

Applying CEFR to teaching and assessing Chinese as a foreign language

– A proposal from the EBCL Project

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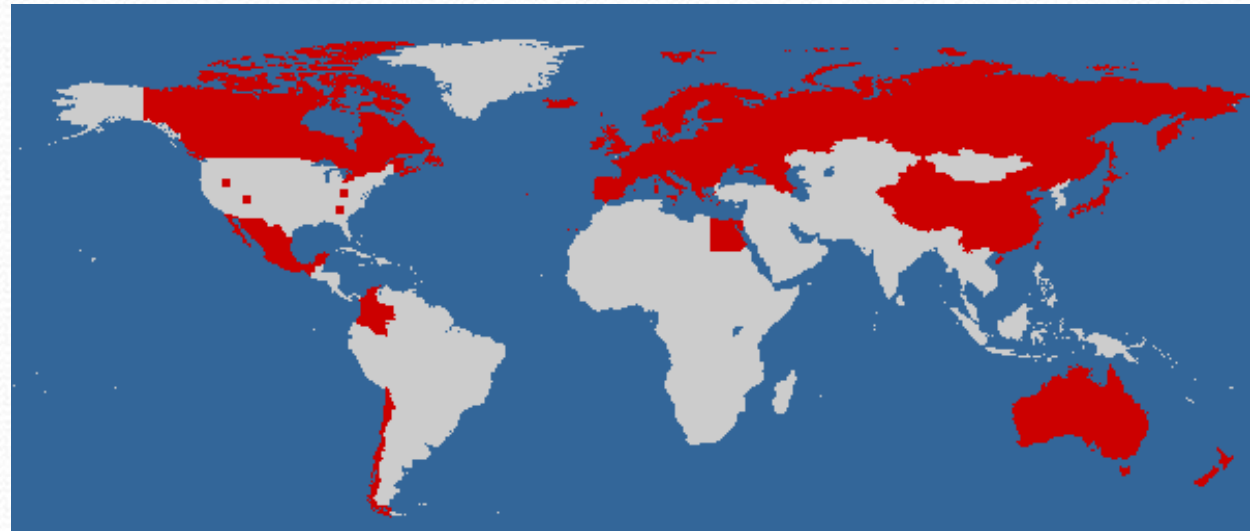


Languages in Europe

- European context – pluralilingual in a multicultural Europe (European citizens)
- A day for **European languages** or for languages used in Europe (e.g. Japanese, Chinese)?

CEFR impact

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



- From CEFR to EBCL

European Benchmarking Chinese Language Project (Nov 2010)

<http://ebcl.eu.com/>



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
- Establishing Chinese language profile in terms of enhancing learners' qualification and employability

