

Chinese Language Teaching in the UK

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1. Synopsis

With a brief introduction to the UK, its foreign language education and the development of Chinese teaching, this article¹ first gives a general overview of the development of Chinese language teaching in the UK in the recent years, and then conducts a preliminary discussion and analysis of the characteristics and development of Chinese language teaching in the UK as well as the challenges faced. It ends with a few remarks on the development trends of Chinese language teaching in the UK after the “Brexit”.

2. A brief account of the development of Chinese language teaching in the UK

The United Kingdom is one of the first European countries to include the Chinese language into its national education system. This is also related to the history of Chinese immigrants in the country. As early as the end of the 18th century, the first Chinatown in Europe appeared in Britain. The Chinese also established their own Chinese newspapers and Chinese associations at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century. Chinese community schools appeared in about the 1940s. In addition to the large number of Chinese immigrants, this was also due to the recognition of the language rights of immigrants in Europe and the United Kingdom at that time. Chinese language became one of the subjects of the junior and senior high school examinations in the late 20th century. However, it was not until the beginning of the 21st century that Chinese language achieved the same and full foreign language status as European languages in the national education system. Previously, Chinese was only a community language, and most of the students were children of Chinese descents, usually attending Chinese community schools on weekends and taking the exams at secondary junior and senior levels, as their parents wished them to. There were very few mainstream schools that offered Chinese language courses.

In terms of the integration of the Chinese language into a national education system, the development usually consists of three stages. The first stage is policy integration, which means that the Chinese language is accept-

¹ This report is mostly based on the two report articles the authors wrote in 2020: “Chinese Language in the British National Education System” and “Chinese Language Education Development in the UK”, with some revisions and updates.

ed as a foreign language teaching and examination subject in the state education system; the second stage is system integration, which refers to the full establishment of the Chinese teaching system, including curriculum, syllabus, teachers training and textbook development, etc. after having achieved the same official status as other foreign languages because of policy integration; the third stage is in-depth integration, which refers to the increase in the scale of Chinese teaching, and the number of learners as well as the exam takers with the comparable results to other foreign languages. As far as the integration of Chinese into the national education system is concerned, the UK is in the early phase of the in-depth integration stage.

However, the Chinese language teaching in the British national education system is very unevenly developed in the four parts of the country. While some primary and secondary schools in Wales and Northern Ireland also have Chinese teaching activities, the number is relatively small and there are no formal examinations at the junior and senior secondary school levels. Therefore, this report will mostly focus on the Chinese language learning and teaching in the national education systems in England and Scotland.

The Chinese language teaching, including both Chinese as a community language and as a foreign language has developed rapidly in terms of the scale in the UK since the beginning of the 21st century. This is probably the result of a number of factors: the adjustment of the country's foreign language education policy; the increased economic and political influence of China; the promotion of international Chinese education by China; and the development in China-UK cooperation and exchanges in trade and education. Among the several hundreds of Chinese community schools in the UK, about one third have been established during this period; about one-fifth of the mainstream secondary schools now offer some forms of Chinese teaching, and some elementary schools have also begun to teach Chinese too. In addition, a number of Chinese-English bilingual schools have also appeared.

In higher education sector, Chinese is no longer a traditional single honours programme only offered by a few universities. Joint honours programmes with Chinese as an equal subject or in some cases as minor, and Chinese as an elective has become very popular, with about four-fifths of the universities now offering Chinese courses. Due to reasons such as the system set-up, there is very little Chinese teaching in the sector of mainly vocationally oriented further education, which is also true of other foreign languages. Lifelong education, including in-service training, has witnessed some growth with regards to Chinese learning and teaching. In short, there has been a noticeable increase in both the awareness and understanding of the Chinese language and Chinese society in the entire country as compared with the situation two decades ago.

The UK is one of the first Western European countries that started teaching Chinese language, with a long history in the development of Chi-

nese language teaching materials in particular. From the early 19th century, there were Chinese textbooks compiled by early pioneers like Robert Morrison, James Summers, and Herbert Giles. In the late 1920s, there was *Linguaphone oriental language courses: Chinese*, of which C. C. Shu (also known as Lao She in Chinese) is one of the contributors, followed by the influential *Colloquial Chinese* by D. Pollard and P. C. Tung published in the 1980s. *Edexcel GCSE Chinese* and *Chinese in Steps* were among the 20 titles globally that won the Outstanding International Chinese Language Teaching Materials Award at the Fifth Confucius Institute Conference in 2010. In 2019 alone, there were over a dozen of textbooks published in the UK, including *Business Chinese*, part of Chinese in Steps series and *A Level Chinese* (Advance Level of GCSE examination for senior secondary school graduates). 2021 also witnessed the publications of *Social Perspective: Intermediate-Advance Chinese Course* and *Complete Mandarin Chinese*, just to name two.

