Some perspectives of language learners and teachers on the Junior Cycle Chinese Language and Culture short course

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1. Executive Summary

The Chinese Language and Culture short course is experienced by this sample of Junior Cycle students as an enjoyable, useful and engaging programme.

- Students demonstrated high language learning motivation towards Chinese, correlated with their interest in learning other languages. Students tended to favour the cultural aspects of their lessons over language learning content.

- Spoken and written production in Chinese was identified as an aspect in need of further development. Less than half of the students reported being able to write some basic Chinese characters. Teachers reported difficulties experienced by students in producing or identifying Chinese characters.

- All teachers identified a lack of sufficient Chinese language input modelled by the teacher as well as the need for more tasks which foster student production. The lessons observed demonstrated a lack of opportunities for student-to-student interaction.

- Some variety in teaching methods was observed. Approximately half of the teachers provided opportunities for collaboration in the classroom. A whole-class approach was the most common method used.

- Teachers followed a similar pattern of instructional activities, characterised by a review of the previous lesson's work, introduction of new content, and a focus on culture towards the end of the lesson.

- Instruction through the medium of English occurred in almost all of the classrooms; only one lesson was delivered bilingually in English and Mandarin.

- A range of age-appropriate activities and materials was used, appropriate for students' proficiency levels in Chinese, although a lack of visible Chinese language resources was noted in the classrooms observed. Teachers deployed a range of digital tools in their lessons.

- Learning outcomes tended to be grouped within Strand 1 (Myself, my family and friends) of the course's four strands, focussing on, e.g. basic greetings, introductions and numbers.

- Most teachers reported lack of prior formal training and experience of teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language before teaching the short course. Teacher engagement with the short course specification and strands was varied. Several good practices in assessment were observed.

2. Introduction

The Chinese Language and Culture short course introduces Junior Cycle students in Irish post-primary schools to the language and culture of China over 100 contact hours. The short course is designed to provide students with basic key skills in order to equip them with a learning base for future Chinese studies. It includes cultural aspects which are integral to successful communication in Chinese. The short course curriculum comprises four strands: (1) 'Myself, my family and friends', (2) 'Out and about in public places', (3) 'Education and school', and (4) 'Chinese and young global citizens'. Learning outcomes are articulated for the short course with specification of vocabulary and Chinese characters to be addressed by strand. In addition to *Chinese Language and Culture: Specification for Junior Cycle Short Course* published by the NCCA in June 2016, *Junior Cycle Chinese Language and Culture Short Course Guidelines for Classroom-Based Assessment* were also published in January 2019.

This document reports on a small-scale study of the Chinese Language and Culture short course conducted between January and May 2019 by researchers from Trinity College Dublin (Centre for Language and Communication Studies) and Post-Primary Languages Ireland. The research team visited eleven classrooms in nine schools across Ireland as part of the study. Our evaluation involved a number of research instruments designed to investigate the language learning and teaching of the students and teachers engaged in the Chinese short course:

1. Questionnaires were used to assess student language attitudes and motivation as well as their experiences of learning Chinese (n=94).

2. A classroom observation protocol which captured the perspectives of two independent observers (including at least one Chinese speaker) in eleven classrooms.

3. Teacher interviews, audio-recorded and transcribed (n=8).

The main findings are described below, organised by research instrument.

3. Some perspectives on the Chinese Language and Culture short course

3.1 Learner Questionnaire

A short, four-page questionnaire printed in A4 size on double sides was administered in paper format by the researchers before the start of classroom observation sessions. No personally identifying information was collected. The questionnaire took approximately three minutes to complete and contained four parts. Part 1 was adapted from the international version of the standardised computerised mini-Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (mini-AMTB) (Tennant & Gardner, 2004), with 10 items proposed for agreement or disagreement. These items addressed the constructs of language learning interest, effort, anxiety and motivational orientation. Part 2 addressed specific aspects of the short course, including enjoyment, whether students would recommend it to others, learning outcomes and favoured activities. Part 3 and Part 4 of the questionnaire asked students about their motivation and anxiety using the graphic representation of a thermometer, following Tennant and Gardner's model (ibid.). Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used to draw conclusions from the data. The questionnaire is reproduced in Appendix One. The following outlines the key findings from the questionnaire.

