Empowering Student Engagement and English Proficiency

Insights from Federation University's Joint Information Engineering Institute in Hebei, China

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Today's presentation

- The Joint Institute
- The need to engage
- Last semester's strategies
- Student feedback
- The way forward
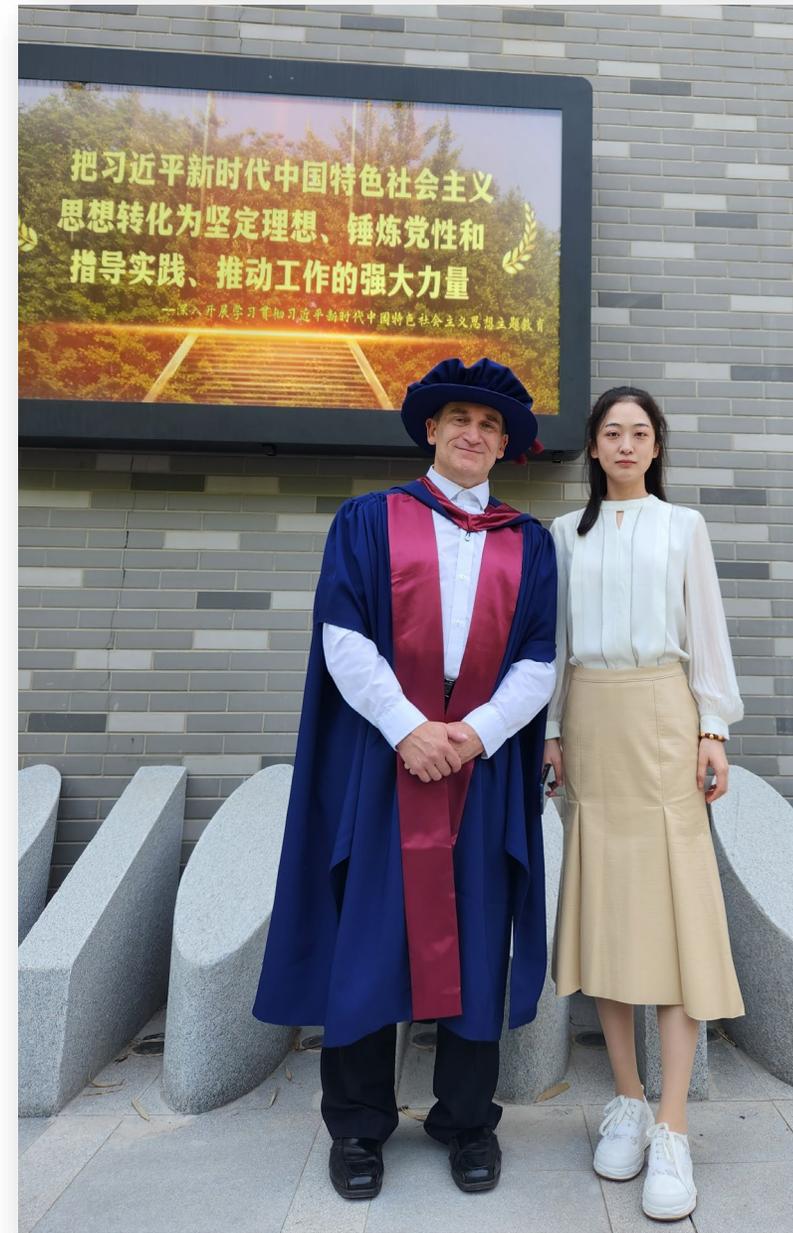
Federation University Information Engineering Institute

- Based within Hebei University of Science and Technology (HUST)

- FedUni courses taught in conventional 12-week mode

- Offering four undergraduate degrees:

  - Bachelor of Information Technology & streams (Networking and Security, Software Development & Business Information Systems)

  - Students are divided across these offerings

- 2+2 & 3+1 articulation options

  - Articulation also mapped for IT Master offerings

The Students

- 800 students across four year-levels
- Joint degrees with HUST

- First year students focus on English and HUST requirements
  - We teach directly into 2nd-4th years

- Live on campus
- Lack confidence in their English skills
- Are "time poor"

The need for engagement

- Teaching began late 2019 via TEAMS

  - Then COVID…….