3. The development of Chinese language teaching in the UK in the recent years

3.1. Primary and secondary education

There are currently 3,069 nurseries or early learning centers in the UK². Pre-school education is not compulsory, but the government stipulates that every child between the age of 3 and 4 has the right to receive some pre-school education.

Pre-school Chinese teaching is predominantly provided in a very small number of independent (private) bilingual schools, and they all seem to be located in major cities. For example, Hatching Dragons Chinese-English bilingual kindergarten started in the suburbs of London in 2015, and opened a new school in the urban area in 2018. The English-Chinese bilingual school Kensington Wade Primary School, established in 2017, has pre-school classes to provide English-Chinese bilingual immersion education for children from 3 to 11 years old. As of June 2019, not only had the number of students in these schools increased, a new English-Chinese bilingual kindergarten was set up in Petts Wood just outside London. The children in these schools come from different ethnic backgrounds, showing that the market demand for pre-school Chinese teaching is growing with an increasingly diverse student profile.

² See <<https://www.besa.org.uk/key-uk-education-statistics/>> (access: 10.06.2022). Statistics for 2019-2020, and for school numbers quoted below.

There are currently 20,807 public primary schools and more than 2,000 private primary schools in the UK³. The provision of foreign language teaching in primary schools only begun not long ago, and the development of Chinese teaching has been slow. A 2017 report on the development trend of foreign language education in England shows that the proportion of primary schools offering Chinese courses had increased from zero in 2012 to 3% in 2016; the 2019 report shows that this proportion remains unchanged (Britain Council: *Languages for the Future* (2017) and *Language Trends* (2019)). The teaching of Chinese in Scottish primary schools has increased in the last few years, especially in the teaching centres associated with Confucius Institute for Scotlands School, but the proportion of primary schools that teach Chinese is still very small.

There are 4,190 state secondary schools of all kinds and 2,345 independent or private secondary schools in the UK, of which 358 and 133 are in Scotland respectively. Compared with primary schools, Chinese teaching in secondary schools has developed far more rapidly. In 2016, about one-fifth of secondary schools in England offered Chinese language teaching, but the proportion of private schools (46%) was much higher than that of state schools (13%) (Britain Council: *Language Trends* 2015/2016). The Mandarin Excellence Programme (MEP) established in 2016 has played a significant role in promoting the development of Chinese language teaching in English state schools. In 2019, the project progressed particularly rapidly. The number of the participating schools reached 76, and that of the students exceeded the target of 5,000 students set by the project. However, the number of people taking the Chinese examinations for GCSE and A level dropped significantly in 2019 compared to the previous year. The number of GCSE Chinese takers decreased from 4,410 in 2018 to 3,200⁴, a drop of about 28%, while those taking Chinese A level dropped from 3,334 in the previous year to 2,272⁵, a decrease of about 31.9%, thus losing its third place in the ranking after having surpassed German in 2018. It is said that the decrease in both cases was related to the introduction of new syllabus for the two exams.

It was not until 2008 and 2010 when Scotland started to offer examination in Chinese for GCSE and A level respectively. While there are fluctuations in the numbers of the students taking the exams in the past five years, the base number is still relatively too small to see much significance in the

