“Current Affairs in Mandarin”: A Student-Led TV Talk Show at LSE

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The “Current Affairs in Mandarin” project takes an innovative approach to the use of audio-visual media for language learning, providing students with a uniquely authentic and immersive learning experience. At the same time, it has generated a growing collection of standalone resources that, over time, have developed into a compelling archive of student achievements as well as an invaluable repository for building specialist vocabulary for students and practitioners within the field of languages in the social sciences. As a collaboration between various departments across the institution, it also stands as an exemplar of connectedness and collaboration within large higher education institutions. Now, in its fifth year, the project continues to be developed and further improvements are pursued. Details of the project will be explored in this chapter. The results of evaluative research into students’ perspectives on their project experiences will also be presented and discussed.

INTRODUCTION

LSE is a world leading single faculty institution of social sciences. The LSE Language Centre provides English language support, foreign language teaching and linguistic courses, as well as teaching and learning support. It hosts students from a wide
range of cultural backgrounds with different subject interests. Currently, English for Academic Purposes (EAP) courses are offered to all international students during their study. Undergraduate students can choose one of the five languages on offer, namely French, German, Mandarin, Spanish and Russian as an outside option, which constitutes 25% of a year’s study. There are on average 300 students taking language courses as part of their degree. The Centre also runs Certificate Courses for all students, members of staff, LSE alumni and the general public, among which 11 languages are offered including Mandarin Chinese. Each year, over 1,500 students take extracurricular Certificate Courses.

The LSE Language Centre also engages in action research focusing on language learning pedagogy, language teaching for specific purposes, technology enhanced learning for language teaching, and multilingualism. This area of work is collaborative and very often LSE Language Centre teachers work with other departments and divisions within LSE, such as the School’s Teaching and Learning Centre (TLC). In this particular project, ‘Current Affairs in Mandarin’, LSE Language Centre works closely with LSE’s Learning Technology and Innovation team (LTI) and the LSE Communications Division (LSE-Comms).

LSE LTI works closely with teaching colleagues from across the School to critically evaluate educational technologies and associated pedagogies, and to ensure that- where technology is used, it extends teaching opportunities, enriches the student learning experience and enhances student learning outcomes. As well as maintaining the School’s core educational technologies (LSE Moodle, LSE Lecture Capture et al.) LTI runs training and development workshops for teaching colleagues, as well as an ambitious programme of grant-supported, technology-enhanced learning projects. LTI’s work explores areas such as assessment diversification through technology, the value of social media for education, and the development of structured approaches to technology-enhanced teaching and learning.

LSE-Comms strategically coordinates external and internal communications, School branding, and advises on appropriate ways to communicate to its various external stakeholders and audiences. The Film and Audio unit within the LSE Communication Division incorporates the School’s externally facing video production, film and audio output onto the LSE website and other online channels, as well as managing the use of the LSE Media Studio. The media studio is a facility for the production of digital video and audio, with capability for recording or broadcasting. It was officially opened on 30 September 2014 by filmmaker Roger Graef (OBE). Since then, the filming of the ‘Current Affairs in Mandarin’ project has been moved to the LSE Media Studio. All student films, from across all years of the project development, are available for viewing via the Language Centre website, Language Centre Moodle courses and the official LSE YouTube channel.
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