- Face-to-face teaching began in early 2023

- There was an opportunity to boost engagement

- Reasons:

  - Strengthen students' all-round English skills

  - Increase verbal participation in classes

  - Encourage articulation

  - Encourage the development of an internationalised student

  - Provide the lecturing team with activities

Engagement Plan 2023/23 – Two approaches

- ITECH1001

- English/Chinese corner activities

- Incorporate the FedUni *Living Values*
  - Inclusion, Innovation, Excellence, Empowerment & Collaboration

- Invite all resident FedUni staff to participate

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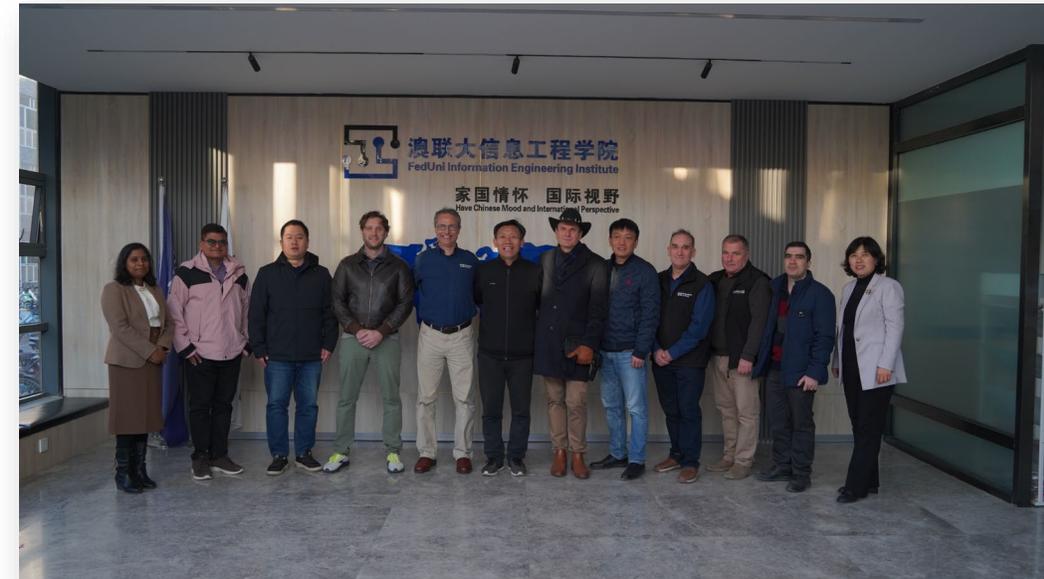
ITECH1001 Communications & Technology

- A core fundamental skills course in 2nd year

  - Academic and communication skills taught to 200 students

  - First contact with FedUni lecturing team

- Involved 6 members of the teaching team

  1 Coordinator, 2 lecturers, 4 tutors

  - Student exposure to a diversity of academics

  - ITECH1101(IT Problem Solving) was taught simultaneously to the same students

- Feedback is very encouraging

2023_23 Dual engagement process

- ## English Corner

  - ## Academic led

    - Help improve student English skills & confidence

    - Encourage interactions with the teaching team

- ## Chinese Corner

  - ## Student led

    - Teach Chinese language and culture to teaching team

    - Encourage students to communicate & lead

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Previous engagement activities 2023/03

- Two English Corner events

  - 1 student from the School of International Education

    - 20 Institute students

  - One FedUni lecturer

    - 10 Institute students

- One "tea party"

  - 4 FedUni lecturers

  - 15 Institute students

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English Corner 2023/23

- Tuesday nights

    - 7 events involving 70 students

- Very well attended

- Different themes per week

    - Cultures

    - Food & festivals

    - Music etc

- Activities

    - Film dubbing

    - [Live music](#)

    - Story telling etc

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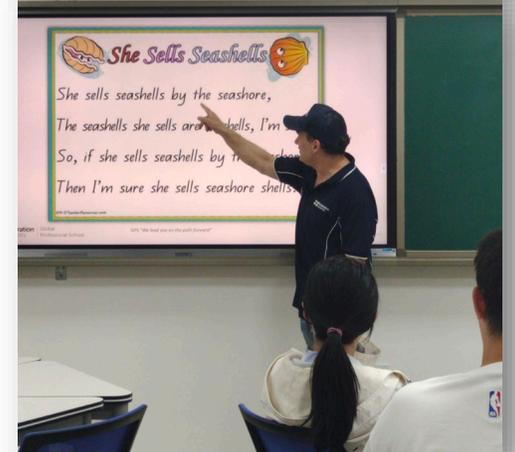
Chinese corner 2023/23

