European Benchmarking Chinese Language
– Opportunities and Challenges

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EBCL project background

- Increasing demand and provision for Chinese language in Europe (and beyond)
  - *Does the fast expansion in terms of numbers (quantity) ensure the quality of delivery?*

- Need for consistency and standardisation in Chinese language learning, teaching and assessment

- Shared interest from colleagues and institutions

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The Chinese-speaking world

- \(> 5,000,000\) Chinese speakers
- \(> 1,000,000\) Chinese speakers
- \(> 500,000\) Chinese speakers
- \(> 100,000\) Chinese speakers
- Major Chinese-speaking communities
CEFR impact

- European context – plurilingual in a multicultural Europe (European citizens) → International

- A framework for European languages or for languages used in Europe (e.g. Japanese, Chinese)?

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From CEFR to EBCL

Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching assessment (2001)

European Benchmarking Chinese Language Project (Nov 2010)

http://ebcl.eu.com/

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CEFR/EBCL feature – 1

- 4 domains
  - Personal
  - Public
  - Educational
  - Occupational

- 3 contexts
  - Formal
  - Informal
  - Non-formal

- 6 key language proficiency levels

- Proficient user
- Independent user
- Basic user
CEFR/EBCL feature – 2

- Action-oriented Can-do statements (‘what’ vs. ‘how’)

- Global scales + illustrative descriptors

- Assessor + assessee

### Global Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C2</td>
<td>Proficient User</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C1</td>
<td>Independent User</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B2</td>
<td>Basic User</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B1</td>
<td>Can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. Can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken. Can produce simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. Can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes &amp; ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2</td>
<td>Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A1</td>
<td>Can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type. Can introduce him/herself and others and can ask and answer questions about personal details such as where he/she lives, people he/she knows and things he/she has. Can interact in a simple way provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CEFR/EBCL feature – 3

Communicative activities and communication strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th><strong>Listening</strong></th>
<th><strong>Reading</strong></th>
<th><strong>Speaking</strong></th>
<th><strong>Writing</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C2</td>
<td>Has no difficulty in understanding any kind of spoken language, delivered at fast native speed</td>
<td>Can understand a wide range of long and complex texts</td>
<td>Has a good command of idiomatic expressions</td>
<td>Can write clear, smoothly flowing, complex texts in a logical structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C1</td>
<td>Can understand enough to follow complex topics, though he/she may need to confirm details</td>
<td>Can understand in detail lengthy, complex texts, provided he/she can read difficult sections</td>
<td>Can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously</td>
<td>Can express him/herself with clarity and precision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B2</td>
<td>Idiomatic usage influences the ability to understand</td>
<td>Has a broad active reading vocabulary, but may experience some difficulty with low-frequency idioms</td>
<td>Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction</td>
<td>Can express news and views effectively in writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B1</td>
<td>Can understand the main points of clear standard speech on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure</td>
<td>Can read straightforward factual texts on subjects related to his/her field and interest</td>
<td>Can exploit a wide range of simple language to deal with most situations</td>
<td>Can write personal letters and notes asking for or conveying simple information of immediate relevance,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2</td>
<td>Can understand enough provided speech is clearly and slowly articulated</td>
<td>Can understand short, simple texts containing the highest frequency vocabulary</td>
<td>Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information</td>
<td>Can write short, simple formal and notes relating to matters in areas of immediate need</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A1</td>
<td>Can follow speech which is very slow and carefully articulated, with long pauses for him/her to assimilate meaning</td>
<td>Can understand very short, simple texts a single phrase at a time, picking up familiar names, words and basic phrases</td>
<td>Can interact in a simple way but communication is totally dependent on repetition at a slower rate of speech</td>
<td>Can ask for or pass on personal details in written form</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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CEFR/EBCL competence range (adapted from Zhang 2011)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CEF</th>
<th>Can-do Statements</th>
<th>Notions and functions embedded in socio-cultural contexts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C2</td>
<td>Texts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C1</td>
<td>Operations</td>
<td>Topics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Events</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Objects</td>
<td>Topics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B2</td>
<td>Persons</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B1</td>
<td>Institution</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Functions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A1</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sub-functions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Domains</td>
<td>Personal, Public, Educational, Occupational</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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EBCL project objectives

To propose a framework of competence descriptors for Chinese in European context

To raise awareness of socio-cultural and linguistic differences between Chinese and European languages

To create a network in Europe and beyond for teachers and institutions concerned

To start a dynamic database of universities (and other institutions) in Europe that offer Chinese language courses
EBCL project partners

Freie University
Rennes II
La Sapienza
SOAS

Project partners
Associated schools
Advisory Board

GE FR IT UK
GE FR IT UK
EBCL project methodology

- Intuitive, qualitative approach
- Prescriptive vs. descriptive

Data 1
Data 2
Data 3
…
Data n

ELP/EAONLAS

CEFR Descriptors

Japanese/Chinese

Proposed EBCL Descriptors

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EBCL major resources

- **Bank of CEFR related Descriptors:**
  - CEFR descriptors
  - ELP (European Language Portfolio) self assessment descriptors
  - EAQUALS (European Association for Quality Language Services) bank of descriptors
  - *Japanese Foundation ‘Can do’ statements*
  - *International Curriculum for Chinese Language Education* 国际汉语教学通用课程大纲 (Beijing, 2010)