A sample of 94 students responded to the questionnaire. In terms of gender composition, the sample was balanced (45 female, 47 male, 2 other). No significant differences were found regarding gender.

Female	48%
Male	50%
Other	2%
Total	100%

Table 1: Gender breakdown

Responding to a seven-point Likert scale, students demonstrated a medium to strong desire to learn Chinese in general (PT1 Q3, m=4.90), and their desire was significantly related to their strong interest in learning languages other than Chinese (PT1 Q2, m=5.29) (r=0.47, p<.01). Students demonstrated a medium to high positive attitude to learning Chinese (PT1 Q4, m=4.90).

		Mean	Std. Deviation
1	Integrative motivation	4.59	1.472
2	Interest in language learning	5.29	1.292
3	Desire to learn Chinese	4.90	1.704
4	Attitude toward learning Chinese	5.12	1.605
5	Attitude toward Chinese instruction	4.97	1.623
6	Instrumental motivation	4.85	1.579
7	Chinese use anxiety	3.70	1.568
8	Attitude toward Chinese course	5.18	1.510
9	Chinese course anxiety	3.31	1.620
10	Motivational anxiety	4.68	1.305

Table 2: Descriptive statistics, mini-AMTB items Part 1

Students' instrumental motivation (m=4.85, characterised as 'my feelings towards learning Chinese for practical purposes such as to improve my career') was slightly higher than their integrative motivation (m=4.59, characterised as 'my motivation to learn Chinese in order to start interacting with Chinese-speaking people'). In Part 3, students were asked to complete a language thermometer, where they were invited to indicate a point between zero ('not motivated at all') and one hundred ('very motivated indeed'). The mean score was 63.

Students reported positive attitudes regarding the short course (PT1 Q8, m=5.18) and positive attitudes toward the teaching of Chinese in the short course (PT1 Q5, m=4.97). More than 90% of respondents enjoyed the course (PT2 Q2: 'Do you enjoy this Chinese course?'). Only nine students responded negatively.

Do you enjoy this Chinese course?	Percent
I love it	30.9%
I like it	31.9%
It's OK	27.7%
I don't like it	9.6%
I hate it	0%
Total	100%

Table 3: Short course reported enjoyment

A large majority of students (94%) would recommend the short course in Chinese Language and Culture to their friends (PT2 Q1).

Would you recommend this short course to your friends?	Percent
I would tell all my friends they should take this course	31.9%
I would tell some of my friends they should take this course	61.7%
I wouldn't recommend this course to my friends	6.4%
Total	100%

Table 4: Short course likelihood to recommend to friends

When asked to select any relevant statements (*fun, difficult, easy, impossible, worth all the work, waste of time, useful*) to describe their experience of learning Chinese in the short course, a majority responded that it is 'fun' (73%), 'useful' (60%) and 'hard' (53%) (PT2 Q3).

In terms of attitudes to classroom activities, students were asked about their most and least favoured parts of the Chinese short course, with a choice of five options (*culture, Pinyin, Chinese characters, the tones, grammar/vocabulary*). More than half of the students selected culture as the best part of the course. Only positive responses were collected in this item regarding cultural learning in the course.

What is the BEST part about learning Chinese in this course?	Percent
Culture	**61.7%**
Pinyin	8.5%
Chinese characters	18.1%
The tones	2.1%
Grammar/vocabulary	9.6%
Total	100%

Table 5: Most favoured activities

What is the WORST part about learning Chinese in this course?	Percent
Pinyin	5.3%
Chinese characters	**37.2%**
The tones	23.4%
Grammar/vocabulary	33.0%
Total	98.9%

Table 6: Least favoured activities

Students were asked two questions regarding their anxiety in speaking Chinese in general (PT1 Q7), and their anxiety level in the course in particular (PT1 Q9) using a Likert scale ranging from one (Very Low) to seven (Very High). This sample of students demonstrated low levels of anxiety in their responses to both questions (Q7 m=3.70, Q9 m=3.31). Part 4 of the questionnaire also explored students' affective motivation in terms of anxiety, engagement and willingness to speak ('any feelings of apprehension, worry or nervousness you feel about learning or speaking Chinese'). Low levels of anxiety were recorded in the form of an anxiety thermometer which, like the motivation thermometer, invited students to respond using a scale of zero ('not anxious at all') to one hundred ('very anxious indeed'). The mean score was 32.