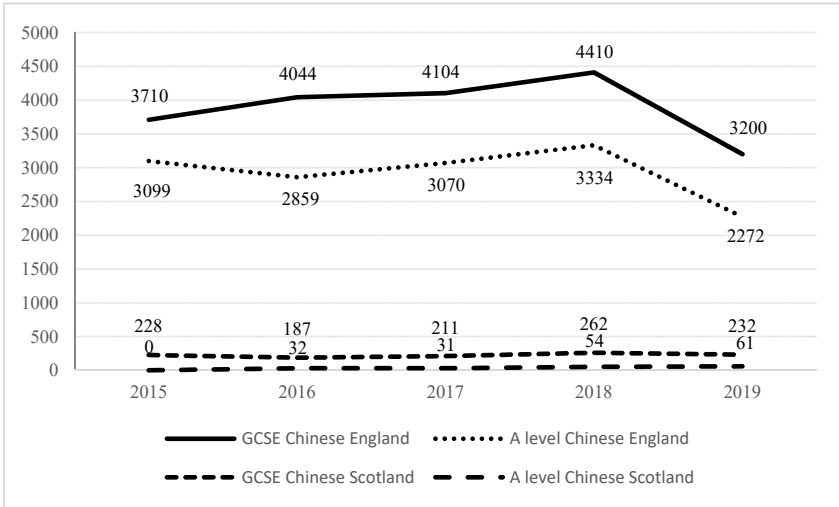
³ 2019/20 statistics shows that there are 2345 independent/private schools in the UK. Most provide both primary and secondary schooling, and some also have pre-school provision. Only a small number cater only for a limited age ranger study, such as sixth form.

⁴ See <www.theguardian.com/education/live/2019/aug/22/gcse-results-day-2019-live-news> (access: 29.06.2022).

⁵ A-level results day 2019: Top grades fall to their lowest level in more than a decade. <<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2019/08/15/a-level-results-day-2019-top-grades-fall-lowest-level-decade/>> (access: 15.08.2019).

difference from one year to another (see Figure 1 for the examination data of England and Scotland).

Figure 1: GCSE and A-level Chinese examination numbers 2015-2019



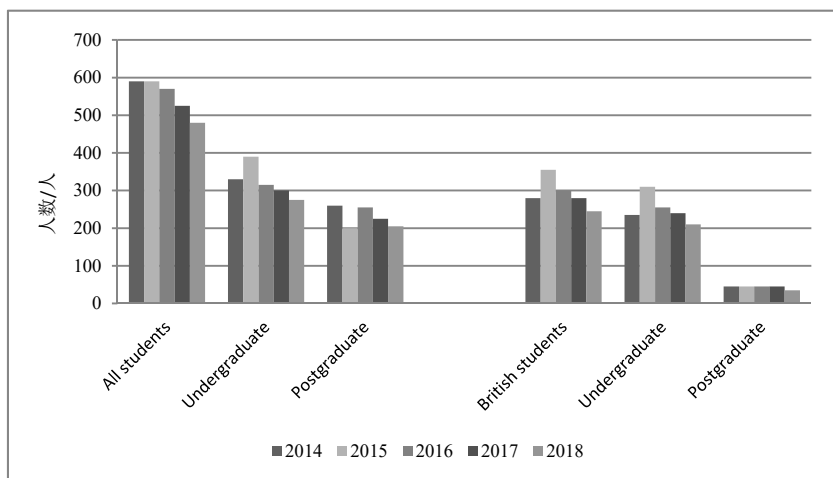
3.2. Higher education

The rapid development in Chinese language teaching in British universities also began at the beginning of the new millennium. By 2017, more than 85% of the universities were offering Chinese language teaching of some kind (Zhang and Li 2019). Previously, only a few traditional universities taught Chinese as part of Chinese language and literature or Sinology degree with some university language centres offering Chinese courses. The fastest-growing programme is joint honours programmes with Chinese language or Chinese studies plus another subject, such as Chinese and Business, Chinese and another foreign language, Chinese and international relations. However, the number of British students entering the Chinese/China Studies major in the UK has been declining year by year since 2015, especially at the post-graduate level⁶ (see Figure 2). In 2019, the UCAS website lists 320 joint honours programmes that include Chinese and another subject across a wide

⁶ HESA, online: <<https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/students/what-study>> (access: 10.06.2022).

range of disciplines, offered by 41 universities⁷. To date, only a few universities offer single honours programme in Chinese such as Cambridge, Oxford, School of Oriental and African Studies, Edinburgh, Leeds, and more recently Cardiff University which started its programme a couple of years ago. Of the three major private universities in the UK, apart from Buckingham University, Regent's University London and Richmond, the American International University in London offered either joint honours programme with Chinese or minor in Chinese Studies.

