

Asian From America

Flying back to my home country is always very fun for me. China is definitely one of the places I will never forget to visit. Watching my mom's side of the family ask about the great America and my studies is somewhat very comforting. Walking into my grandmother's home, or I would like to say is the party place where everyone hangs out, I see a few of my relatives gathered. I get myself ready for breakfast as they greet each other. I grabbed a bowl, scooped some rice and sat down at the table. My siblings join me as we start to eat as the adults talk.

My aunts start to praise my mom, "Oh Your kids are such good people. They all have grown so tall." and my mom replied, "Yea, they basically do everything themselves now like if they're hungry, the twins will cook for themselves and the older ones work already." I continue to pick at my side dishes while my grandmother joins the conversation. "I am glad they are working hard. They should definitely study chinese though." she said as she walked into the kitchen. My mom looks at my siblings and then calmly says, "Oh the twins do have chinese class at their school but they haven't been learning much. The two older ones can speak pretty well but the twins will just get lost and stranded."

It hasn't been the first time this topic has been brought up. Picking up half an egg with my chopsticks and scooping a bit of rice, I continue to eat as they chat. Spending the rest of the day surrounded by my family and the Asian culture, the only language I knew and ended up speaking was my Fuzhou dialect to communicate with the people around me. Being in the biggest Asian country and spending days talking to the people in my hometown, I found it hard to communicate.

As they try to convince me to study, I finish up my food. Many thoughts are going through my head. I understand there's many benefits to learning Mandarin but then why should I learn it if I already know my Fuzhou dialect? Isn't that enough? Shutting the lights off, I tuck myself in and close my eyes. Up to this point, spending the day invested in my family, I try to reflect on the one topic that is always brought up.

I wasn't reluctant to learn my native language but I didn't find a point to study besides communicating with my family. Of course I respect the language but I always thought, I know the Fuzhou dialect so why do I have to learn Mandarin? That's where I realized I was wrong. I used to think speaking Fujianese is equivalent to speaking Mandarin. I often bring up my knowledge of Fujianese to my parents whenever they pushed me to learn Mandarin and their response was always, "Mandarin is a very popular language. It's great you know Fujianese but learning Mandarin will make your job applications in the future look more impressive. Also what if you get lost in China, you won't be able to do anything but cry." Yes, they did make many good points and I completely understood them but then again, I had no motive.

But knowing the fact my parents only wanted the best for me, I came to sense that Mandarin is actually very common to learn, not just among Asian Americans. So, as soon as I got back to America, I started to look for Chinese content. I did not study Chinese but instead immerse myself in the language and culture. I spent hours watching movies, shows, dramas and soon I found myself watching it almost every day.

After this topic constantly brought up for the past few years, I finally found my motive. I wanted to feel more connected with my family, my home country and my culture so I started to pick up Mandarin. I would not say that I am even close to being fluent but I definitely have improved. With my family influences and time to consider, I finally start this new journey.