The Chinese-speaking world



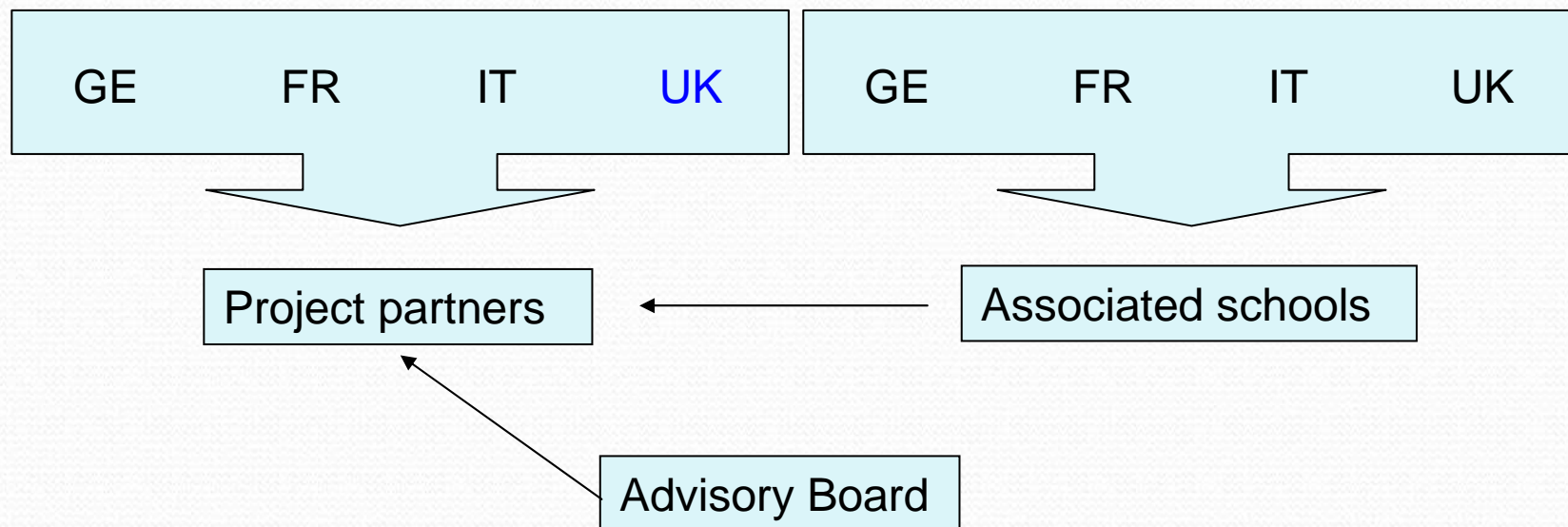
EBCL project partners

Freie
University of
Berlin

Rennes II

La
Sapienza

SOAS



EBCL project principles

- Based on CEFR, user oriented (learners, teachers, assessors, institutions, etc.) and reference only
- Rooted in the European context, but with due attention to the international society (esp. advanced levels)
- Taken into consideration the linguistic features of the Chinese language as well as intercultural knowledge and skills
- Taken into consideration the reality and development of Chinese language learning and teaching in Europe

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

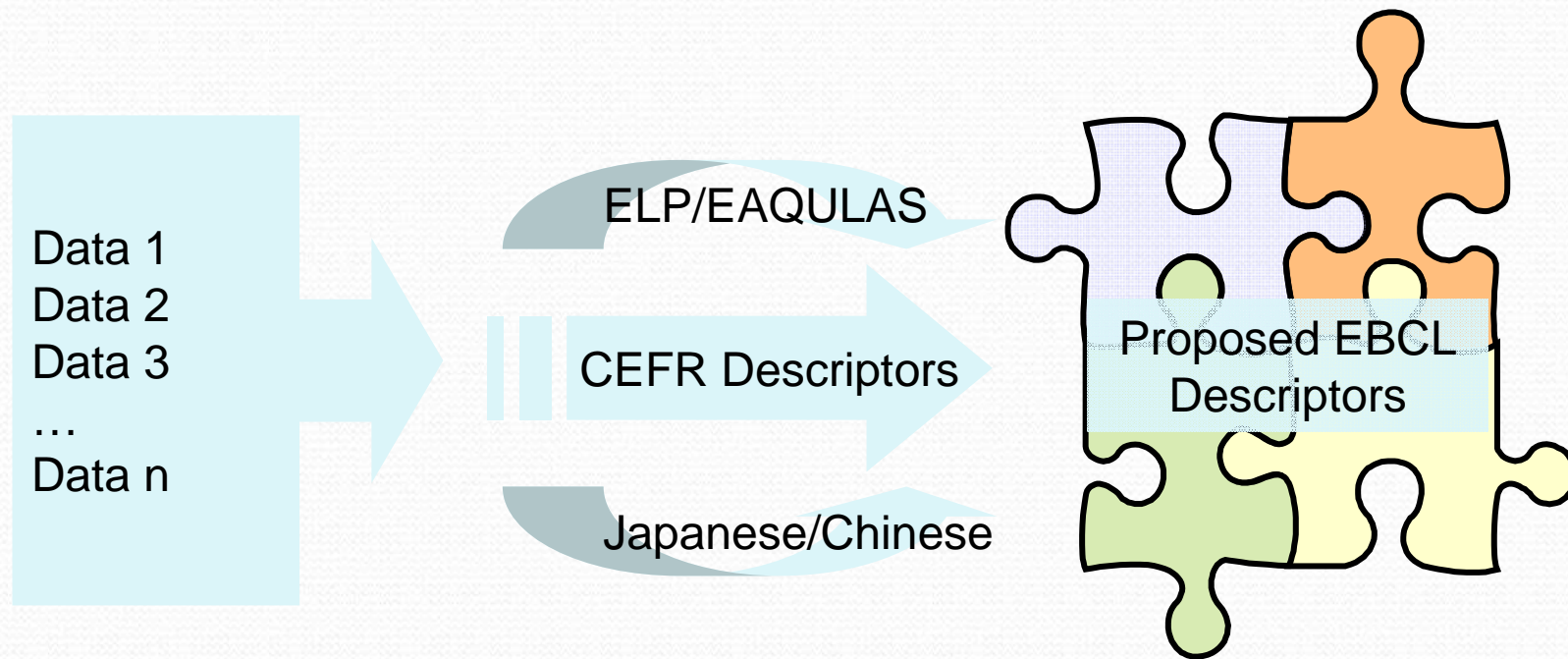
EBCL Project
A modified framework of competence descriptors