In terms of learning outcomes, students were asked to report on what they can do in Chinese. This list of activities, reproduced below, was compiled using the short course specification (NCCA, 2016). The majority of students reported progress in the activities outlined in Strand 1 of the short course Guidelines, including exchanging simple greetings in Chinese (86%) and using basic numbers (87%). Less than half of the students reported being able to understand Pinyin (romanised Chinese characters based on their pronunciation) or being able to write some basic characters. Students reported competence in receptive and productive activities such as exchanging simple greetings and using basic numbers, but a lack of competence in communicative functions such as asking for directions, understanding weather forecast or telling the time in Chinese. The Can Do statements presented to students included:

1. I can understand simple instructions in Chinese
2. I can exchange simple greetings in Chinese
3. I can understand Pinyin
4. I can use basic numbers in Chinese
5. I can say my age and birthday in Chinese
6. I can understand some basic characters
7. I can send a simple message in Pinyin
8. I can write my name in Chinese characters
9. I can talk about some real things in Chinese (like my daily life, my hobbies)
10. I can write some basic characters
11. I can talk about my likes and dislikes in Chinese
12. I can ask for directions in Chinese
13. I can understand a weather forecast in Chinese
14. I can tell the time in Chinese

In addition to questions regarding learning Chinese in the short course, students were asked about teaching in the course in terms of a negative to positive attitude (PT1 Q5, 'My attitude toward the teaching of Chinese in this particular course'). Students' responses regarding positive or negative attitudes to teaching in the course correlated with their overall motivation (r=0.72, p<.01), attitude to learning Chinese (r=0.75, p<.01), attitude to learning Chinese in the short course (r=0.78, p<.01), anxiety level in the course (r=0.27, p<.05), students' effort to learn Chinese (r=0.61, p<0.01) and their enjoyment of the course (r=0.72, p<.01).

Overall, there was a significant relationship between learner motivation and attitude to learning Chinese in general (r=0.77, p<.01), attitude toward this Chinese course (r=0.75, p<.01), and the level of difficulty experienced in learning Chinese (r=0.69, p<.01).

The questionnaire was designed to capture any students for whom Chinese may be a home language. Five students reported a native Chinese-speaking family member. These students showed a stronger desire to learn Chinese (PT1 Q3, mean score of 6.00 versus overall mean of 4.84) but also reported stronger anxiety in speaking Chinese (PT1 Q7, mean score of 4.60 versus overall mean of 3.65).

Chinese-speaking family member at home	Percent
Yes	5%
No	95%
Total	100%

Table 7: Chinese as a home language

Finally, students were provided with an opportunity to add comments about the course. Several indicative statements are provided below.

> *Mandarin is actually quite an easy course (with the effort) and it is mostly more fun than most subjects. The times when we learn about culture are my favourite as it breaks away from constantly learning new words.*

> *It is hard but very fun. Though if you are not prepared to work, you won't do very well! If you are though, it is very fun:)*

> *It's very very hard with the drawings instead of words. And they talk too fast so I don't understand what they are saying.*

> *The Chinese characters are difficult to understand, I wish I could. It is very interesting.*

> *It is fun but difficult. It's cool to learn about such an amazing language that is widely spoken and I hope that I can use Chinese for my future career.*

3.2 Classroom observations

Classrooms observations were conducted in eleven short course lessons in the first half of 2019. A team of two researchers observed each classroom, each including one native Chinese speaker. The observers were introduced by the classroom teacher, and they did not participate in the subsequent classroom activities. An observation protocol was completed by the researchers (see Appendix Three). The following summarises the key themes arising from the classroom observations, aggregated across the sample of classrooms observed. The classroom observations showed students who seemed for the most part to be comfortable, confident and engaged in the Chinese short course lessons.

