

THE CHINESE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG

Department of Chinese Language and Literature
Evaluation of the Effectiveness of the Chinese 334 Curriculum

1. Approach

In the new 4-year curriculum, a 6-credit programme of Chinese Language Core Requirements has been launched for all students, irrespective of their major subjects. A role of the Department of Chinese Language and Literature (CHLL) is to offer courses for all undergraduate students to fulfil the Core Requirements in order to achieve the mission in laying solid foundations in the Chinese language for students to be proficient in communication in Chinese and nurturing them with a sound knowledge of classical and modern Chinese through the appreciation of ancient and contemporary classics.

2. Deployment

The 6-credit programme includes two 3 unit courses, namely CHLT 1100 “University Chinese I” and CHLT 1200 “University Chinese II”. CHLT 1100 “University Chinese I” has been offered for all year one students since 2012-13 while CHLT 1200 “University Chinese II” has been offered for all year two students since 2013-14. The aims of this programme are (i) to lay solid foundations in the Chinese language for our students to be proficient in communication, and (ii) to nurture our students with a sound knowledge of classical and modern Chinese. Structurally, the programme is composed of six learning units, each focusing on one of following language abilities: Unit 1: Language awareness; Unit 2: Self-learning strategies; Unit 3: Observation; Unit 4: Expressiveness; Unit 5: Organization; and Unit 6: Critical thinking. Each unit is aligned with each of the following outcomes respectively.

The curriculum integrates the traditional with the modern, bringing together the past and the present into classroom learning. While each unit introduces students to the ancient and contemporary classics, it also at the same time addresses the language needs in their daily activity here and now. Towards this end, the programme selects representative works of the canon for classroom reading, thereby enriching the language syllabus with a cultural dimension. A unique feature of the programme that is welcomed by many students is the Chinese literary walk on campus. Students are requested to take part in the walk under the guidance of the teacher to explore the special learning experience of the Chinese language and literature. To enhance the effectiveness of learning, a campus-wide activity for all CUHK students called “Literary CUHK 2015-16” has been launched in November 2015. This activity is organized by the Chinese Language Teaching Development Centre of the Department, which aims at arousing students’ interest in creative writing in Chinese and enhancing their observation and expressive skills through writing competition. It is believed that

there is no better way to appreciate the beauty of the campus than to visit the scenic and historical spots on its campus described in the literary works about CUHK by the famous modern writers, following their footprints and learning from their thoughts with enjoyment. Components of creative writing, Chinese literary walk, and the appreciation of Hong Kong literature and traditional classics have been put more emphasis on to nurture our students with good knowledge of Chinese classics and to raise their literary level and cultural awareness with all new experience.

In addition, the curriculum also selects appropriate topics for material development, including both web-learning programmes and assessment software. Topics include common errors in characters and word usages, character variations, common grammatical errors, and sound patterns, preparing students for the language requirements in their respective disciplines and for the language demands they will have to embrace, upon graduation, at work or in further academic pursuits.

Apart from CHLT 1100 “University Chinese I” and CHLT 1200 “University Chinese II”, various types of language enhancement courses are offered, such as elementary courses for students with heterogeneous backgrounds and non-credit bearing self-learning Chinese courses for students with advanced standing who are exempted from the University’s Chinese Language Core Requirement. The self-learning courses that have been offered include CHLT 1103 “Self-Learning Chinese I”, CHLT 1203 “Self-Learning Chinese II”, and CHLT 1104 “Self-Learning Elementary Chinese”. In 2016-17, a new self-learning course CHLT 1105 “Self-Learning Chinese” is expected to be offered to replace both CHLT 1103 “Self-Learning Chinese I” and CHLT 1203 “Self-Learning Chinese II”.