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 methodology

- Intuitive, qualitative approach
- Prescriptive vs. descriptive



EBCL major resources

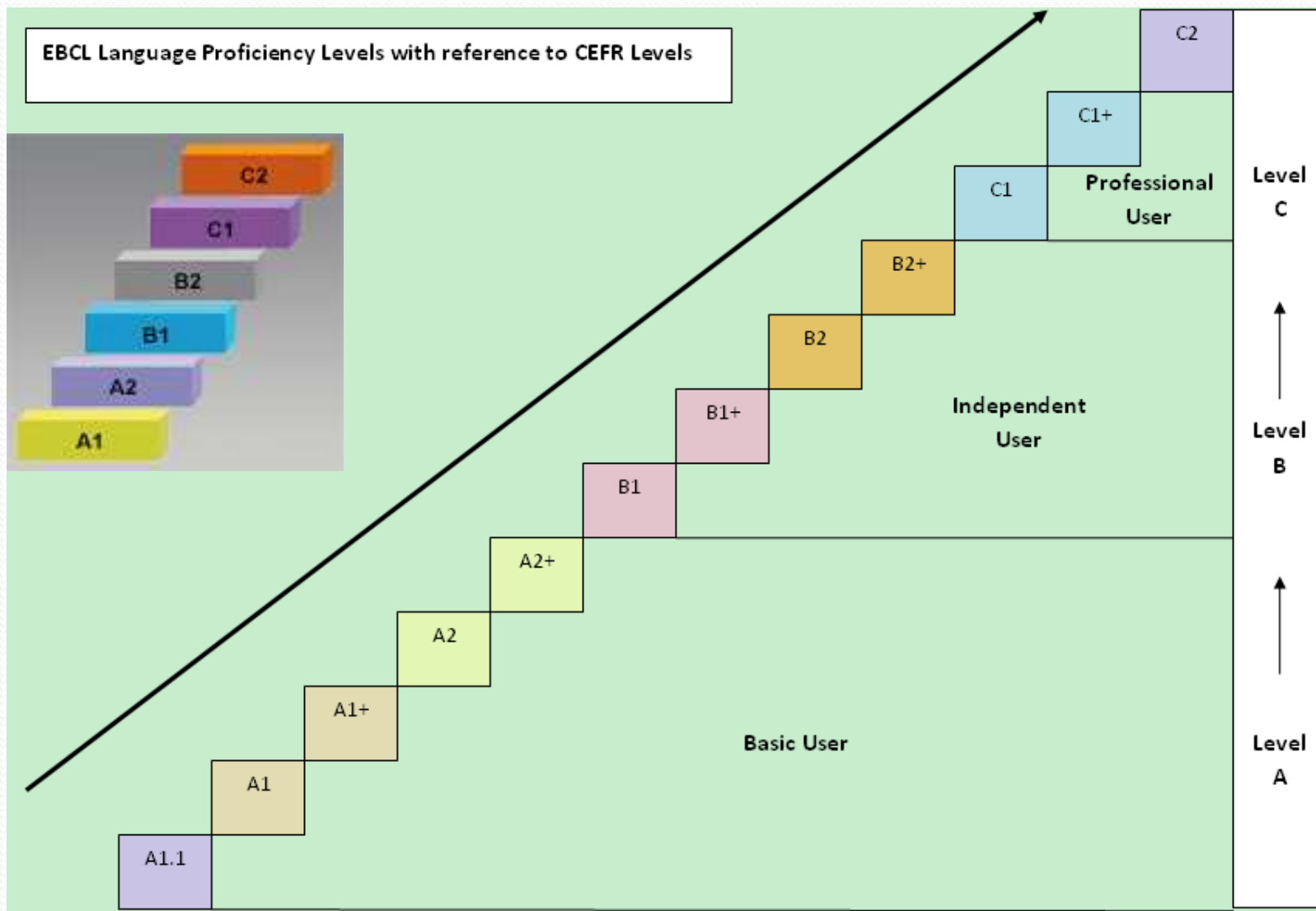
➤ Bank of CEFR related Descriptors:

