insight into Chinese life and culture, and continues to enrich my studies, as I can relate my experiences and insights from China into my current studies. For example, through having attended cultural workshops at Fudan University introducing me to Chinese crafts like fan painting and moon cake baking, and some which are unique to different regions, such as tie-dye from Yunnan. From having visited museums around China I got to see the Chinese perspective on its history in different regions. And having visited cities in China, such as Nanjing, Suzhou, Chongqing, Guilin, Haikou as well as beautiful small towns, meant I got to see very different sides of Chinese life.

Apart from the academic side of the exchange, living in China has been amazing. I’ve made some family-like friendships with people from all over the world and made unforgettable memories in Shanghai and in my travels alone and with friends. The stipend alleviated a lot of worries around expenses and gave me more freedom through the exchange to focus on making the best of this exchange opportunity. I’m extremely grateful to have been granted this stipend to support me through this journey.

Nicole Ornedo