Chinese Language Learning, Teaching and Assessment in Europe: The Need for Standardization

An overview of the EBCL Project

XIX EACS Conference
Paris, September 4-8, 2012

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What’s EBCL

The European Benchmarking Chinese Language (EBCL) project aims at creating a reference framework for Chinese Language learning, teaching and assessment in Europe based upon the Common European Framework of Reference for languages (CEFR).
EBCL project team:
Under the guidance of the Advisory Board

- Freie University Berlin, GE
- University of Rennes II, FR
- “Sapienza” University of Rome, IT
- School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, UK

- Geschwister Scholl Gesamtschule, GE
- Collège-Lycée Emile Zola de Rennes, FR
- Convitto Nazionale "Vittorio Emanuele II" di Roma, IT
- Kingsford Community School, UK
EBCL project background

- Increasing cooperation between Europe and China
- Increasing demand and provision for Chinese language in Europe (and beyond)
- Need for consistency in Chinese language learning, teaching and assessment
- Shared interest from colleagues and institutions

The Chinese-speaking world

- Native Chinese-speaking countries
- > 5,000,000 Chinese speakers
- > 1,000,000 Chinese speakers
- > 500,000 Chinese speakers
- > 100,000 Chinese speakers
- Major Chinese-speaking communities
EBCL project objectives

- To propose a framework of competence descriptors for Chinese in European context
- To raise awareness of social and linguistic differences between Chinese and European languages
- To create a network in Europe and beyond for universities, teachers, and other institutions concerned
- To enhance European Universities’ internationalization
- To help and encourage students’ mobility
- To break away from the old tradition of a knowledge and structure based approach to teach Chinese in Europe and focus on a communicative approach.
- To provide a tool for the production of a new generation of curricula/syllabi, textbooks etc. for the European context.
**EBCL project timelines**

- **Work done so far (1)**

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<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Project launch</td>
<td>Survey</td>
<td>Rome Seminar:</td>
<td>Proposed framework</td>
<td>Paris Seminar: open consultation and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(London)</td>
<td>Project report</td>
<td>report on</td>
<td>components at A1/A2</td>
<td>open consultation and development</td>
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<td>on survey and</td>
<td>survey and</td>
<td>levels; language</td>
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<td>next steps</td>
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<td>activities</td>
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<td>planning; open</td>
<td>planning;</td>
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<td>presentation</td>
<td>open</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>presentation</td>
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**EBCL project timelines**

- **Work done so far (2) and next steps**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jan 2011</td>
<td>Interim report + transition</td>
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<tr>
<td>27-29 April 2012</td>
<td>Berlin Seminar: consultation on key issues, open presentation</td>
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<tr>
<td>18-19 July 2012</td>
<td>London seminar: closed seminar on last key issues</td>
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<tr>
<td>Summer 2012</td>
<td>Last revisions and preparation for Brussels Symposium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19-20 October 2012</td>
<td>Brussels symposium: promotion and further development</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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From CEFR to EBCL

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

European Benchmarking Chinese Language Project (Nov 2010)

http://ebcl.eu.com/
EBCL Project Challenge 1: Levels

- CEFR has 6 language proficiency levels

- Proficient user
- Independent user
- Basic user
EBCL has 12 language proficiency levels and sublevels

EBCL Language Proficiency Levels with reference to CEFR Levels

- **Basic User**
  - A1.1
  - A1
  - A2
  - A2+

- **Independent User**
  - B1
  - B1+
  - B2
  - B2+

- **Professional User**
  - C1
  - C1+
  - C2
EBCL Project Challenge 2: Adapting Descriptors/’Can do’ statements

- CEFR has Action-oriented Can-do statements for the different abilities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Listening</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Speaking</th>
<th>Writing</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 reread 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 topics 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 formulaic 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>

Reception (Spoken/Written)

Production (Spoken/Written)

Interaction (Spoken/Written)
Challenge 2: Adapting Descriptors/’Can do’ statements - EBCL Sources

1) Bank of CEFR related Descriptors:

- CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference) descriptors
- ELP (European Language Portfolio) self assessment descriptors, developped by the Swiss project LINGUALEVEL and including the outcomes of the Bergen CAN DO project.
- EQUALS (European Association for Quality Language Services) bank of descriptors, which has provided descriptors for “plus levels”, has filled the gaps on the original EQUALS/ALTE ELP checklists, has provided systematic coverage of a specific number of categories, and has developed further the descriptors for strategies.

2) Japanese Foundation ‘Can do’ statements:
- Japanese Standard for Japanese Language education based on CEFR
Challenge 2: Adapting Descriptors/’Can do’ statements – EBCL Methodology

EBCL adopted an intuitive and qualitative approach:

- In some cases the CEFR descriptors were judged suitable and did not undergo any changes.
- In some cases descriptors coming from other sources were added to better specify and contextualize the original CEFR descriptor or to provide a descriptor for a sublevel.
- In some cases the CEFR or other descriptors were slightly changed to better suit Chinese language learners.
EBCL Project Progress 1:

- A1.1/A2+ level descriptors
  - Reception (6 categories)
  - Production (5 categories)
  - Interaction (9 categories)
  - Strategies Interaction (6 categories)
  - Reception (5 categories)
  - Production (3 categories)
  - Interaction (3 categories)

Spoken

Written
## CEFR/EBCL competence range

<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><strong>C2</strong></td>
<td>Texts</td>
<td>Notions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>C1</strong></td>
<td>Operations</td>
<td>Sub-themes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>B2</strong></td>
<td>Events</td>
<td>Sub-themes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>B1</strong></td>
<td>Objects</td>
<td>Themes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>B1</strong></td>
<td>Persons</td>
<td>Sub-themes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A2</strong></td>
<td>Institution</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A1</strong></td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Functions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Domains**

- Personal
- Public
- Educational
- Occupational
EBCL project progress – 2

- Generic and illustrative descriptors
  - List of themes and topics
  - List of language functions
    - Lexical components (vocabulary/character, grammar, discourse, etc.)
    - *Intercultural components (knowledge, attitude, skills, critical cultural awareness)
EBCL Project: other challenges and issues

- Whether/where to include the graphemic competence
- What’s the role of Pinyin and where to include it
- Aside from the words’ list, is the character’s list needed?
- Writing with electronic devices means being able to write in Chinese?
EBCL Project: possible developments

- To work on upper levels (B1-C2)
- To create a Language Portfolio for Chinese
To Know more about European Benchmarking Chinese Language Project (EBCL) please visit our website

www.ebcl.eu.com
Thank you!
谢谢！

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