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

➤ Profiles of major European languages

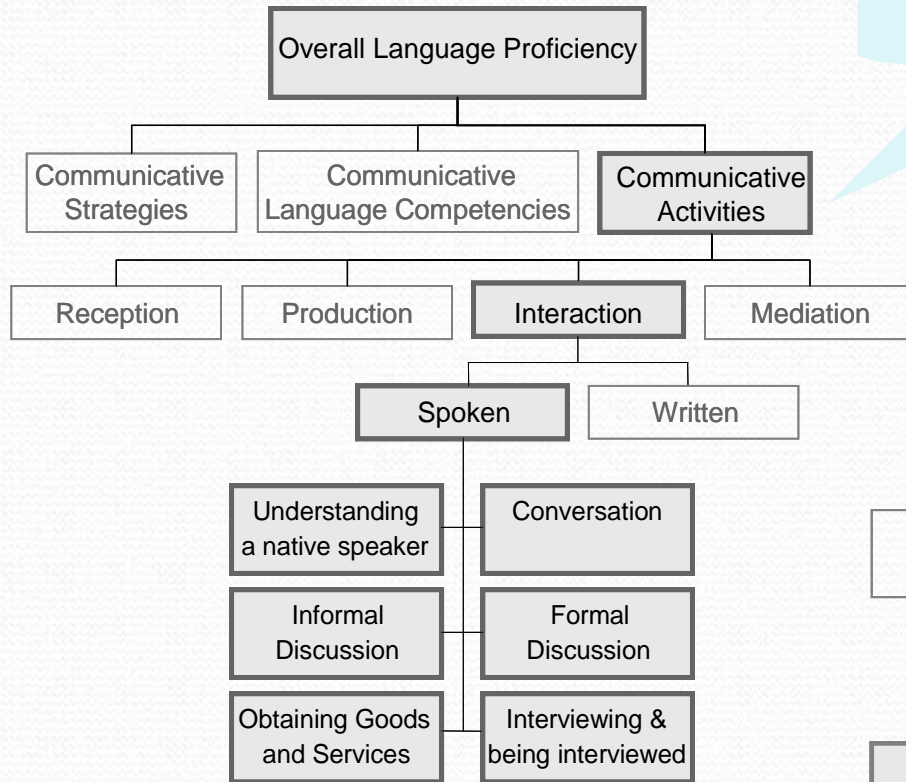
- *Profilo della lingua italiana (Florence, 2010)*
- *Profile Deutsch (Berlin, 2005)*
- *Niveau A1 pour le français (Paris, 2007)*
- *English Profile (Cambridge, 2012)*

