Chapter 8
Short Video Production for Language Learning and Assessment

Fang Pan
London School of Economics and Political Science, UK

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

To better encourage students to use a language in a meaningful context, to further provide a new learning methodology and experience, and to innovate assessment, a Chinese video project was introduced to students at the Language Centre of the London School of Economics and Political Science. The project, iFilm, asked students to make a short video using as many of the vocabulary words and grammar points they learned in class as possible. Students were given about three months to come up with the video concepts, to film, and to edit. They could complete the project using any themes they wanted and work either individually or in a group. The project was assessed under three categories: writing, speaking, and video production. Many students found the video project interesting and agreed that it helped their Mandarin learning. However, the project also met several challenges. Some constructive suggestions are provided for future application.

INTRODUCTION

The video project iFilm was conducted among all students who took the lower-level Chinese language courses (levels one and two) and the upper intermediate-level courses (level four) at the Language Centre of the London School of Economics and Political Science. The language levels were based on the Common European
Framework of Reference for Languages (CEF or CEFR). The exit levels of level-one, -two, and -four courses were, respectively, A1, A2, and B2.

The Language Centre is part of the school academic and professional development division. It provides modern foreign language degree courses as well as modern foreign language certificate courses. Mandarin Chinese is among the five languages that offer both degree and certificate options in addition to French, Spanish, German, and Russian.

A degree course means that students can take an option outside the department in their own undergraduate degree. Because of its nature, the degree course at the Language Centre is intensive and demanding. For example, in the level-one course, students are required to commit to 6 hours of classroom learning every week and to 1 or 2 hours after class every day. In addition, there are 20 pieces of continuous assessments throughout the year. Each continuous assessment targets one particular language skill: listening, speaking, reading, or writing. In addition to the continuous assessments, which count for 20% of the total grade, students also take a final listening exam (15%), a final written exam (45%), and a final oral exam (20%).

A certificate course allows students at the Language Centre, along with staff members, alumni, or anyone looking to take a language course, to learn a language they prefer. The teaching time is much less than a degree course. Most certificate courses are 2 hours per week for 20 weeks, which totals 40 hours of classes. Some advanced courses are 1 hour per week for 20 weeks, which totals 20 hours of classes. For the assessment, there are 10 pieces of continuous assessments throughout the 20 weeks. Each continuous assessment targets one particular language skill: listening, speaking, reading, or writing. In addition to the continuous assessments, which count for 50% of the total grade, students take a final written exam (30%) and a final speaking exam (20%). The overall difficulties and requirements of the assessments for a certificate course are much less than a degree course.

Students who take the language courses have various backgrounds. For the degree courses, usually they are all London School of Economics and Political Science undergraduates from different school departments. For the certificate courses, they can be students, staff members, or anyone outside the school community. Students also come from different countries, and they choose to learn a language based on their own interests or academic or work needs.
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