

Final Report – maximum 2 pages

Project Name: Webcasting 2.0: Translating, Captioning, and Indexing for Flexible Learning

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Year of Funding: 2014/2015

Summary of Work Accomplished

Through the use of online webcast video technology, this project focuses on the Chinese language, allowing students to participate in translating English lectures into Chinese using video transcription technologies as a pedagogical tool for language learning. In our context of language learning using video, we also utilized open access Chinese language films and lengthier sixty-minute lecture webcasts.

The **deliverables** of the project included:

- 1) Successful translation of selected UBC video webcasts by graduate students as well as students from Chinese 411: Modern Chinese Literature I for media-to-text proof of concept model.
- 2) Transcription, annotation, captioning, production and indexing of webcast videos and Chinese films on using the Daxue web platform. The purpose is that through this technology, online learners can conduct keyword searching of the text transcription of video webcasts in both English and Chinese languages.
- 3) Creation of the website (www.daxue.ubc.ca) to use as a one-stop portal for Chinese language learners translated webcast videos for a worldwide audience. (“Daxue” means “university” in Mandarin Chinese.)

Evaluation of Project’s Success

“Making History”: CHIN 411 Introductory Modern Literature (Non-Heritage) 2015 TLEF (Teaching and Learning Enhancement Fund) Subtitling Project

Non-heritage Chinese language students in CHIN 411 this year were given a unique opportunity to take part in a film sub-titling project conceived by Dr. Tim Cheek or the Centre for Chinese Research (CCR), Dr. Christopher Rea of Asian Studies and funded by TLEF under the auspices of the Centre for Chinese Research and IKBLC, with the invaluable support of Community Librarian Allan Cho and IT specialist Yu Minghui. The pilot project this term was run by Dr. Alison Bailey, with the exceptional assistance of TA Qiu Yanting. CHIN 411 usually covers Chinese fiction and film 1900-1949, but this year we read works by four Republican writers and then spent the rest of the term on the subtitling project. Film choices dating from before 1949 were restricted by copyright, accessibility, lack of previous subtitling, technical limitations

and other issues such as non-standard language use. These criteria reduced selection to five possibilities, from which we chose “Children of Troubled Times” (1935; directed by Xu Xinzhi, screenplay by the famous playwright Tian Han, starring Yuan Muzhi and music by Nie Er. This film was produced by the leftist Shanghai film company Denton and is notable for having as its theme music the song which later became the Chinese national anthem.

Methodology: Students were divided into four groups of four with each group transcribing into traditional Chinese characters approximately 20 minutes each of the film. The sound quality of the film was poor and the non-standard accents initially difficult to understand. This part of the project was the most difficult and laborious, with students going over the same bit of dialogue sometimes on multiple occasions until the words and meaning came clear. The instructor and TA moved from group to group to help the transcription process and then worked with students on editing the final Chinese version, including credits, texts such as newspaper reports, poetry, and announcements.

Students then translated their section of the transcription and the Chinese and English paired draft was put onto Googledocs for shared editing in class. Groups also had to time-stamp all sections of dialogue and text (in Chinese and English) to match the words and images together – another laborious and at times boring process, but essential for the subtitling to work. Working on editing the translation through shared documents and reading out the dialogue in class to achieve accurate, fluent English with an emphasis on colloquial but historically fitting speech proved to be a popular and engaging part of the process.

Results and feedback:

Students worked hard on the project and by the end all were thoroughly engaged. The instructor asked them to write an opinion piece in Chinese on the process at the end and the overwhelming consensus was that the project was a success in terms of pedagogy and in motivating the students. Students noted that the project improved their listening, writing, reading, and translation abilities, as well as their confidence in handling complex (and professionally useful) tasks in Chinese and English. They also said that this close-up encounter with a 1930s black and white Chinese film that most admitted they would not have watched on their own was a revelation: they learned a great deal about modern Chinese history and culture and the impact of modernity on society, as well as appreciating the film for its artistic qualities.

Some students suggested that small groups working on individual films rather than dividing up one film into sections would improve motivation and uniformity of style. In fact one group took the initiative and also completed a draft transcription and draft of a second 1930s film – “*Waves Washing the Sand*”, by the great director Wu Yonggang – which had clearer and more limited dialogue. I am working with them to complete this so that subtitles for this can be uploaded too (after the exams!)

Screening: Yu Minghui is continuing work to produce a subtitled version in separate box format but, in addition, one student volunteered a great deal of precious extra time to upload Chinese and English subtitles for “Children of Troubled Times” directly onto the screen. This is the version the class watched on Tuesday April 22nd and it proved to be a great success: the film came alive for all of us.

All in all, this TLEF project has done what it set out to do: enhance the learning opportunities for our students. In their feedback many of the students suggested that this form of language and cultural pedagogy be used in other Chinese language courses. It is a highly intensive process and involves not only actively engaged students but also instructors and TAs who work closely with students at every stage of the process. The results speak for themselves: as one student put it, students are proud because they have made history by making a great film widely available to much larger audiences.