Figure 2: Students Enrolments for Chinese 2014-2018



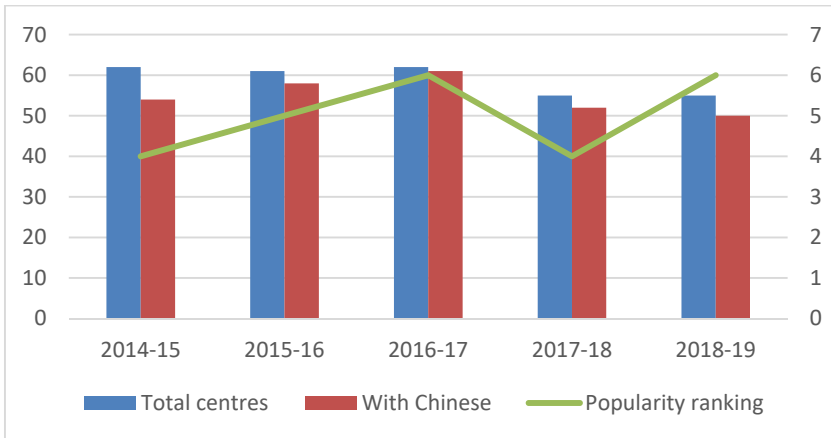
The fastest growing type of Chinese courses in British universities is open elective or institutional wide Chinese language courses, and it is mostly provided by the university language centres. Some of these courses are accredited, and some are not. The Association of University Language Communities (formerly Centres) in the UK and Ireland (AULC)⁸ conducted an annual survey of such foreign language courses in its member universities for many years, focusing on languages, popularity rankings, and student numbers. However, due to the difficulty in collecting the data on the numbers of students, the statistics are no longer available in recent years. The growth of university elective Chinese courses mainly took place in the first 15 years of

⁷ See <<https://digital.ucas.com/coursedisplay/results/providers?searchTerm=Chinese&studyYear=2021&destination=Undergraduate&postcodeDistanceSystem=imperial&pageNumber=3&sort=MostRelevant&clearingPreference=NextYear>> (access: 10.06.2022).

⁸ See <<http://www.aul-c.org/>> (access: 13.06.2022).

the century, with the proportion of universities (centres) offering such Chinese courses increasing from about 15% at the start to nearly 90% in 2014. The same period also witnessed a continuing rise in the number of students learning Chinese, once approaching 10% of the total number of students learning foreign languages⁹. However, as the survey results in the mentioned years show (see Figure 3), although the proportion of universities offering Chinese courses remained high at about 95%, the number of students for Chinese was no longer growing, and the popularity ranking was also unstable, slipping from the fourth place in 2017/18 fell to the sixth place in the following year¹⁰.

Figure 3: Chinese Electives and Popularity Ranking in UK University Language Centres 2014-2019



In terms of Chinese language teacher education, there are mainly two types of programmes in British universities – Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE, Postgraduate Diploma in Education in Scotland) that train teachers with qualifications for primary and secondary schools, and MA in applied linguistics/Chinese language teaching that also aim to develop both teaching and research capabilities. In 2019, the Universities that offer the first type of programmes include UCL-Institute of Education, Oxford, University of Manchester, Manchester Metropolitan University, University of Portsmouth, Goldsmith and University of Bolton in England, and the University of Aber-

⁹ UCML-AULC survey of Institution-Wide Language Provision in the universities in the UK (2016-2017), online: <https://university-council-modern-languages.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/UCML_AULC_2016-2017.pdf> (access: 10.06.2022).

¹⁰ Association of University Language Communities in the UK and Ireland, University Council of Modern Language (AULC-UCML) (2018/2019).

deen, University of Edinburgh and University of Strathclyde in Scotland. Some of these programmes are exclusively for Chinese language, some include Chinese in their programme for modern foreign language teachers, with some placing Chinese in the list of their community language teacher training courses. However, the number of local enrolments in these programmes is relatively small, which is related to factors such as admission requirements and employment opportunities. Some of the universities that offer the second type of programmes are UCL Institute of Education, the University of Nottingham, and Richmond, the American International University in London. However, this provision is constantly changing in the last few years with regards to the list of universities offering these programmes, which also indirectly reflects changes as well as uncertainty of the market demand.