3.2.1 Teaching approaches

Some variety in teaching methods was observed. Approximately half of teachers provided opportunities for collaboration in the classroom, including small group activities (in four classrooms), pair activities (in seven classrooms) as well as one-to-one instruction (in six classrooms). A whole-class approach was the most common method used in the eleven classes observed. In the majority of the classes observed, students were seated in fixed desks and/or in rows. Five classrooms were characterised as interactive, with a stimulating classroom environment. Two of the eleven classrooms involved little to no interaction amongst learners, where the teachers did most of the talking. In most classes, students appeared to busy, attentive and engaged throughout the lesson, although, in several classes, some students appeared to lose attention halfway through the lesson, creating a distracting classroom environment for other students. A range of teaching strategies and methodologies was observed, with a variety of levels of student engagement. The most common approaches and lesson activities employed by teachers were the following:

1. Teacher questions/student answers (10 classrooms)
2. Use of video clips in a whole-class approach (7 classrooms)
3. Listening to audio clips in a whole-class approach (7 classrooms)
4. Worksheet-based activities (6 classrooms)
5. Reading aloud (6 classrooms)
6. Drills/repetitions (5 classrooms)
7. Problem-solving activities (4 classrooms)
8. Guessing games (4 classrooms)

In a large majority of lessons, teachers followed a similar pattern of instructional activities, characterised by a review of the previous lesson's work, introduction of content through the activities listed above, and a focus on culture towards the end of the lesson. In several classes, a dynamic cycle of review of previous content and introduction of new content was observed.

3.2.2 Target language use

In terms of target language use, English language instruction was predominant in almost all of the classrooms. Only one lesson was delivered bilingually in English and Mandarin. Written content was provided in both Chinese characters and Pinyin during lessons, with a predominance of one or the other varying by teacher. Native English-speaking teachers tended to use more Chinese characters in written input than their native Chinese-speaking counterparts. The majority of the classrooms lacked student-to-student interaction, with communicative activities directed both by and towards the teacher, most commonly observed in an IRF discussion pattern (Teacher Initiative, Student Response, Teacher Feedback structure).

3.2.3 Materials and resources

All teachers used a range of age-appropriate activities and materials appropriate for students' proficiency levels in Chinese. However, a lack of visible Chinese language resources was noted. Three classrooms had some Chinese vocabulary displayed in the classroom. Two classrooms displayed both Chinese vocabulary lists and posters about Chinese culture. The remaining classrooms had no visible Chinese materials in the classroom. Teachers deployed a range of ICT tools in their lessons. The large majority of the teachers observed used their computer in the classroom. Student iPads were used in four classrooms, with student computers, teacher iPads and interactive smart boards each used in two classrooms. One teacher also encouraged students to use personal headphones for pronunciation practice.

3.2.4 Language skills

Turning to teaching language skills, all lessons observed contained listening exercises as well as the opportunity for spoken production (ten classrooms), spoken interaction (nine classrooms), writing (seven classrooms) and reading (six classrooms). Some reading and writing activities were conducted in Pinyin. In more than half of the classrooms observed, there was a balance of receptive and productive skills. In three lessons, teachers focused predominantly on receptive skills rather than productive skills. Few learning strategies were observed overall. Most teachers simply encouraged students to ask questions and to take notes. Only three of the eleven teachers demonstrated visual or memorisation strategies in their lessons.

3.3 Teacher interviews

Short course teachers were invited to participate in a short post-lesson interview with the researchers. Eight teachers were interviewed in English, with responses audio-recorded and transcribed. A semi-structured interview format was employed, following a standard template of core questions (see Appendix Two). Questions covered topics such as:

1. Teacher background, experience, teaching approach & use of materials/resources
2. Junior Cycle short course, course specification, key skills
3. Reflections on the class observation, whether it was typical
4. Student preferences, favoured activities
5. Target language use, focus on language skills
6. Assessment and learning outcomes

Of the eight teachers interviewed, half had received prior formal training in Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language as well as a short intensive training course by the Confucius Institute. Only one of the eight interviewees had teaching experience greater than one year, seven of the teachers were novice instructors combining postgraduate study with working as Volunteer Chinese Teachers for the Confucius Institute in Ireland. The Chinese short course was the first experience of teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language for the eight teachers interviewed.

