



WU JUN FOR CHINA DAILY

Shenzhen citizens will take the opportunity to host the Universiade Games to learn better English to show their hospitality and friendliness.

City learns better English

SERVICE INDUSTRY WORKERS HIT THE BOOKS TO HELP OUT FOREIGNERS

By MICHELLE FEI
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SHENZHEN — “Wel-co-me to Shenzhen,” Li Xufeng, a 35-year-old taxi driver, slowly said almost letter by letter. His face turned red as he was embarrassed by his accent.

The very Chinese-flavored pronunciation made the sentence almost impossible to understand. However, the genuine smile on his face was more than welcome enough.

It was the first English sentence Li, a high school degree holder, had ever spoken. He learnt it at an English course arranged by his employer, the Haiyi Taxi Company, in early June. The purpose of the course was to arm Shenzhen taxi drivers with basic English so they can better serve foreign customers coming to the city for the Universiade.

The Shenzhen government started its English campaign last August, aiming to promote the language among citizens to create a better environment for young athletes and visitors from all over the world during the 26th Universiade.

“Welcome to Shenzhen. We will speak foreign languages to welcome the Universiade,” the city’s top leader, Xu Qin, said at the launch ceremony of the campaign on August 12, 2010.

Staff members of service industries, especially

those in public transportation and at border checkpoints, are most encouraged to learn rudimentary English to better serve foreign visitors. Among them, security guards, taxi drivers and bus attendants have found it difficult to start learning English at their ages as most had never received any English training.

“I already knew words like ‘hotel’ — now ‘airport,’” said Li, who was quite proud of himself.

Li carries a handkerchief-sized blue brochure with Chinese translations and pronunciations of English. The brochure was the primary teaching aid for the twice-a-month English course.

“I haven’t had a chance to practice my English so far, as you can tell. I’m still extremely nervous about speaking English at the moment,” said Li. “But I believe I must benefit from the course somehow, at least I can also teach my boy.”

Yang Zhiqiang, another driver for the Haiyi Taxi Company, found his passion to learn English was dimmed by limited spare time and work pressure.

“Taxi drivers work long hours every day and we stay up all night every other day. I could not find time to attend the English course,” said Yang. “Railway lines are expanding rapidly in the city. This certainly puts pressure on the taxi industry.”

In English teaching material for security

guards at Longgang District, the pronunciation of English words was illustrated by Chinese characters, which shared similar pronunciation, yet were totally unrelated to the meaning of the original word.

For example, the word “welcome” was translated into pinyin as “*wei'er kang mu*”, where the Chinese characters have nothing to do with the content.

This rather ham-fisted way of learning English brought much mirth and has been called “made-in-China English”, yet the efforts for the Universiade have been greatly appreciated.

“The way they learn English is kind funny as well as cute. Some foreigners also learn Chinese in the same way, especially elderly beginners,” said Wang Ruomei, a Shenzhen resident, who teaches foreigners Chinese at a local language center.

Meanwhile, the media has also made great efforts to encourage the learning of English around the city.

A “One-Minute English” TV program is broadcast on the City Channel, which boasts the highest audience rating in the city. The News Channel provides citizens with a “Universiade English” program, while “Cartoon English” has reached the younger generation on the Youth Channel.

Hotlines available in different languages

SHENZHEN — During the Universiade, Chinese telecom operators like China Telecom, China Mobile and China Unicom are expected to launch multi-language service hotlines for the convenience of people coming to Shenzhen. On July 27, it was reported that five specialized service groups will be set up to provide world first-class communication services.

According to the Shenzhen Communications Administration, the telecommunications industry in the city has been carrying out English-learning activities, and will make every effort to enhance the success of the Universiade and promote the city’s image.



During the games, multi-language service hot lines will be provided by the telecom operators. China Unicom will mobilize considerable manpower and materials to ensure a international roaming service for foreign guests who can enjoy 3G services without changing their SIM card, or mobile number.

China Telecom has already launched a free WIFI network around the city, and citizens and athletes can have access to information about the city and the games through the establishment of 170 information inquiry terminals and 10 internet IPV6 display terminals at Universiade venues.

The most-advanced TD-LTE (4G) network has covered most Universiade venues and several highly-populated areas of the city to provide special services such as instant filming-instant uploading and online HD video.