- Thursday nights

  - 8 events and 70 + different students
- The students become teachers
- Chinese culture

  - History

  - Festivals

  - Food etc
- Chinese language skills

  - Greetings

  - Common phrases

  - Shopping etc

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GPS *"We lead you on the path forward"*

Student feedback survey

- Attendee surveys before and post engagement program

    - Next semester we will enquire more

- These students value giving feedback

    - We have fostered this culture over time

NHS Campus	Invited	Finished	Response Rate
HUST	196	60	31%
ZUT	115	16	14%
GSU	14	1	7%
HUFED	403	333	83%
SZPT	38	0	0%

NHS 2023/03 SeLT response rates

What is your current English listening level?

Before   N= 71   **After**

A. There is no difficulty in understanding when communicating with foreigners.

0%   A. There is no difficulty in understanding when communicating with foreigners.   7%

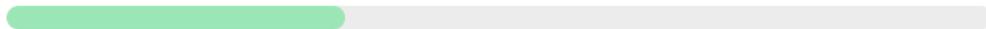B. I can watch and understand foreign news and movies without subtitle.

2.9%   B. I can watch and understand foreign news and movies without subtitle.   9.9%

C. I can understand the basic communication in daily life.
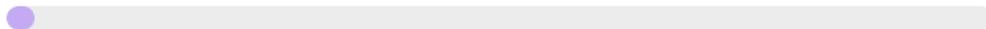
59.9%   C. I can understand the basic communication in daily life.   57.7%

D. I can only understand some simple words or sentences.
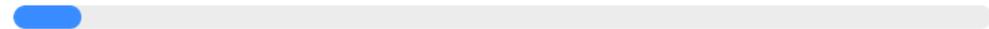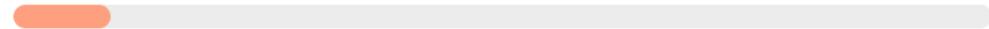
34.3%   D. I can only understand some simple words or sentences.   16.9%

E. I barely understand English.

2.9%   E. I barely understand English.   8.5%

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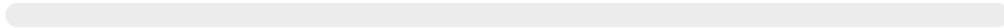GPS *"We lead you on the path forward"*
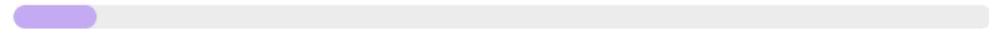
What is your current English speaking level?

Before

N= 71

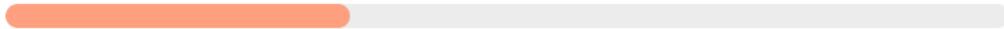**After**

A. I can speak English very fluently and confidently.

A. I can speak English very fluently and confidently.

0% █ 7%

7%

B. I can speak English somewhat fluently and confidently.

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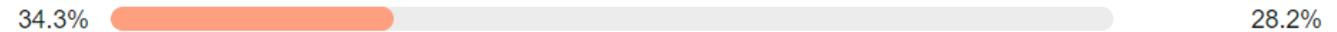
34.3% ████████ 28.2%

28.2%

C. I can only use some simple words or sentences to communicate.

C. I can only use some simple words or sentences to communicate.

65.7% ████████████████ 57.8%

57.8%

D. I can hardly speak English.

D. I can hardly speak English.

0% █ 7%

7%

Skill improvement

Which skill did you improve the most after participating in English Corner/Chinese Corner? (N=71)

Skill	Percentage	N
Listening	83%	N=59
Speaking	85%	N=60
Reading	41%	N=29
Writing	41%	N=29