3.3.1 Target language use and materials

All teachers acknowledged a serious lack of Chinese language input in their classes. They tried to address this input gap through singing Chinese songs or combining their language teaching tasks with teaching aspects of Chinese culture in a more integrated approach to language and culture teaching. Reflecting on the predominance of whole-class teaching activities, teachers acknowledged a desire to employ more collaborative, interactive and communicative activities in their lesson plans, whilst noting the lack of such activities during the observed lessons. No series of textbooks has yet been designed for the short course. Seven teachers reported using the textbook *Happy Chinese*, published by Hanban. All the teachers described creating and using their own materials, in the form of PowerPoint slides, videos, images, and printed handouts. Only one teacher had structured teaching plans for the short course lessons. Teacher continuity was mentioned as a challenge, as often the Chinese Volunteer Teachers remain in Ireland for a relatively short period during their postgraduate studies, making handover and communication between teachers sometimes difficult.

3.3.2 Key skills

There was a focus on receptive rather than productive skills in most lessons, and teachers noted that this was reflected in assessment outcomes where students performed better in listening tasks than in speaking tasks. Many teachers stressed difficulties experienced by students in producing or identifying Chinese characters. Even supported by the use of Pinyin, most teachers noticed challenges for students in the development of reading and writing skills in Chinese. Grammatical items in particular were difficult for students to acquire.

3.3.3 Assessment

Assessment practices varied greatly according to the teachers. Some teachers did not use any formal tests or other summative assessment procedures, using formative methods such as quizzes and presentation activities. Several teachers used both formative and summative procedures, including midterm projects and final tests designed to assess learning outcomes in all language and culture skills.

3.3.4 Short course specification

Most teachers demonstrated some understanding of the key skills and strands specified in the short course and how these could be realised through Chinese short course lessons. Two of the eight teachers had not read the short course specification. Several teachers reported following their own lesson plans designed to develop language skills rather than the strands specified, reporting that they found the strands difficult to follow.

4 Conclusion

The short course in Chinese Language and Culture as observed and reported on here by teachers and students is clearly perceived as an enjoyable, useful and engaging programme. The students in this small sample demonstrated high language learning motivation toward Chinese in general and the short course in particular, correlated with their interest in learning other languages. Teachers are working hard to deliver engaging and varied lessons, as observed in eleven classrooms.

Developing productive skills in Chinese remains a challenge within the short course. Opportunities for sustained and engaged linguistic production and practice are necessary to meet the descriptors laid out for A1 level in the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (Council of Europe, 2002). The teacher plays a key role at this level in modelling and fostering opportunities for engagement beyond drills, repetitions and teacher questions. A range of varied teaching strategies and approaches in addition to a whole-class approach will allow students to interact and engage with materials in meaningful ways, especially if supported by enhanced use of the target language by the instructor as well as visible Chinese language resources in classrooms.

Training in the junior cycle programme as well as Continued Professional Development will be necessary to ensure that teachers are delivering lessons which reflect the specification of the short course in Chinese Language and Culture, its statements of learning, key skills, learning outcomes, assessment and reporting. Samples of materials and classwork will enable teachers to have a clear understanding of the standard and nature of the level indicators at Level 3 of the National Framework of Qualifications. The sample exponents contained in the short course specification could be used in conjunction with CPD opportunities and materials design. Opportunities are needed for teachers to share and pass on resources, as well as to discuss their experiences and knowledge of the short course that they have acquired in their time teaching Chinese Language and Culture before leaving their school in order to ensure continuity.

The short course provides learners with a basic introduction to the language and culture of China as well as a learning base for future studies. Further attention to learning strategies and engagement will consolidate this learning base. A move away from a teacher-centred classroom will support students in becoming more self-directed in their learning and in identifying what helps them to achieve their own learning goals. The stated focus of the short course is on understanding and speaking basic Chinese in everyday situations through active engagement in activities and through using digital media. Whilst ICT resources are in use, further engagement in activities will enhance learning outcomes. Students' experience of learning Chinese is positive as reported here, with low levels of language anxiety and high levels of enjoyment. The short course will achieve even greater confidence and competence in its learners through extending the opportunities to speak and write Chinese throughout the programme.

5 References

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NCCA (2015). *Framework for Junior Cycle*. Dublin: Department of Education and Skills.

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Appendix One   Student Questionnaire

Part 1. The purpose of the following statements is to determine your feelings about a number of issues associated with learning Mandarin Chinese. You are asked to rate each statement to indicate how it applies to you. We would appreciate it if you could try to answer all the questions on this page, so we can include your answers in our overall analysis. Please circle the level that best describes your feelings.

