

Virtual International Academy Program Report

The University of Texas at Austin English Language Center
Winter 2022



Program Overview

The faculty and staff at The University of Texas at Austin English Language Center (UT Austin ELC) were honored to host a total of 67 university students from China for the virtual International Academy (IA) this winter. The two-week program included English language and academic coursework delivered synchronously online by expert faculty. Additional details about the program are further outlined in this report.

The Virtual Classroom

Zoom

Each day at specified class times, students joined the virtual classroom using the video conferencing platform, Zoom. Instructors enhanced class dynamics by using an interactive whiteboard, breakout rooms, and other features within Zoom. One IA student commented, "The function of dividing us into [breakout] groups is really helpful!" Instructors were also able to share their computer screens with students to show videos, external websites, and

documents. The image on page 1 shows students and their oral communication instructor, Ben Cunningham, in class using Zoom.

Canvas Learning Management System

Students accessed Zoom links for each class in Canvas, the learning management system for UT Austin ELC. Faculty uploaded and maintained all course materials and resources in Canvas where students could easily access assignments and view their grades throughout the course. “With the help of Canvas, I have improved the efficiency of my study,” said one IA participant. The International Academy Welcome Page was also hosted on Canvas, including the program orientation information, schedule, course descriptions, and technology resources in addition to the biographies of our UT Austin ELC faculty and staff.

Coursework Overview

Students had the option of attending English only classes, academic only classes, or English + academic classes. Depending on their program selection, students were enrolled in classes for 15 or 30 hours per week. A list of class topics and a brief description of each follows.

Academic Classes

Foundations of Accounting

In this class, students used an open-resource principles of financial accounting textbook to explore various topics in a beginning accounting course. Topics included the accounting cycles of service and merchandising companies as well as various areas of financial statements in greater detail, such as inventory cost tracking, internal controls, and bank reconciliations. Lectures were structured as oral discussions of the chapter broken up by prompting students for questions and then working through various examples utilizing Microsoft Excel for calculations and formatting. Time was also devoted to internal controls and the students were self-assigned to groups to do a fraud presentation, based on a real-world company, on the last day of class as a part of their grade.

Engineering Physics

In this class, the goal was to give students a feel for an American university survey/leveling course. To accomplish this goal, students covered a range of topics in quick succession, beginning with foundational concepts and moving towards more advanced topics within the same subject. The class incorporated traditional lectures with active learning elements. After being presented with the information for the day, students were asked to use this new knowledge to solve problems and present their solutions to the class. Students ended each course module by taking a quiz over the topics covered in that module to assess their understanding of the material. Additionally, students completed lab activities in which they were asked to demonstrate some of the topics covered in the course utilizing materials they had available to them in their workspace.

Western Language and Culture

The purpose of this course was to help students improve their knowledge and understanding of American culture while allowing them to practice and improve their speaking and listening skills in English. This course allowed students to discuss complex and abstract concepts such as culture and language while discussing how these ideas have led to cooperation, competition, and conflict in both interpersonal and intercultural relationships. Students read and discussed short texts, current events news articles, and American historical and political documents to answer questions related to cultural interpretation, meaning, and a variety of points of view. They also watched and discussed several online materials, including current events news articles, TED Talks, etc., related to social, professional, and cultural interpretation, meaning, and point of view.

English Classes

Oral Communication

In the oral communication class, students practiced speaking and comprehending oral English. Students worked together with classmates frequently and participated in a variety of discussions and activities that centered around a range of topics. Students acquired new vocabulary and idioms that are commonly used in spoken English. The students practiced pronunciation in terms of problematic sounds (e.g., /th/ and /l/) as well as linking, -ed endings, reduced vowels (schwa) to help them improve their rhythm and intonation in spoken English. Students listened to level-appropriate listening materials and practiced

identifying the main ideas and details prior to expressing and supporting their opinions in small group/ class discussions. They gave two presentations that were organized and comprehensible and participated in a class debate where they were able to practice useful expressions and transitions for expressing thoughts and opinions.

Written Communication

In the written communication class, students learned strategies for building their written fluency and accuracy. Students analyzed model texts and wrote sentences, paragraphs, and essays each day in class. They received feedback on their writing from their instructor and their peers, which they used to revise and edit their essays. In the first week, there was a special focus on the writing process (prewriting, outlining, drafting, revising, and editing) and sentence variety. In the second week, lessons focused on the effective use of paraphrasing, summarizing, and quoting.

Course Schedule

Classes were held five days a week in the mornings or evenings, depending on the selected track. The schedule below reflects class offerings in China standard time.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
9:00 – 10:20 am	Class 1				
10:40 – 12:00 pm	Class 2				
12:00 – 8:00 pm	Break				
8:00 – 9:20 pm	Class 3				
9:40 – 11:00 pm	Class 4				

Program Certificate & Grade Report

Students, who maintained an attendance percentage of at least 75% and finished the program with a passing grade received a certificate of completion. Students also received an official grade report reflecting their final grades for each class. Grades for each class were based on in-class assignments, quizzes, presentations, writing assignments, and/or final projects.

International Academy Survey Results & Student Feedback

At the conclusion of the program, students completed anonymous program and course surveys in Canvas. Evaluation response rates for each class were 80% or higher with positive student feedback overall. Some of the student feedback related to International Academy overall and to each track is highlighted below.