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Participation feelings

Using one word to describe your feelings about participating in English Corner/Chinese Corner. (n=66)
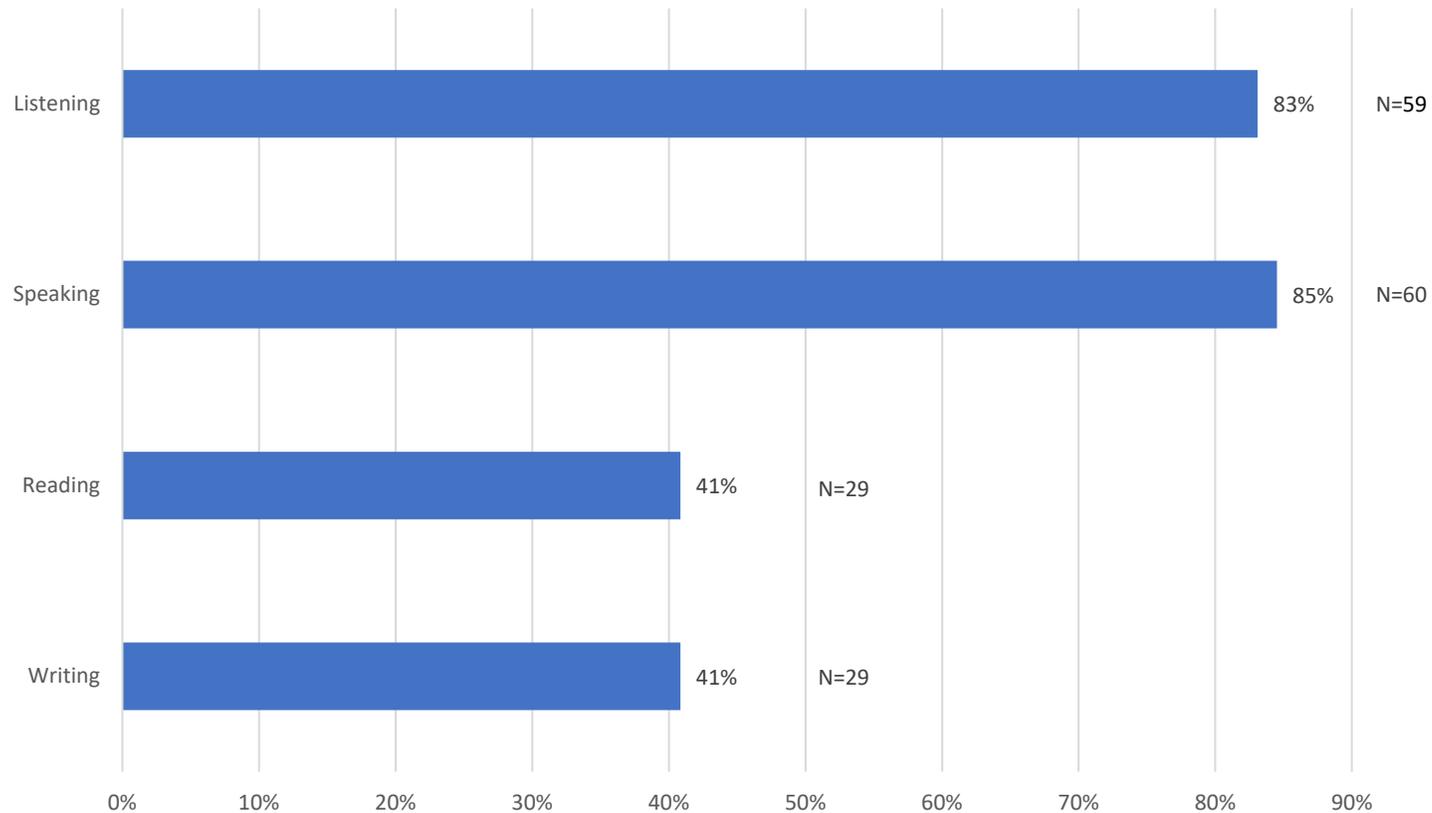
Best things

What were the best things about English Corner/Chinese Corner? (n=67)

Improvements?

How can we improve English corner/Chinese Corner into the future? (n=67)

communicate   foreigners   transition   start

pronunciation   study   chat

interaction   team   speaking

great

speak   themes   participate   innovation

activities   community   vocabulary

continue   reading

films   watching   diversity   stories   funny

invite   listening   communication   english

flexible

activites   add

people   practice   listen

keep   games

fun

English Corner feedback

Chinese Corner feedback

What next?

- Continue English/Chinese corners
  - Alternating weeks
    - Lessen load on teaching staff & encourage stronger attendance
  - More hands-on activities & games

- Empower students
  - They will lead initiatives
  - Listen to their ideas

- Simple activities to involve staff and students
  - e.g. take a picture with a teacher, tell a teacher a joke etc

Acknowledgements

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Thank you for listening