

Shanghai Airlines brings back local dialect

Shanghai Airlines has reintroduced cabin announcements in the Shanghai dialect on selected flights, following suggestions from passengers.

The prerecorded messages will initially be played only on flights from Taipei and Kunming, Yunnan province, to Shanghai's Pudong and Hongqiao international airports.

"We'll test the Shanghai dialect on these two services until the end of August," said Xu Mei, a manager in the carrier's passenger cabin services department. "If the feedback is positive, we may expand it to other flights."

The 60-second messages will be broadcast before takeoff and landing, she added.

Shanghai Airlines, a subsidiary of China Eastern Airlines, operates about 350 flights a day to domestic and international destinations. It first introduced local dialect announcements in January 2012 but halted the practice without explanation a few years later. The return of the local language service appears to be an attempt by the airline to build its Shanghai brand, as well as to promote the city's image and its culture.

To make sure the dialect is spoken with genuine flavor and fluency, the airline invited Huju Opera performer Mao Shanyu to record the messages along with Lin Jiaqing from the airline's passenger cabin services department, both of whom are Shanghai natives.

"I have played quite a few characters, but this is the first time for me to be a chief flight attendant," Mao said.

"I always think the promotion of the Shanghai dialect is the responsibility of people from all walks of life. The decision to use it on Shanghai Airlines flights is helpful in displaying the city's enthusiasm and charm, and I am willing to be part of it," she added.

Questionnaires will be gathered from passengers after the flights, and their feedback will be reviewed before fine-tuning the service.

Broadcasts in the local dialect have been part of Shanghai's public transportation system for years. According to a staff member at Shanghai Ba-shi Public Transportation (Group) Co, passenger feedback has been positive.