1. **My motivation to learn Chinese in order to start interacting with Chinese-speaking people is:**
    1 (Weak)   2   3   4   5   6   7   (Strong)

2. **My interest in languages other than Chinese is:**
    1 (Very Low)   2   3   4   5   6   7   (Very High)

3. **My desire to learn Chinese is:**
    1 (Weak)   2   3   4   5   6   7   (Strong)

4. **My overall attitude toward learning Chinese is:**
    1 (Negative)   2   3   4.   5   6   7   (Positive)

5. **My attitude toward the teaching of Chinese in this particular course is:**
    1 (Negative)   2   3   4.   5   6   7   (Positive)

6. **If I were to rate my feelings about learning Chinese for practical purposes such as to improve my career, I would say that they are:**
    1 (Weak)   2   3   4   5   6   7   (Strong)

7. **My anxiety in speaking Chinese is:**
    1 (Very Low)   2   3   4   5   6   7   (Very High)

8. **My attitude toward this Chinese course is:**
    1 (Negative)   2   3   4.   5   6   7   (Positive)

9. **My anxiety level in this Chinese course is:**
    1 (Very Low)   2   3   4   5   6   7   (Very High)

10. **I would characterize how hard I work at learning Chinese as:**
    1 (Very Little) 2   3   4   5   6   7   (Very Much)

Part 2. Below are some questions about this Mandarin Chinese course from your perspective.

1. **Would you recommend this short course in Chinese Language and Culture to your friends?**

   1. I would tell all my friends that they should take this course
   2. I would tell some of my friends that they should take this course
   3. I wouldn't recommend this course to my friends

2. **Do you enjoy this Chinese course? Tick just one answer:**

   1. I love it
   2. I like it
   3. It's OK
   4. I don't like it
   5. I hate it

3. **Can you describe your experience of learning Chinese here? Tick all the words that apply to you:**

   1. It's fun
   2. It's difficult
   3. It's easy
   4. It's impossible
   5. It's worth all the work
   6. It's a waste of time
   7. It's useful

4. **What can you do in Chinese? Tick all the things that you can do now:**

   1. I can understand simple instructions in Chinese
   2. I can exchange simple greetings in Chinese
   3. I can understand Pinyin
   4. I can use basic numbers in Chinese
   5. I can say my age and birthday in Chinese
   6. I can understand some basic characters
   7. I can send a simple message in Pinyin
   8. I can write my name in Chinese characters
   9. I can talk about some real things in Chinese (like my daily life, my hobbies)
   10. I can write some basic characters
   11. I can talk about my likes and dislikes in Chinese
   12. I can ask for directions in Chinese
   13. I can understand a weather forecast in Chinese
   14. I can tell the time in Chinese

Part 3. Below is a "motivation thermometer." Please think about how you are feeling right now as you begin this lesson. Consider how hard you think you will try to learn the material, how much you want to learn the material, and how much you will enjoy this session and then summarize your overall motivation by circling the number on the thermometer that you think best describes your level of motivation. If you want, you can colour in the thermometer as well.

1000   (very motivated indeed)

900

800

700

600

500

400

300

200

100

00   (not motivated at all)
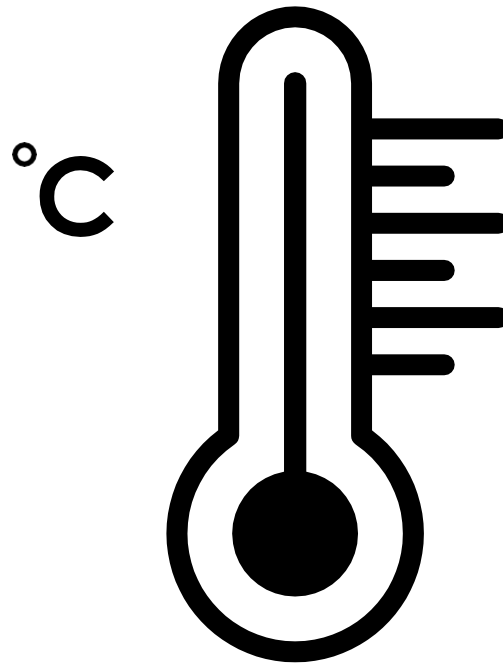
Part 4. Below is an "anxiety thermometer." Please think about how you are feeling right now as you begin this lesson. Consider any feelings of apprehension, worry or nervousness you feel about learning or speaking Chinese and then summarize your overall anxiety by circling the number on the thermometer that you think best describes your level of anxiety. If you want, you can colour in the thermometer as well.