CEFR/EBCL proficiency levels

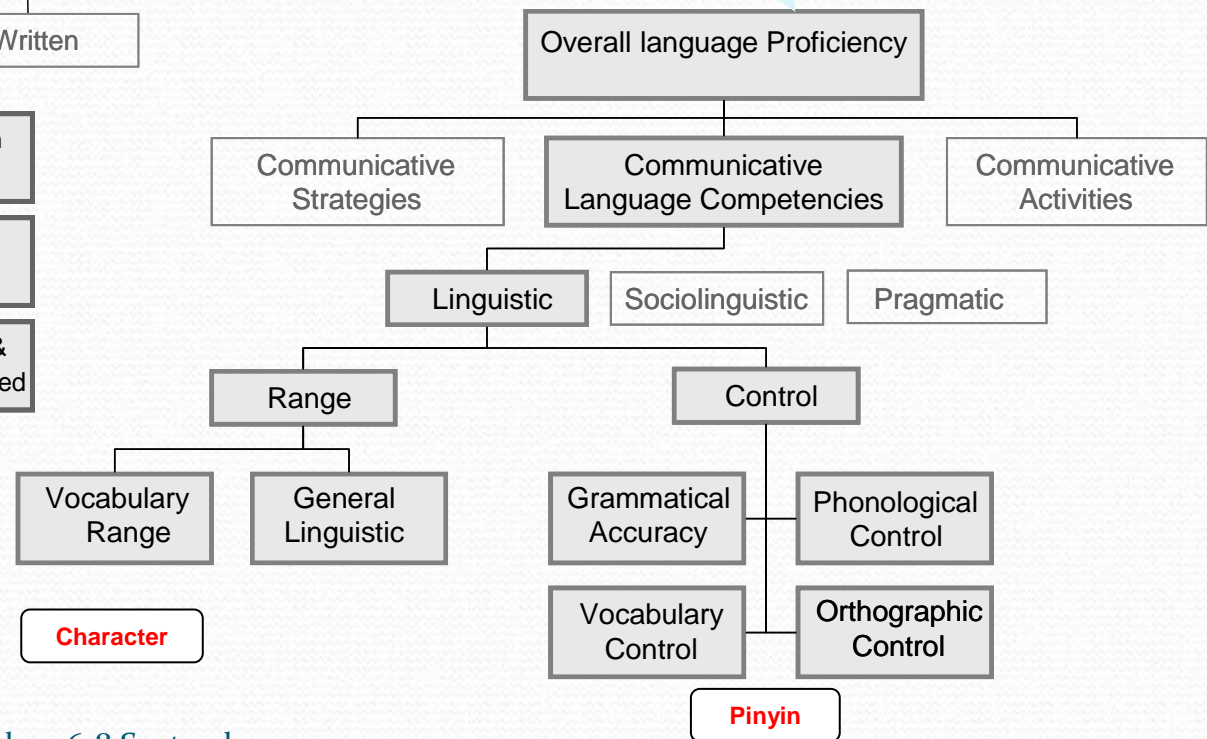


CEFR/EBCL dimensions

The quantity dimension



The quality dimension



CEFR/EBCL real-life-like activities

➤ Communicative activities and communication strategies

Reception
(Spoken/Written)

Production
(Spoken/Written)

Interaction
(Spoken/Written)

Mediation?

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

CEFR/EBCL can-do statements

➤ Action-oriented

➤ ‘what’ vs. ‘how’

➤ Global scales + illustrative descriptors

Global Scale		
Proficient User	C2	Can understand with ease virtually everything heard or read. Can summarise information from different spoken and written sources; reconstructing arguments and accounts in a coherent presentation. Can express him/herself spontaneously, very fluently and precisely, differentiating finer shades of meaning even in more complex situations.
	C1	Can understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts, and recognise implicit meaning. Can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. Can use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes. Can produce clear, well-structured, detailed text on complex subjects, showing controlled use of organisational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices.
Independent User	B2	Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialisation. Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party. Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.
	B1	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 & ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans.
Basic User	A2	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.
	A1	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.

CEFR/EBCL competence conceptualisation

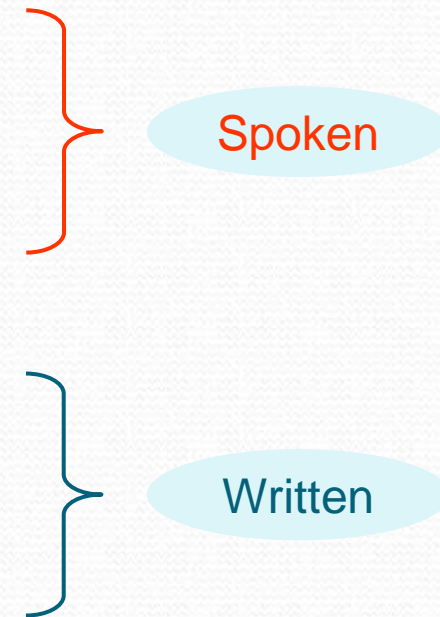
CEF	Can-do Statements	Notions and functions embedded in socio-cultural contexts			
C ₂	Texts				Notions
C ₁	Operations	Themes	Topics		Notions
B ₂	Events				Notions
B ₁	Objects		Topics		Notions
	Persons				
A ₂	Institution				Notions
A ₁	Location	Functions	Sub-functions		Functions
Domains		Personal	Public	Educational	Occupational

(adapted from Zhang 2011)

