Week two marked an exciting beginning for our group as it marked the beginning of our Chinese classes.

With approximately 10 days already been in china and a trip to Beijing under our belt our classes began very smoothly. There were quite a few worried faces on the first day as levels varied, however our patient Chinese teachers quickly put us at ease. Two of our group members attained high levels while the majority of us entered in at either beginners (Level F) or the next class above it, Level E. This proved immediately challenging, as the Chinese classes in Australia are differed greatly. It was a shock to learn that in most classes our instructors spoke almost no English. After several days however all group members settled in and the language difference became a positive aspect of classes as everyone was improving at an impressive rate. With our immersion in Chinese society and intensive classes it is easy to see all the group will be learning a great deal in the coming months.

Once the shock of the classes had subsided, all group members settled down and homework quickly became the primary afternoon past-time. With 4 hours of classes in the morning and 2 hours of homework our free time was quickly filled as our Chinese liaison introduced us to a group of Chinese Masters Students looking to improve their English. This was a great opportunity for all group members to get to know some Chinese students who spoke English and we all quickly ‘buddied up’ with a local student. This provides us with a local contact to turn to for help but also a great opportunity to get to know Chinese people and not simply their language.

Additionally, the student union of Tianjing Normal University invited us to volunteer our time on Thursday afternoons to talk to and discuss Australian student life with Chinese students destined to study at Australian universities. This opportunity was agreed to and I believe the entire group is more than willing to help their fellow students.

Our carefree days were therefore quickly filled with classes, homework and meeting exciting new people and making Chinese friends. Barring the occasional Craving for western style food our group has settled into classes perfectly and our outlook couldn’t be better.

By Alex Zotti (The President of the Young Australian Ambassadors Delegation to China)