1000   (very anxious indeed)

900

800

700

600

500

400

300

200

100

00   (not anxious at all)

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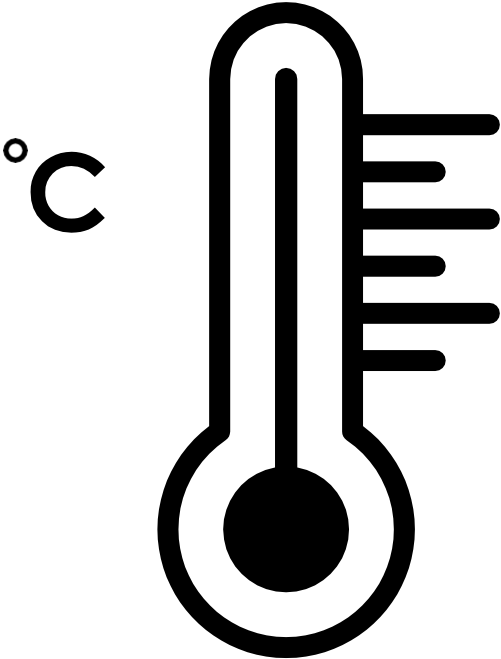
Appendix Two   Teacher interview questions

1. **Could you tell us a little bit about yourself and your interest in teaching Chinese as a foreign language? e.g. How long have you been teaching Chinese? What's your own educational background?**

    1. Could you describe your teaching approach?
    2. Would you say that you use an activity-based or task-based approach to teaching Chinese?
    3. What kind of materials and resources do you tend to use? Where do you get them from?

2. **When did you first learn about the Junior Cycle short course in Mandarin Chinese?**

    1. What do you think about the short course in general?
    2. Are you following the short course specification – have you seen that document?
    3. Are the Key Skills of the Junior Cycle part of your course in any way?
    4. What about the content you are teaching in class – can you choose what you want to teach? Or is everything based on the short course specification?
    5. What are your thoughts on the four strands in the course specification (Myself, my family and my friends; Out and about in public places; Education and school; Chinese and young global citizens). Are these good ways to structure things, are they relevant and meaningful to your students?

3. **Tell us a bit about the class we just observed – was that a typical class for you?**

    1. How do you think your students find learning Chinese? What are the hard parts for them? What are the parts they most enjoy? It's easy
    2. What is the most successful way of learning Chinese, in your opinion? What kind of activities and strategies help students to become successful learners? It's worth all the work
    3. What about the balance between Chinese and English, are students getting enough Chinese input in your opinion?

4. **How are your students progressing:**

    1. Listening?
    2. Reading?
    3. Writing?
    4. Speaking? Pronunciation and tones? Grammatical forms & vocabulary

5. **What about assessment? Could you describe the assessment used in class, how are the learning outcomes measured?**

Appendix Three   Classroom observation protocol

The needs of students and teachers in relation to the Short Course in Mandarin Chinese

Classroom Observation Protocol

Date: _____

Start/end time: _____

School: _____

Class: _____

Researcher: _____

No. of pupils: _____

A.   **General observations**

1.   **Classroom instruction style (tick all that apply)**
   - ☐ Full class instruction
   - ☐ Small group activities
   - ☐ Pair activities
   - ☐ 1:1 instruction

2.   **Classroom furniture arrangement (tick all that apply)**
   - ☐ Fixed seats/desks, cannot be moved
   - ☐ Seats/desks in rows throughout the lesson
   - ☐ Seats/desks arranged in small groups/pairs
   - ☐ Pupils move around during the class

3.   **Classroom instructions**
   - ☐ Delivered in English only
   - ☐ Delivered mostly in English with some instructions in Mandarin
   - ☐ Delivered bilingually in English and Mandarin
   - ☐ Delivered mostly in Mandarin with some instructions in English
   - ☐ Delivered in Mandarin only

4.   **Age-appropriate activities:**
   - ☐ Age-appropriate tasks & materials are mostly used
   - ☐ Tasks & materials appropriate for younger learners rather than current age-group
   - ☐ Tasks & materials appropriate for older learners rather than age-group

