

| People

# Cultural Exchange: Winning Big at Mahjong Night

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| ISIE Club President Kai-Chun Wu (first left) observing the game, explaining the rules, and facilitating the game.

Olivia, an international student in Taiwan from California, had a special treat—her first “Mahjong” night at NTU. Cautiously reaching for the tiles in front of her, Olivia soon grasped the game under the watchful eye of Claire, a local NTU student. “The tension is mounting!” shouted Katelan, a spectator. As Olivia revealed a triplet on the table, cheers erupted from everyone around her—“She won!”

Around the room, members of the NTU Mahjong Club expressed surprise when they saw four international students seated at each of the 12 mahjong tables in the room. “Is this an activity of an international student mahjong club?” they whispered to each other in amazement, observing 50 local students patiently teach 50 foreign students how to play mahjong—in fluent English.



| ISIE member Cassandra teaching the mahjong rules in English.

## ISIE: Bridging cultures

Mahjong Night, is an exciting event hosted by NTU International Student Information Service (NTU ISIE), where the excitement begins. “We want to help our international students learn local Taiwanese culture in the most amusing and interesting ways,” affirmed ISIE President, Kai-Chun Wu. Wu had noticed that international students tended to flock together, so he strived to create more opportunities for them to interact with local students. Activities such as Mahjong Night, one-day trips in Northern Taiwan, and culture workshops have been organized by NTU ISIE to help international students integrate with the local student community.

This year’s Mahjong Night attracted an unprecedented number of applicants. “We received more than 100 applications within the first two hours,” exclaimed Wu; “Finding enough mahjong tables and chairs was also a huge problem, but thankfully we managed to borrow them from the Mahjong Club with the help of the Student Activity Division, Office of Student Affairs.” ISIE even purchased a few sets of tables and chairs to ensure that all students could participate.

### A game without borders

“Playing mahjong involves a lot of thinking and strategizing, but it was truly fun!” said Olivia, who had beginner’s luck in her first attempt. She gave all the credit to her table leader, Claire, for teaching her how to play.

ISIE assigns a “table leader” to every table to instruct the players and explain the rules of mahjong in English. “at first, we borrow terms, such as round, house, and pair, from poker, so learners can pick up the game faster. Once they are familiar with the rules, we teach them the terms in Chinese so they can play smoothly with their Taiwanese friends,” explained Wu.

For many students like Olivia, it was a successful night of exploration and interdisciplinary learning in an environment that only NTU can offer. Who would have guessed that a game of mahjong could bring people from different parts of the world together to have fun and learn about each other’s cultures?



Twice as many students participated in this year’s Mahjong Night compared to last year. ISIE members setting up the mahjong tables for the event.



Participants learn more about local culture through mahjong.



Click or Scan the QR code to visit NTU ISIE’s Facebook page to learn more.