- **Profiles of major European languages**
  - Profilo della lingua italiana (Florence, 2010)
  - Profile Deutsch (Berlin, 2005)
  - Niveau A1 pour le français (Paris, 2007)
  - English Profile (Cambridge, 2012)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date Range</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10/2010 - 05/2011</td>
<td><strong>Project launch (London)</strong>: Survey + Case studies; Project web</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-21/05/2011</td>
<td><strong>Rome Seminar</strong>: report and development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- 10/2011</td>
<td><strong>Proposed framework components at A1/A2 levels; examples</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14-15/10/2011</td>
<td><strong>Paris Seminar</strong>: open consultation and development</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<tr>
<th>Date Range</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- 04/2011</td>
<td><strong>Refined A1/A2 levels of framework (descriptors+ samples)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27-29/04/2012</td>
<td><strong>Berlin Seminar</strong>: open consultation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- 07/2012</td>
<td><strong>Proposed B1 level of framework</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19-20/07/2012</td>
<td><strong>London Seminar</strong>: B1-level descriptors and product</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/2012</td>
<td><strong>Brussels symposium</strong>: promotion and further development</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
EBCL proficiency levels

Note: EBCL criterion levels
(A1=A1.2, A2=A2.2, B1=B1.2, B2=B2.2; C1=C1.2)
EBCL project progress – 1

- Revised A1/A2/B1.1 level descriptors and samples
  - Reception (6 categories)
  - Production (5 categories)
  - Interaction (9 categories)
  - Strategies (7 categories)
  - Reception (5 categories)
  - Production (3 categories)
  - Interaction (3 categories)

Spoken

Written
Generic and illustrative descriptors (A1-A2)

Socio-linguistic components (themes and topics)

Pragmatic components (language functions)

Linguistic components (vocabulary/character, grammar, grapheme, etc.)

Intercultural components (knowledge, attitude, skills, awareness)
EBCL project challenge – 1

- Different backgrounds and varieties of Chinese language

- Use of Chinese in Europe vs. use of Chinese in Greater China
  - Overlapping
  - Complementary
EBCL project challenge – 2

- Lack of corpora for real-life use of language
- Spoken form vs written form
EBCL project challenge – 3

- The gap between EBCL and CEFR
  - Graphemic element
  - Number of vocabulary (lexical items)

- The integration of the intercultural dimension
  - Being (doing + knowing)
EBCL project challenge – 4

- International collaboration
- Intercultural mediation and management
- Time, funding
EBCL implications

- Standardisation and sustainability
- Comparability of learning outcomes (with other CEFR-based European languages)
- Syllabus and course design
- Material/textbook development
- Assessment
- Policy making
- Employability
- Language certificate
EBCL project next steps

- Disseminate and pilot the outcomes (A1.1-B1.2) at universities, schools, and enterprises for modification and improvement

- Move up to C1 level descriptors to provide a complete set of descriptors in line with CEFR

- Flesh out the framework with adequate samples at different levels for compiling the Chinese Profile
EBCL Survey – UK HE

- EBCL Internet Survey May 2011
- Among 190 universities in the UK, 92 university run various Chinese courses.
- 6 universities in Ireland have various Chinese courses
- The number has been growing
EBCL Survey – UK HE

- Types of courses
  - Degree courses (single)
  - Degree courses (combined)
  - Credit courses (open access)
  - Diploma courses
  - Evening courses
  - Confucius institute courses
EBCL survey – UK HE

- Contact hours
  - Majority 1.5-2 hours per week, teaching 14-30 weeks per year
  - Diploma courses 3-4 hours per week, 20-22 weeks per year
  - Degree courses 6 hours per week, 20-22 weeks per year
UK HE-CEFR level (?)

- A sample from a university
- 4 hours per week, 22 weeks, total 88 hours
- 4 language skills
- With background of learning other European languages
- Fast track course
- Achieve A2
Schools CEFR

- UK
  - It normally takes 3 years school education to sit GCSE Chinese exam, which is A2 (C grade +). It is roughly equivalent to 350 hours.

- SLO (National expertisecentrum leerplanontwikkeling of Netherlands)
  - Suggested 480 contact sessions over 3 years to achieve A2.
Taiwan, Test Of Chinese as a Foreign Language (Reading)

- **A1**: Level 1, 180 hours (1-2 years) 500 words
- **A2**: Level 2, 480-720 hours (1-2 years), 800 words
- **B1**: Level 3, 720-960 hours (2-3 years), 1500 words
- **B2**: Level 4, 960-1920 hours (3-4 years), 5000 words
- **C1**: Level 5, More than 1920 hours, 8000 words
Possible solutions

- Set separate target for different skills.
  - Listening and Speaking skills can be developed at a similar speed to other modern languages.
  - Reading skill will be developed rather slowly but need to be included in the teaching plan. Chinese characters need to be taught although in small number.
  - Writing skill can be developed and assessed via using computer, not ideal for character learning but can release lots of time for the development of other skills.
What’s coming up...

- Brussels Symposium, Oct 2012 (Date/Venue TBC)
- Updated information about the project, please visit [http://ebcl.eu.com/](http://ebcl.eu.com/)

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