5.   **Proficiency level-appropriate activities:**
   - ☐ Proficiency level-appropriate tasks & materials used
   - ☐ Tasks & materials appropriate for less proficient learners (too easy)
   - ☐ Tasks & materials appropriate for more proficient learners (too advanced)

6.   **Classroom environment (tick all that apply)**
   - ☐ Many students busy & engaged throughout
   - ☐ Moments when many students seemed disengaged
   - ☐ Interactive lesson
   - ☐ Noisy classroom (with learner talk)
   - ☐ Quiet classroom (with teacher talk & learner responses when sought)

B. Observation indicators	Notes/examples
1. Technology used in the class: (tick all that apply) ☐ Teacher computer ☐ Student computers ☐ Teacher iPad ☐ Student iPads ☐ Smartboard ☐ Mobile phones ☐ Other (describe under Notes)	
2. Types of instructional tasks observed: (tick all that apply) ☐ Drills/repetition ☐ Textbook-based activities ☐ Worksheet-based activities ☐ Guessing games ☐ Read aloud ☐ Storytelling ☐ Role-play ☐ Question and answer ☐ Gap exercises ☐ Jigsaw/reordering ☐ Music/singing ☐ Art/craft ☐ Experiential activities ☐ Information gap activities ☐ Problem-solving ☐ Watching video clips ☐ Listening to audio clips ☐ Other (describe under notes)	
3. Chinese language resources and input (including whiteboard/handouts) provided in: (tick all that apply) ☐ Chinese characters ☐ Pinyin ☐ Romanized script ☐ Other (describe under Notes)	
4. Language resources visible in the classroom: (tick all that apply) ☐ Classroom objects labelled ☐ Posters ☐ Flashcards ☐ Dictionaries ☐ Word lists ☐ Authentic materials ☐ Calligraphy ☐ Other (describe under Notes)	

5. **Teacher talk is delivered: (tick all that apply)** ☐ Through Immersion in Chinese ☐ Mostly in Chinese, some English ☐ In Chinese, repeated in English (bilingual) ☐ Mostly in English, some Chinese	
6. **Learner talk suggests that most pupils are generally: (tick all that apply)** ☐ *Comfortable* when trying to speak in Mandarin ☐ *Uncomfortable* when trying to speak in Mandarin ☐ *Nervous* when trying to speak in Mandarin ☐ *Confident* when trying to speak in Mandarin ☐ *Engaged*, i.e. demonstrate independent efforts to speak in Mandarin ☐ *Unengaged*, only speaking when spoken to ☐ Other (describe under Notes)	
7. **Learner communication is delivered via: (tick all that apply)** ☐ Answering teacher questions ☐ Responding to teacher prompts in pairs/groups ☐ Asking questions to the teacher ☐ Modelling utterances in pairs/groups ☐ Other (describe under Notes)	
8. **Language skill areas covered in the lesson: (tick all that apply)** ☐ Listening ☐ Spoken Interaction ☐ Spoken Production ☐ Reading ☐ Writing	
9. **Focus of the lesson tends towards: (tick all that apply)** ☐ Mostly receptive skills (listening & reading) ☐ Mostly productive skills (speaking & writing) ☐ Balance of receptive and productive skills ☐ Other (please describe in notes)	
10. **Learner strategies/activities encouraged in the lesson: (tick all that apply)** ☐ Asking questions to the teacher ☐ Independent production in pairs/groups ☐ Pronunciation strategies ☐ Mnemonic strategies (bespoke ways to remember) ☐ Visual strategies/imagery ('this character looks like…') ☐ Goal-setting ☐ Memorization strategies ☐ Note-taking ☐ Other (describe under Notes)	

Additional notes
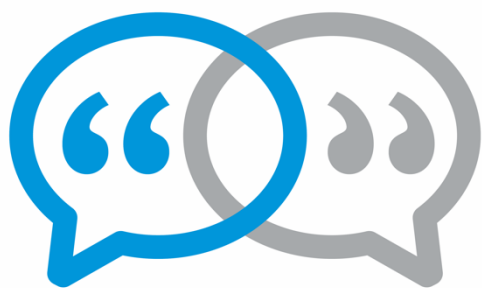
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