

LANGUAGE AND BUSINESS MASTERCLASS WITH A CHINESE NEW YEAR THEME

A regional event for gifted linguists

Friday 11th February at Brooksby Hall

This Masterclass was a regional event specifically aimed at gifted linguists and designed around Chinese culture, the Chinese Mandarin language and the business opportunities that China offers. We wanted to excite and challenge those students who are good at picking up languages, so that they would think seriously about taking a language like Mandarin ab initio at university level. The event was funded by Routes into Languages, whose particular remit is to promote languages at university.

We asked schools for students between Years 9 and 13. This was a wide age range, but since Chinese would be a new language for all of them, we didn't see this as an issue. When they arrived, we split them into teams of mixed school and mixed age, with each team receiving the name of an animal in the Chinese calendar. The ability to work with people you don't know and of different ages is important in the work place, and once the students had overcome the shock of being split from people they knew, the teams worked very well!



We were delighted to receive students from South Wolds Community College, Groby College, Brookvale High School, The Bulwell Academy, Bolsover School, Beauchamp College and Long Field High School.

After an ice breaker so that the students could get to know one another and the business people there, Stewart Ferguson gave a keynote talk about learning Chinese from scratch at university and how it led to his current job in the China British Business Council in London.



Min Rose, from the East Midlands China Bureau then gave a talk about Chinese New Year and also gave an insight into a teenager's a life in China. Based on this, the students were then set a challenge to design and and make a prototype product that would appeal to a Chinese teenager using the theme of Chinese New Year.

In the afternoon, the teams were treated to a carousel of activities which included an introduction to Chinese calligraphy, a Mandarin language taster, an introduction to interesting geographical and historical facts about China, business etiquette and learning how to use chopsticks. The challenge for them though was to give a presentation to a panel of judges about the product they had developed.

This event was enthusiastically supported by Brooksby Melton College, which was developing links with China and we were delighted to welcome Rob Grant, their Head of International Development as one of the judges.

The winners were the Rabbit team with the Tiger team being the runners up. With the teams being made up from students from different schools, every school went back with having won part of a prize. On leaving, about two thirds of the students said they would be interested in pursuing the Chinese language further.

Student comments included:

'I've enjoyed it, thank you!'

'I enjoyed meeting new people'

'Awesome day, thank you!'

'Today has inspired me to learn some more Chinese'

We would like to thank the following Business Language Champions for supporting this event:

- Min Rose from the East Midlands China Bureau
- Stewart Ferguson from the China British Business Council
- Elisa Kuang, independent consultant
- Rongjie Tang and Honguan Li from the Confucius Institute
- Kay Marsden from UKTI
- Lisa Baldwin from BestNetwork Asia
- Rob Grant Head of International Development at Brooksby Melton College

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