In terms of research and exchange on Chinese language learning and teaching, the British Chinese Language Teaching Society (BCLTS), primarily composed of teachers of Chinese in British universities, plays a very important role and works closely with other organisation in this regard. BCLTS organises annual international conferences on learning and teaching of Chinese language for many years. It organised in 2019 in cooperation with the Confucius Institute at Lancaster University its 17th International Conference on Chinese Teaching with the theme of Chinese teaching in universities. More than 180 scholars from nearly 30 countries and regions participated in the two-day conference. In addition to the keynote speeches delivered by well-known scholars both inside and outside the Chinese teaching circle, the conference received more than 180 abstracts, and nearly 90 were read and exchanged at the conference. The conference also issued the Lancaster Manifesto with the slogan „Chinese professionals and speakers all over the world, unite“. Due to the Covid-19, the 18th Conference in the following year was postponed till July 2021 and held online over three days, this time jointly with Confucius Institute based at Bangor University.

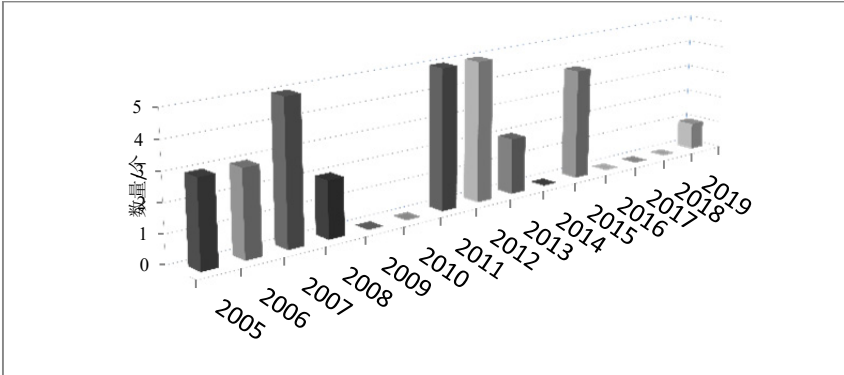
3.3. Confucius Institutes

Since the establishment of the first Confucius Institutes in the UK in 2005, Confucius Institutes developed rapidly in the first 15 years (see Figure 4). In recent years, only a few new Confucius Institutes have been established, but Confucius classrooms for schools are still increasing. The latest one was established at the end of November 2019. As of the end of 2019, there were 30 Confucius Institutes and 161 Confucius Classrooms across the UK. The number of people learning Chinese in Confucius Institutes/Classrooms exceeded 190,000, all of which ranked the UK the first in Europe¹¹. In 2019, the

¹¹ See <www.fmprc.gov.cn/ce/ceuk/chn/dsxx/dshd/2019dashihuodong/t1715284.htm> (access: 13.06.2022).

Chinese government sent more than 250 Chinese Confucius Institute directors and Chinese teachers to the UK, as well as nearly 300 volunteers.

Figure 4: 2005-2019 Annual number of new Confucius Institutes



All the Confucius Institutes in the UK are now based in and partnered with a local university, including the Confucius Institutes previously established in cooperation with other institutions. Many of them belong to the type termed as Confucius Institute with a distinctive focus or feature, and were the very first of its kind in the world, such as Confucius Institute for business, Confucius Institute for schools, Confucius Institutes for traditional Chinese medicine, Confucius Institutes for dance and performance etc. Most Confucius Institutes offer courses in general Chinese, Chinese culture and Chinese proficiency test (HSK), but very few courses lead to formal academic qualifications. Confucius Institutes are the main vehicle to promote the Chinese Proficiency Test and the university “Chinese Bridge” Competition, both of which are also related to some scholarship programmes of the institutes. Many Chinese teachers seconded from China to Confucius Institutes in the UK also teach on the accredited Chinese courses offered by the local partner university, and in schools since most Confucius Institutes also have school links.

In England and Scotland, Confucius Institutes have played an important role in promoting Chinese language learning and teaching in schools and in pushing for in-depth integration of Chinese language in the British national education system as a foreign language. In 2019, the UCL-IOE based Confucius Institute for Schools in England responsible for the implementation of the British government’s Mandarin Excellence Programme (MEP) had reached the target ahead of schedule to get 5,000 secondary school students onto the programme to learn Chinese, while Confucius Institute for Scotlands Schools had established secondary school Confucius classroom hubs in 22 of

the 32 Scottish administrative regions, and primary school Confucius classroom hubs in 17 regions.¹²

Almost all the Confucius Institutes are engaged in the provision of short professional development programmes for the local Chinese language teachers, but some do so more regularly than others. One of such regular ones with its own special features is the annual business Chinese teacher training programme organised by Confucius Institute for Business based at the London School of Economics and Political Science. Every September, several dozens of participants from the UK and abroad would gather in London to attend this three-day training event. Due to Covid, both 2020 and 2021 (the 11th year) programmes were delivered online, which also greatly extended its reach, with some participants coming from as far as China.

