

Zhiyan Guo (University of Warwick)

Teaching Chinese as a third language in a British university: issues and problems

Panel: Establishment of Chinese language education as a subject of study in Europe

With the increasing awareness of the importance of teaching Chinese as a foreign language (TCFL), more and more higher education institutions in the UK developed their curricula to include Chinese in the University-wide Language Programme. Although some universities have offered Degrees in Chinese Studies where students learn the language from scratch, most universities tend to take very cautious steps towards the large-scale incorporation of Chinese into the mainstream curriculum. One of these steps are the creation of degree courses with Chinese as a minor language, that is, the component of Chinese takes up 25% of the whole degree programme, in addition to the other two European languages as their majors. The current study describes the course structure of the programme titled Bachelor of Arts in Modern Languages (BAML) that has been offered for the past three years in a British university, with the focus on how Chinese has been taught and how well the candidates have developed their language skills in speaking, listening, reading and writing. It discusses the issues and problems that the students have had in learning three foreign languages at the same time, with the two of them being from Ab initio, such as the arrangement in their Year of Study Abroad, the balance between language and culture components of the programme and the challenges students face in coping the intensive pace of learning Chinese as their third foreign language. The study also suggests that there are a lot yet to be done in the development of Chinese as a discipline in the UK and Europe in terms of curriculum design, quality assurance, effective teaching and assessment methods as well as the continual professional development of the teachers in order to be confident in both course delivery and assessment design.