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A Student-initiated Online Newspaper Reading Resource for Learning CFL

Panel: Establishment of Chinese language education as a subject of study in Europe

The availability and sophistication of web-based tools have triggered curiosity and creativity from language tutors as well as language learners. An online digital newspaper reading resource in Chinese, initiated and implemented by Chinese as Foreign Language (CFL) students, is such as example. As an online graded reader, the newspaper provides HSK 1-6 levelled news content daily. The interactive features benefit CFL learners with synchronisation across platforms - website, iOS and Android, which can be used in the platforms of Apps, Facebook, Twitter, Youtube, and Google play. The online newspaper now enjoys high popularity among CFL students across Europe, with 1.3k tweets, 1.1k followers, and 994 likes among thousands of users to date.

In the online newspaper, the archive can be filtered by category and by date or year, which makes it easy for readers to select articles to read. With the export functions to Pleco, Skritte, Memrise & Anki.function, readers can join any group and interact with each other. The word bank function enables readers to select from print, export or rename word group, and move or delete selected words, and the words are shown in simplified or traditional characters, pinyin, or English. Readers can browse the words to categorize according to how well they know the words or by degree of difficulty. What is more, through Q/A function, readers can get online feedback from the online tutors in the editing team, and readers can discuss the feedback in Webo, Wechat, and Facebook.

Data from online surveys and interviews revealed that students liked it for its visual attributes, usability, interactivity, support for reading comprehension and for the cultural associations and functionality. The articles were interesting, insightful and informative, in that from the content, readers could get the information that they were seeking to use directly for their functional purposes; and from the structure, readers obtained the meta-information about the content that facilitated the accessing, processing, and sharing of information. By browsing the resource daily, readers could have a general idea of what was going on in China, and in other parts of the world in Chinese.

The pedagogical implications are that the web-based online reading approach has the potential to promote understanding through increased reading practice, systematic thinking, and structured content, which has the potential to arouse student interest, enlarge and consolidate the vocabulary, enhance reading comprehension skills and enrich learning experience.