All the Confucius Institutes, especially those for business, attach great importance to maintaining close contact with the local communities. The Confucius Institutes for business always take the lead in offering business related Chinese language and consulting services, often in cooperation with the local businesses and industries. This in turn has also brought benefits to themselves. For example, the London Confucius for Business made over 200,000 pounds in 2019 by organizing business related activities, which helped financially ensure the sustainable development of its operations. At the same time, just as the cultural activities organised by the Confucius Institutes, the teacher training and business-related activities also help to enhance the understanding of the Confucius Institutes as well as the Chinese culture and society by the British society and foreign language teaching professionals.

Confucius Institutes in Wales and Northern Ireland are closely associated with the development of Chinese language learning and teaching in primary and secondary schools, where there was very little Chinese teaching before. The first and only Confucius Institute in Northern Ireland was established in 2013. By 2019, it had set up a network of about 100 schools, operated from 8 Confucius Classroom Chinese teaching centres, most of which were in middle schools, a couple in primary schools and further education colleges. There are three Confucius Institutes in Wales, and they have between them 19 Confucius Classrooms, of which 5 belong to the Confucius Institute at Bangor University (3 in secondary schools and 2 in primary schools); 8 to Cardiff Confucius Institute covering more than 30 schools. Trinity and Saint David University (UWTSD) Confucius Institute even established a Chinese school in cooperation with the local Chinese community on its Swansea campus in 2016. In addition to ethnic Chinese, the school also opened its

¹² Confucius Institute for Scotlands Schools Confucius Classroom hubs, online: <www.strath.ac.uk/human-ities/confuciusinstituteforscotlandsschools/confuciusclassroomhubs/> (access: 29.06.2022).

door to all students from the local community. Nearly 200 students were enrolled in 2019, an increase of 20% over the previous year.

3.4. Chinese community schools

There are currently more than 300 Chinese community schools of different sizes in the UK. Basically, they rent venues, typically school premises for classes on weekends. Large schools have hundreds of students, and small schools may have only a few, like small study classes organized by several parents for their children. Chinese community schools play an important role in Chinese language education in the UK, especially for ethnic Chinese children. Although the curriculum for young children is mainly based on interest, majority children will later take the Chinese language exam at GCSE and/or A level in schools. In recent years, the profile of students in Chinese community schools has changed a lot, with more and more non-ethnic Chinese children and adults from local communities joining to learn Chinese, which has brought new challenges to Chinese teaching in the Chinese community schools.

There are a number of Chinese community school organisations in the UK. The two with long history and the substantial influence are the UK Association for the Promotion of Chinese Education (UKAPCE)¹³ and UK Federation of Chinese Schools (UKFCS)¹⁴. The UKAPCE was established in 1993 with the purpose to “promote and develop Chinese culture, Chinese education, and advocate the application of Mandarin and simplified Chinese”. It also provides various support including funds to its member schools. In 2019, the UKPACE had 159 member schools, including 95 in England (37 in London), 18 in Scotland, 5 in Wales and 4 in Northern Ireland., with 22,478 students and 2,163 teachers in its member schools. 474 students took GCSE examination, and 230 A-level examination in Chinese in the same year. In addition, the UKPACE held many cultural activities and teacher training events to promote the learning of Chinese language and culture, such as “Chinese Roots-tracing Trip” summer camp, Putonghua Speaking Competition, the “Qilu Culture Knowledge Contest”, the “Handan Cup” Chinese Idioms and Story Competition, calligraphy, writing and Chinese painting competitions, etc. The UKPACE also either organised training programmes for its teachers in China, or invited experienced teaching professionals from China to join the training tours in the UK. It also hosted the “4th Chinese Community School Principals’ Forum” and the “International Seminar on the Uniform Test for Chinese Community Schools in the UK”. 2019 also wit-

¹³ UKPACE: <<https://www.ukapce.org/>> (access: 10.06.2022). Thanks to UKPACE for the various figures provided.

¹⁴ UKFCS: <<http://ukfcs.info/sc/>> (access: 10.06.2022).

nessed its 19th year of its annual event “The UK Chinese Teachers’ Day and Award of Outstanding Chinese Teachers”.