International Academy

- I think all 3 [classes] changed many of my stereotypes of the States and made me want to visit the city Austin. I am super glad that I had the chance to be a member of these courses. I not only received knowledge but also friendship and profound communication about cultural things. Thanks!
- I think the course arrangement is very good and I like it very much. After two weeks of study, I feel I have gained a lot, not only gained knowledge, but also broadened my horizon.
- As far as I am concerned, it has been the perfect [program] right now. I just want to say I really appreciate that I can take the courses.

Foundations of Accounting

- [This course] helps me to understand the accounting cycle, and lets me know the application and treatment of accounting elements.
 - Learned a lot of knowledge about foreign accounting. I also know the difference with Chinese accounting.
 - I know more about accounting, especially about financial statements.
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- Everything was great! I learned a subject here that I had never learned before. Through this course, I became more interested in accounting.
- The teacher led us to analyze and practice with some practical cases, which would be very useful for my future study and work.
- In this course, I have got to know lots of knowledge about international accounting. And I have had a good command of editing financial statements through excel after the course.

Engineering Physics

- We always had lots of time to solve problems and the professor made everything clear. He highlighted something after a chapter ended.
- The best thing about this course was the different kinds of ways to learn physics.

Language & Culture

- The teacher shared a lot of Western cultural knowledge I didn't know. I also found that I had learned more than I expected when I reviewed my notes for this class.
- The teacher is good at teaching us while telling a story. Actually, I think it's the best way to understand the lessons and remember them for a long time.
- Teachers often give us opportunities to talk about our understanding of American culture and different Chinese culture.
- I can learn a lot of things I haven't known before, such as knowledge of the local customs, daily expression, literary aesthetics and so on. Moreover, the relaxing, enjoyable atmosphere in class helps me to learn more efficiently and excitedly.
- I learned a lot about local culture and customs in this course. I got to experience the western way of looking at things, met a lot of new friends, and got to know the teacher and his two lovely children. I have learned a lot from reading novels, discussing problems and communicating skills.
- The course improved my ability to communicate in English as a second language (in fact all of these international academic classes will help). But most importantly, what is special in this program is that the teacher did a lot to get to know our culture and

clarify our stereotypes of Americans as well. It helps to broaden our horizon. As the younger generation in China, I think the communication between America and China is important now and in the future. The more we know about each other, the less conflicts and the more development there would be. I major in Literature and this class will definitely help when I try to comprehend Western literature.

- I don't wanna make any changes. It's perfect for me as a student who is majoring in English in China.
- At first I was worried that I would not be able to adapt to the full English course, but I'm so happy that the teacher can teach in a relaxed way. To be honest, I hope that we are not just teaching online. If I can, I hope to participate in his course again. Maybe next vacation? Maybe I'll apply for a graduate program. But there is one thing I can guarantee. In the future, I will send emails to him to share the story about China and put forward my new questions. I hope I can get his answers. :)

Oral Communication

- The teacher tried his best to help us and his corrections and feedback are great. Every time I feel that I want the class to be longer! We haven't talked enough but time flies.
 - I think the discussion topic is comprehensive and fresh-new, which makes me feel excited and inspired. Everyone inside the class has the opportunity to share their opinions within a small discussion group. Wonderful. The teacher is a funny teacher, too!
 - We can talk with each other more, and the teacher wanted us to speak without worries. So we can say what we want to say. Our teachers are also interested. We all love him. In this course, I overcame myself, and I can say more in English.
 - I really like the teacher's personality. He is lively and enthusiastic, and tries to make us talk in every class. After watching every interesting video, I really became more familiar with English communication.
 - The teacher is always in high spirit when giving courses. This helps us to stay focused and enjoy the class. I really wish each class time could be prolonged.
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- I got 8 in IELTS listening on Feb 12th. I do think it can be attributed to the instructor's work.

Written Communication

- I received helpful feedback on my writing in this class, especially the feedback of essays. It's really detailed!!
- The teacher is a target-oriented teacher. In her class, we are strictly in line with how to write a good essay. Power writings, grammar learning, vocabulary replacement and discussion, all of these things are concentrated on how to improve our writing skills! No matter what level you are, you can learn what you desire in the class.
- I learned a lot about how to write. For example, I know the structure of the sentence, the structure of the article, how to use the transition sentence and how to write the article more specifically. Through the teacher's detailed feedback, I know the mistakes in my essay and more idiomatic usage. With the help of the teacher, I constantly modified the essay, such as adding transition sentences and so on, which greatly improved my writing ability.
- I can learn a lot of knowledge to make my writing more fluent, accurate and complex. Also, I can learn some professional expression and grammar usages. Except for those aspects, I have gradually built a logical thinking skills that helps me to make structure and organization. But most importantly, this class makes me fall in love with writing, stimulate my interest in it.
- We have time to practice skills we have just learned. Although I made many mistakes, the teacher was patient enough to correct them.

Acknowledgements

Students representing the following Chinese universities participated in the Winter 2022 virtual International Academy.

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*East China University of Science and
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*Huazhong University of Science and
Technology*

Jiangxi University of Finance and Economics

Jiaxing University

Jimei University

Jinan University

*Nanjing University of Posts and
Telecommunications*

Ningbo University

Northeast Normal University

Shandong University

Soochow University

Southwest Jiaotong University

Southwest University

Tianjin Foreign Studies University

Wenzhou University

Xi, Aôan Jiatong University

Xiamen University