3. External Referencing

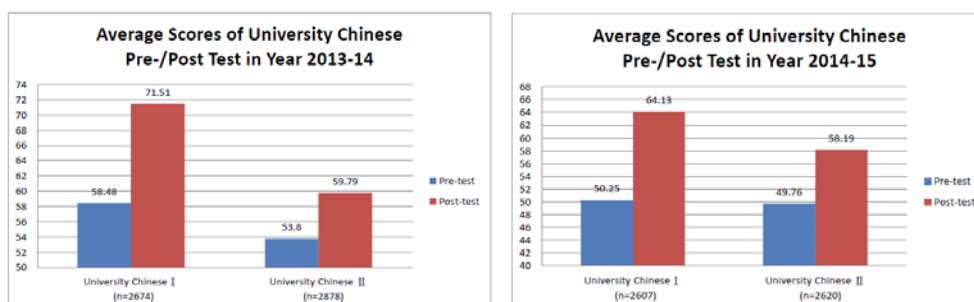
Forums and seminars have been held to review the development and implementation of the new Chinese programme and to share experiences among colleagues. The first forum on university Chinese teaching and learning was organized in April 2011, providing a platform for colleagues from all local universities to exchange valuable experience of Chinese teaching and management in the new 4-year curriculum. The second forum was jointly organized by the Department and the T.T. Ng Chinese Language Research Centre (CLRC) of the Institute of Chinese Studies in April 2014. Colleagues in charge of the university Chinese programmes from all local universities were invited to present the implementation of the new Chinese curriculum after two years of working within the new 4-year curriculum. The reports of the presentations have been published in a special volume of *Newsletter of Chinese Language* in July 2014.

The Department has been cooperating closely with the Centre for Learning Enhancement and Research (CLEAR) to improve the curriculum under various joint projects, such as “Professional Development of Teaching Staff Evaluation of

Students' First-Year Experience", "Reflection on New Curriculum", "TDG 2012-15 - Additional Teaching / Professional Development Activities", "Teaching Development Grants for 2015-16 Roll-over Year", and "Professional Development Activities of Front-line Teaching Staff 2015-16". The Chinese courses have been enriched with various online self-learning components with the help of the Independent Learning Centre (ILC). There will also be more collaboration with CLEAR, CLRC, ILC, and other units in improving the curriculum planning and development.

4. Results

The university-wide Course and Teaching Evaluation Questionnaires (CTE) are administered to all students who are taking University Chinese and other Chinese language courses, which can reflect the effectiveness of the courses. A pre-test and a uniform post-test for both CHLT 1100 "University Chinese I" and CHLT 1200 "University Chinese II" are administered on all students attending these two courses to monitor their learning progress and their level of Chinese language proficiency across years and across majors. Partial findings of a project supported by the Resource Allocation Committee (RAC) for monitoring of Chinese and English language proficiency for 2013-16 are presented in the following two charts that show the improvement of two cohorts of students taking CHLT 1100 "University Chinese I" and CHLT 1200 "University Chinese II" in 2013-14 and 2014-15, respectively, by comparing the average scores of the pre-test and the post-test. The figures clearly indicate that the improvement is positive. The mechanism to monitor the progress of the Chinese language proficiency of the students will continue to be refined.



A continuous assessment tool is also adopted to measure the learning outcomes of the students, for example, to evaluate and to improve the language abilities of students in various aspects like language awareness, self-learning strategies, observation, expressiveness, organization, and critical thinking by case study of their names and interesting linguistic phenomena in the society, group projects, theme-based compositions, oral presentations, debates, etc., throughout the two terms of study, hoping that students will develop a positive attitude towards language learning in their university life and beyond.

5. Improvement

In addition to conducting the CTE exercise, qualitative feedback is solicited through regular view sharing sessions on the curriculum for evaluation of course effectiveness, which are held in every term to collect students' opinions on the courses through interactive discussion. Quality assurance (QA) of the programme is closely monitored by an internal QA committee set up by the Department, which is comprised of experts from the colleagues in the Department at the professorial grade who are familiar with the assessments of the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (HKEAA) and language teaching and acquisition. An in-house workshop on curriculum review is organized every summer for teaching staff to share teaching experience and to examine the existing syllabuses. A retreat for all teachers was held in May 2014 to enhance the quality and effectiveness of the curriculum.