

夏天里: A summer in Shanghai

The second LSE-Fudan language exchange course saw LSE students take the world's newest global city by storm...

In July 2013, an intrepid band of beginner level Mandarin speakers set out from London to spend eight weeks learning at one of China's most respected universities. For many this trip was their first taste of China and all embraced the culture in one of the world's most vibrant global cities. This beginner level group was joined a fortnight later by more advanced speakers, some of whom, including myself, had attended the first LSE-organised course at Fudan in the summer of 2012.

Together our group of 17 students attended over 20 hours of Chinese language classes a week, including lectures on Chinese modern history and economic development and specialist language training with postgraduate students from Fudan. In only two months our ability to speak, read and write made remarkable progress. The fact that students from the beginners course in Shanghai will now go on to study the Mandarin advanced language degree course at LSE over the coming year is testament to all the hard work put in by them while in Shanghai.

However, as is to be expected from a group of independently minded LSE students, we all took the approach that what we could learn outside the classroom was just as valuable as the training we were receiving on campus. To this end, whether it was having late-night philosophical discussions with taxi drivers or sampling all-you-can-eat sushi, our Mandarin conversation skills were carefully honed on the streets of Shanghai.

Furthermore, in an effort to truly engage with Chinese culture, both the beginner and advanced groups performed end of course skits. With LSE Pro-Director for Teaching and Learning Professor Paul Kelly in attendance, the beginner group presented a critically-acclaimed re-imagination of Kung Fu Panda with Lodewijk Vriens stealing the show with his Master Oogway. The advanced group meanwhile entertained with a news program (Grace Chen providing a very convincing Chinese news anchor) and classic Chinese pop (月亮代表我的心 and 春天里). The latter item was rehearsed at KTV and also received an enthusiastic reception when performed at a local pool bar.

It is impossible to detail all the amazing experiences we had and all the wonderful people we met in Shanghai this summer. We are all profoundly grateful to the LSE Language Centre, and in particular Catherine Xiang, for setting this exchange program up. Thank you to all my fellow students for making this summer so memorable and long may the LSE-Fudan exchange continue!

If you want any further information on Mandarin language courses at the LSE or how you can attend the LSE-Fudan exchange please contact Catherine Xiang, LSE Mandarin Co-ordinator:

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