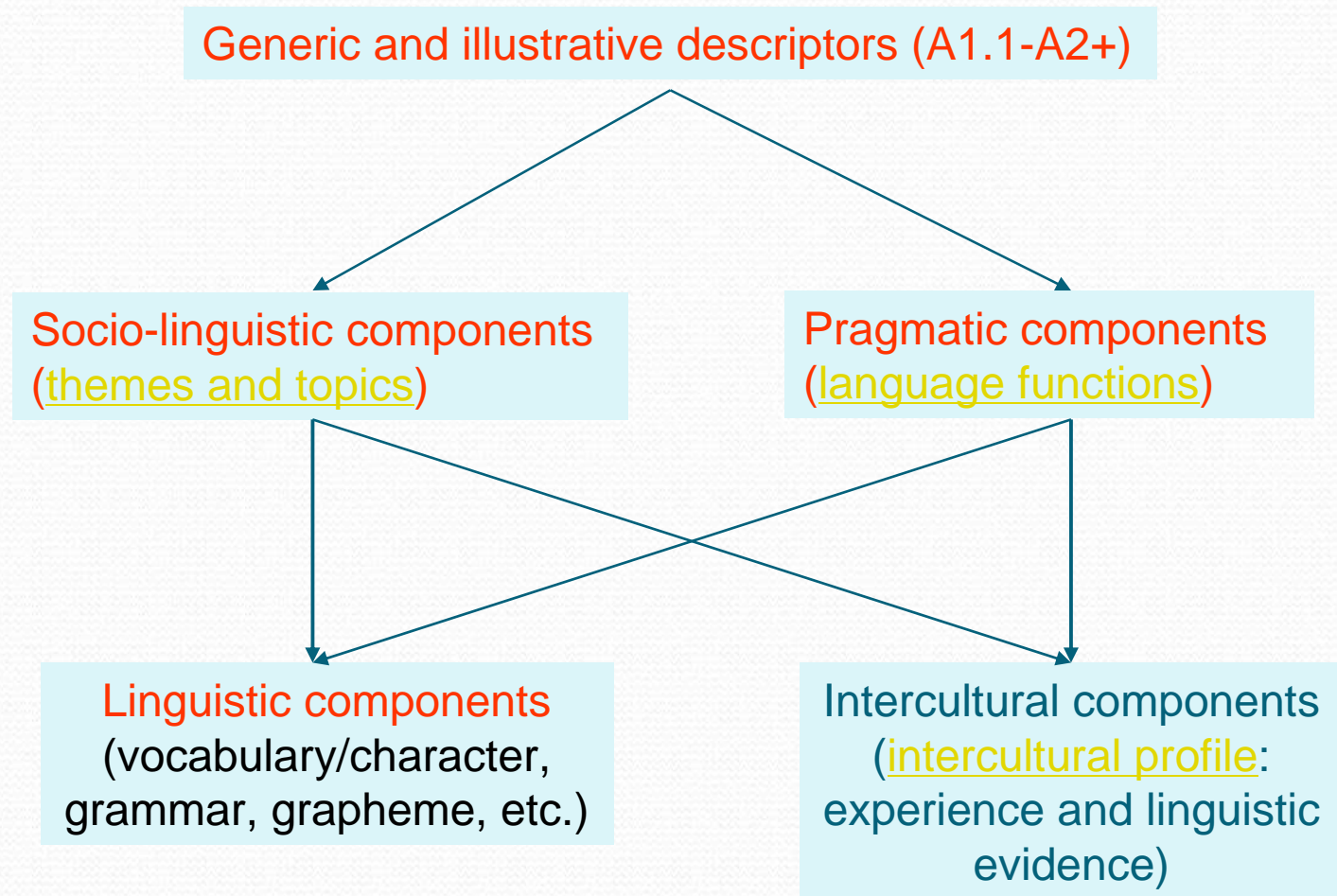
EBCL project deliverables – 1

➤ A1.1 – A2+ 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)



EBCL project deliverables – 2



EBCL project challenge – 1

- The gap between EBCL and CEFR
 - Graphemic element
 - The uniqueness of characters



- Use of Chinese in Europe vs. use of Chinese in Greater China
 - Overlapping
 - Complementary

- The integration of the intercultural dimension
 - Being (doing + knowing)
 - Gradeability?



EBCL project challenge – 2

- Implementation and empirical validation of the framework
 - Tentative vs standard
 - Reality of Chinese language teaching in Europe (time, requirement, etc.)

- Lack of corpora for real-life use of language
 - Pedagogical materials vs real-life materials
 - Spoken form vs written form



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 certificates
 - Intercultural competence

EBCL project next steps

- Disseminate and pilot the outcomes (A1.1-A2+) 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 examples at different levels for descriptors (can-do statements) to establish a portfolio of Chinese language competence

What's coming up...

- Brussels Symposium, 19-20 Oct 2012
- Updated information about the project, please visit <http://ebcl.eu.com/>

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