

Dean's Outstanding Internship Award – Certificate of Merit
院長優秀實習生獎表揚狀 (2024/25)

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Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Creative Arts and Culture and Bachelor of Education
(Honours) (Visual Arts)

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An Unforgettable Cultural Integration Experience

From June to August 2024, I interned at CanTone Hong Kong. Throughout this period, I enhanced my competencies across various domains while identifying personal areas for improvement. These experiences have shaped my growth and equipped me with foundational skills for my prospective career. This article reflects my feelings and thoughts on the internship process.

Established in 2023, CanTone is an innovative social enterprise. The company aims to build bridges between Hong Kong's multicultural society and focuses on using innovative technology to provide Chinese language education services (CanTone Hong Kong, 2024). CanTone's main service targets are ethnic minorities and non-Chinese speaking students (CanTone Hong Kong, 2024). They are committed to providing learning support and equitable learning opportunities for children to learn Cantonese and promote cultural integration in a diverse community (CanTone Hong Kong, 2024). CanTone's mission is to create a comprehensive and easy-to-use learning platform, by launching the CanTone App, an AI vocabulary learning app that brings the joy of learning Cantonese to more children (CanTone Hong Kong, 2024). CanTone's goal is not only to help multicultural society children learn Cantonese, but also to break the cycle of poverty through the power of education, giving them more opportunities to change their future and realise their aspirations (CanTone Hong Kong, 2024).

As a Project Assistant, the duties include assisting the company in planning and coordinating projects. At the beginning of my internship, I was mainly responsible for assisting the supervisor with teaching activities such as assisting with the rice dumpling packing activity at the Dragon Boat Festival Cantonese Workshop, teaching Cantonese by using CanTone Apps at the Father's Day Cantonese Workshop and assisting with children's arts and crafts at the mobile van. These experiences helped me acclimate to interacting with ethnic minorities and familiarise myself with CanTone's operational structure. In the middle of my internship, I spent more time on teaching and event planning. Recognising my eagerness to gain teaching experience, my supervisor entrusted me with preparing and delivering Cantonese classes for ethnic minority adults, in collaboration with the Red Cross. This four-week course, designed for ethnic minority women, aimed to provide essential Cantonese skills for daily life and facilitate community integration. My responsibilities included developing lesson plans, preparing teaching materials, and conducting the classes. In addition to teaching, I also

do clerical work, including designing teaching content for new features of the CanTone software. Given my background in Visual Arts, I was also afforded numerous opportunities to plan and execute art-related activities, such as organising perler beads workshops. Furthermore, I occasionally collaborated with my supervisor on various initiatives, including joining workshops focused on designing safe activities for children and organising booth games and art activities at fairs.

During my time at CanTone, I believe that my performance meets the supervisor's expectations. I have been actively involved in different projects to help develop the company's business. I have been able to meet deadlines in my lesson plans. In teaching, I added board game elements and experiential teaching. My innovative and diversified teaching methodology has been recognised by supervisors, colleagues, organisers and students. For booth activities, I used my past experience in event planning to propose and effectively implement a variety of activities for the company. The funny games attracted more people to know CanTone. At the fair, I made use of my artistic talent to host a booth with a perler beads workshop, which brought in revenue for the company. On the other hand, I maintained a friendly employee relationship with my supervisor. When facing difficulties and doubts, I would always ask for the supervisor's advice to ensure the smooth running of the project. Even after the internship period, CanTone expressed interest in retaining my support on a part-time basis.

The internship at Cantone was a brand-new experience, and the work has enhanced my abilities in various aspects and left a far-reaching impact.

My proficiency in English speaking and writing has greatly improved. CanTone's service targets are non-Chinese-speaking people. Therefore, English has become my primary language when assisting in classes, teaching and attending events. The adult Cantonese classes require me to teach in English continuously, which has greatly improved my English-speaking skills. In addition, the company hires ethnic minorities to assist in the activities, so communicating with colleagues in English is unavoidable. Besides, to make it easier for the participants to read the teaching materials, I usually prepare the teaching materials in both Chinese and English. After two months of training, my English standard has improved rapidly.

My problem-solving skills have improved dramatically because of my CanTone project. Chinese language education was unfamiliar to me. At the same time, I had no experience in teaching adults. When my supervisor offered me to lead a Cantonese class for adults, I felt anxious and uneasy. How to explain Cantonese in English became the main difficulty. Nevertheless, I was willing to step out of my comfort zone. I took on the project and solved the problems one by one. Firstly, as my students had no basic knowledge of Cantonese, I designed the notes to include not only Chinese-English parallelism but also Chinese pinyin. On the other hand, the students came from various countries and there was a big difference in their ages. Since their language and learning abilities varied widely, I would take the initiative to rehearse the teaching process with my ethnic minority colleagues to better understand their needs and anticipated learning difficulties. In addition, due to religious and cultural differences, I tend to avoid mentioning certain topics when designing the curriculum, for example, avoiding mentioning pork in the topic of shopping in the market. This teaching experience has taught me that there are different challenges I will face in my future career. Even though there are a lot of tough spots, I still have to be brave enough to solve them.

The work environment has broadened my global perspective. Before my internship at CanTone, I had very little exposure to ethnic minorities and my knowledge of their culture was limited. After two months of immersion, my understanding of ethnic minorities has increased. In teaching, I realised that there is a huge difference between their English pronunciation and that of Hong Kong. In terms of diet, as many Islamic colleagues in the company need to eat Halal food, I had the opportunity to try different Halal dishes every week. In addition to this, I also tried Indian art, painting henna on my hands. In the area of religion and customs, I learnt about Islamic prayer rituals, dress, marriage, and so on. After spending time with them, I have become more tolerant and understanding of the ethnic minorities in Hong Kong.

Although I have been able to gain a variety of skills in CanTone, I also have become aware of my areas for improvement. First, I understand that it is necessary to improve my English language skills. In multicultural Hong Kong, I need to keep improving my English proficiency to communicate with foreigners more easily, no matter whether I am working or living in Hong Kong. Besides, I also realise that my typing speed is slow. I am not familiar with the Chinese input method, which makes me inefficient in writing lesson plans. Realising my shortcomings, I will try my best to train myself to become a better person!

Working at CanTone has had a profound impact on me. Firstly, the experience of teaching ethnic minorities has widened the scope of my career. As I learnt more about ethnic minorities, I became more tolerant of them. In the future, I would like to try teaching in non-Chinese speaking (NCS) schools. In addition, this internship has given me more experience in teaching NCS students, which undoubtedly broadens my career path. Secondly, the value-address of my language skills, problem-solving skills and global perspective have been greatly enhanced, which will be beneficial to my future career. All these skills can be applied to my work as a teacher, preparing me for my future career as a teacher. Thirdly, I have deepened my understanding of social enterprises. In the course of my work, I have learnt how social enterprises operate, which has increased my interest and confidence in starting my own business.

Finally, I would like to thank my internship partners for their support over the past two months. CanTone has provided me with a variety of opportunities to try out different activities. Despite the challenges of the job, I have stood up for my beliefs and overcome them. This belief will affect me for the rest of my life. Also, my supervisor organised my work according to my goals and visions, which allowed me to gain an unprecedented teaching experience. These experiences will bring me job opportunities in the future. Overall, I have observed that CanTone is committed to its mission. Their efforts have inspired me to join them in this meaningful endeavour.

Reference:

CanTone Hong Kong (2024). About CanTone. <https://www.cantonehk.com.hk/about-us>



I taught vocabulary related to transport in a Cantonese adult class.



I used the Cantone app for teaching Cantonese adult class.