## Roderick's Update 2020/2021

Dear friends,

First and foremost, I wish that you are all doing well, healthy and happy, free of COVID.

I do realize it's been kinda long since I last wrote to you which should be 10/2019. As I just finished my summer vacation and reentering working mode, I find it to be a good time to give you some update about my life and Chile.

After my volunteer contract with English Opens Doors (EODP) ended in 12/2019, I signed a new contract with my school (LPSN) and continued on to be a full-time Chinese teacher. My status is no different from any other Chilean teachers. I receive the introductory level salary, pay the health care (FONASA), social security (AFP) and tax which were the major things that people protested against last year. My school's been very helpful for me with respect to all the paperwork. I'm on a year-long work visa now.

I was between China and the US during winter 2020, then came to Chile at the end of 2/2020, 2 weeks before the 1<sup>st</sup> confirmed COVID case showed up in central Chile.

As agreed in 2019, I moved into a new host family in central Chillán. They are 2 grandparents in their 60's and 3 adult daughters who live away in Santiago and the youngest son who lives just in front of their house. They are all very nice, intelligent and well-educated people. I've been living with them since 3/2020 and till now, almost a year. Their house is very big, the grandma cooks super well and takes care of everyone including the grandpa and the doses of spice/pepper he's allowed to eat to avoid coughing (very controlling). I've been very happy and relaxed living with them. I learned to cook some typical Chilean food from the grandma too. I sold my car in the US for some cash and bought a 3<sup>rd</sup> handed Peugeot 207 compact manual transmission as my new baby for daily commute to school, turns out to be my best friend for grocery runs only.





Like many of the schools around the world, my school suspended face-to-face work in 3/15/2020 and shifted to online mode. It was a big mess but not so disastrous comparing to the situations in some of the other schools in chile. From 3/15 to mid-May, we only had non-live online teaching: teachers sent students materials online like homework. Then, since mid-May, we shifted to Google Classroom (GC) as the primary platform for live videochat classes. I hold about 10 -12 hrs weekly of live classes via GC and assign homework and projects to my students. We didn't start immediately after suspension because not all students have access to internet, let along stable connection for live classes. But a telecommunication carrier later gave the school free SIM cards for the students who need them. It took us (the teachers and the school) about

1 month, from mid-May to mid-June to fully figure out a smooth online workflow. This online schooling lasted from June to first week of December 2020.

A Typical Class



This model of online teaching has been physically and mentally challenging and difficult for me mainly because my eye hurt when I have to stare at the screen (I guess 12 hrs a week is very little but still), and because of the feeling of disconnection from my students and the lack of sense of a school community. And because the sometimes-poor audio quality, I humbly think I've become a body-language master instead of being good at giving verbal instructions. But in general, I did fine. My physical and mental health has been excellent the whole time thanks to a lot of things. I tried to remind my students of the positive things and motivate and inspire them at this difficult period of time.

A major newspaper asked our school for a shot, so I taught the best students to write "Take care of yourself" in Chinese

## Los colegios de la Red de Escuelas Líderes innovan para seguir acompañando a distancia

■ Además de preparar quías y habilitar plataformas de aprendizaje en línea, los establecimientos están promoviendo los concursos de cuentos, habilitando teléfonos que ayudan a entender las medidas del Gobierno y contactando a profesores extranjeros para que a través de las pantallas enseñen una segunda lengua, entre otras iniciativas.

a comunidad de la Escuela Bernardo O'Higgins de Toco-Jpilla (Región de Antofagasta) lo que es adaptarse a escenaersos. Por nueve años y tras noto del año 2007, esturs uno al lado del o



Alberto Hurtado de I

lente San Nicolás, en la

The quarantine regulation in chile is called "Paso a Paso". There are 5 pasos, with the 1st paso being total quarantine, ppl are not supposed to leave their home except for absolute necessity. And 2<sup>nd</sup> paso,

being ppl allowed to leave for more reasons during the weekday but not allowed to leave on the weekend. I lived the majority of my quarantine life from March to November in fase 2.





Luckily my host fam and I have been free of COVID, and out of the few ppl who got it that I know of, all have recovered pretty well. When I do need to go grocery shopping (about the only activity I've been doing in a crowded public space) I've been following all the sanitization protocols like wearing a mask, using alcohol gel, washing hands, social distancing etc. Other than grocery runs, I tried to develop a healthier, more mindful at-home lifestyle and developed and picked up some old/new hobbies. I wrote blogs in Chinese on Wechat (more frequently than this English version update I must apologize), practiced meditation, worked out with twin heavy water jars with 6 liters (1.6 gallon) of precious liquid usually used for human hydration, re-read books more thoroughly that I was supposed to read when I was a student (CONFESSION!), learned the Hebrew alphabet and some basic stuff, watched some good movies that have been sitting in my to-watch list for ages. All in all, pretty good, except I longed for some face-to-face human interaction, especially with young ppl of my opposite gender: D which I eventually got.



Last year, school year finished mid-December 2020 and left me with a long vacation time (to spend all the money I saved during quarantine) till late Feb 2021. I thought to myself "Time for some adventure". So I roughly planned the places and friends that I want to visit, the things I wanted to do, and hit the road solo in my car on 12/30/2020. I spent the new year's eve in Santiago and continued to the north, with a colleague from Colorado USA. We went together from Valparaiso to Vicuña, region of Coquimbo where she teaches English. I stayed there for a week, got to know the *Norte Chico*. The landscape, climate and history are very different from central-south where I live. It's fascinating. I then returned solo, visiting some of the places between Chillán and Santiago that I always missed via a train trip. It's been an awesome trip. Have to admit, solo road trip, visiting friends along the way, is really good, totally great new experience.

A random graffiti in Valparaiso 1/2021



School year just started on 2/25 Thursday. My school is back doing face-to-face classes with a so called "Hybrid mode" where all the classes are divided into 2 groups, group 1 comes for present classes this week and watch online streaming of classes the next week and group 2 watches online streaming this week and comes in the next week, alternating. Students come on a voluntary basis. These two *Hybrid Mode* +

*Voluntary mode* make everything looking very complicated. Today at the first dpt meeting all the teachers had a billion questions for the dpt head. I'm curious about how this year is going to carry out. Also, I've got a new colleague. He's a Chilean, ex-student of the school, winner of the Chinese language competition in 2016 and lived in China for 4 years. Looks like we are gonna have a good year. Though I'm not sure how long the face-to-face classes are gonna hold before the very possible 3<sup>rd</sup> wave comes.

It's supposed that all the teachers and workers etc in the school community get vaccinated in March. But I'm not sure if this is going to happen according to the plan. There has already been changes to the vaccination plan this month where all the teachers like me were initially told to get vaccinated on Friday 2/19 but then Ministry of Health said only 60 yro plus can get it that day, everyone else had to wait.





I'm going to be at this school at least until the end of 2021. My goal is to establish a better workflow and do some reform within the Chinese department with respect to year planning, class routine, student management, a database for all pedagogical materials, among others. Once I feel like I have established an efficient, continuable workflow / system for the Chinese department, I will start looking for other jobs in Chile, maybe in other South American countries too, for few more years, depending on the pandemic and what happens in life. I don't see myself staying in South America for long. I want to eventually return to China or the US.

Thanks for reading my update. I hope to hear from you all too, long or short. And most importantly I wish you all healthy. Take care.