

Chinese Universities Succeed with eLearning

In China, learning English at the university level has often been held back by the lack of class hours and also by not having enough teachers to coach students with English learning – particularly speaking. Pilot studies at a number of Chinese universities demonstrate how the addition of eLearning can add power and value to a formal English training program.

In 2004, Pearson became the first learning company to introduce interactive learning with its *Longman English Interactive* (LEI) eLearning program with the help of a local partner, Tsinghua University Press. They were responding to the government call for reforming university level English education.

Since then, the successful program has grown to more than 150 Chinese universities who have adopted LEI in an experiment to improve their students' English listening and speaking proficiency levels.

The results have been dramatic. Based on the surveys completed in 2010 at participating universities, students pass rates of the local university exit English exam has improved by an average of 17.8%.

Hunan Agriculture University increased this rate to 36%. Students from these pilot “blended” classes at the university showed a significant improvement in their English speaking grades when contrasted with their counterparts who studied in traditional English classes.

Changes have not only taken place in students' test grades, but also in their ability to learn by active learning itself. For example, at China's top university, *Tsinghua University*, the survey shows that after using the Pearson's eLearning program, 78% of the students agreed that LEI had enhanced their interest in learning English.

83% of them said that they became more confident to speak the language, while 79% of them thought they became more capable in active learning—a generally weak area for Chinese students—and had more interactions with their lecturers. Some students won prizes in the English speaking competitions.

Equally important, were professional development of the English teachers with the new found abilities to utilize new ways of instruction.

Hunan University reported that LEI helped their instructors to improve their ways to communicate with students and to explore more interactive ways to teach English. Six lecturers in the pilot classes got the highest rating from their students. Two teachers became award winners in excellent English instructions.

LEI has won first prize from the Chinese Ministry of Education in 2007 for its special contribution to making changes in the university English teaching.

China has also enjoyed results that have spread far beyond the university campus.

At the 2008 Beijing Olympics, some 3,000 students from *Beijing Communication University* became volunteers to provide English services to international visitors at the games. These students were part of the university's pilot program, which had adopted LEI for its non-English major students. Their excellent English communication services won commendation and praise from the International Olympic Game Committee.

In 2011, Pearson expanded the online program of Longman Interactive English to more second tier universities and higher vocational colleges to help teachers and students to change their way of learning English.

Today, millions of Chinese students have been using Pearson's LEI to practice speaking which they used to be shy of or had no chances to speak that foreign language.

For more information or to see some of the survey's actual results, send an email to eLearning@vantage-siam.com