The UKFCS was established in 1994 with the aim to promote Chinese language education and Chinese culture. Its member schools used to teach Cantonese and traditional Chinese characters, but in recent years most of them have also switched to Mandarin and Pinyin. The eight-volume textbooks *Let’s Learn Chinese* compiled and published by the Federation many years ago were of great help to its member schools. The UKFCS also holds annual teacher training events. In 2019, it organised the Chinese Spring Festival Performance Competition. However, there is not much news about its other activities, and it seems that its website has not been updated for a while. According to its own figure, the UKFCS has more than 80 member schools with more than 10,000 students.

3.5. Vocational education and other Chinese teaching and training institutions

Pre-service vocational education in the UK is mostly carried out in further education (FE) colleges. There are currently 214 such colleges in the UK, of which 168 are in England. This type of educational establishment is part of tertiary education but sits between secondary schools and universities, and provides mainly vocational education. However, many FE colleges also offer remedial courses for secondary school qualifications in addition to tertiary education courses such as those for high national diploma or even undergraduate courses. As FE colleges predominantly focus on vocational education, very few run language courses, and even fewer offer Chinese courses. Even if some do, it is usually unstable. An exception is perhaps South West College in Northern Ireland that hosts a Confucius Classroom run by the Confucius Institute based at Ulster University. 2021 was the 7th year that the college’s Confucius Classroom had been in operation.

Of the firms that have business with China, those with scale and substantial needs tend to organise and set up their own Chinese courses, but such firms are few in numbers. Most would work in collaboration with relevant teaching institutions, either outsourcing its Chinese teaching, or inviting someone to teach on their premises. Confucius Institutes, especially those specialised in business are often their preferred partners. For example, the London Confucius Institute for Business. As it has as its board members a number of well-known global companies such as HSBC, BP, and Deloitte, its operation tends to be more market-oriented with its obvious business advantages, and it also has more corporate customers than other Confucius Institutes. Many companies provide subsidies to their employees to take Chinese courses offered by other institutions. However, unlike government personnel, it is very rare for corporate employees to learn Chinese full-time

while working. For financial reasons, many small and medium-sized companies seek to partner with language schools and even freelance teachers of Chinese. In addition, there is a large number of adults who learn Chinese for professional reasons, and they generally choose courses, institutions or teachers, including private tutors, according to their own needs and financial situation. The number of private tutors has been increasing in recent years, so are their online courses. However, the quality of such provision varies due to lack of quality control.

A number of private language training institutions with professional experience and financial backing have been involved in the Chinese teaching market for many years, and some are still very important even today, such as Cactus, City Lit and International House, just to name a few. What they have in common is that they all provide a diverse range of language courses for different purposes and at different levels. They also have own markets, their own teaching approaches and high-quality services. They are truly market and service oriented international or cross-regional commercial institutions in the field of Chinese language teaching and vocational language training.

4. Analyses of the current Chinese language teaching in the UK

If examined from a macro perspective, Sino-British diplomatic and economic relations and British pragmatic cultural tradition seem to have acted as important foundations for the development of Chinese language education in the UK. It has been almost half a century since the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and the UK. In 1998, China and the UK established a comprehensive cooperative partnership. After upgrading to a comprehensive strategic and cooperative partnership in 2004, the exchanges and cooperation between the two countries in diplomatic and other fields have become more active. In the last decade, leaders of the two countries once frequently exchanged visits, especially in 2015 when Chinese President Xi Jinping paid a “super state visit” to the UK, which opened the so-called “Golden Era” of Sino-British relations. The exchanges and cooperation have been accelerated in all areas concerned since then. To a certain extent, a well-developed China-UK relationship is of great strategic significance to the UK, as it had always been “half-hearted” in the EU before it finally decided to leave the EU altogether.

The growing economic and trade exchanges between China and the UK are also an important reason why the UK pays attention to UK-China relations. In terms of bilateral trade alone, the total trade volume between China and the UK had grown from £6 billion in 1999 to over £80 billion in 2019. China has become the UK’s sixth-largest export market and fourth-largest import market, with bilateral trade growing at least 6.5% annually over the

past few years¹⁵. In addition, bilateral investment is also on a gradual but steady increase. In addition, China is also an important tourism market for the UK and the largest source of international students. In 2019, more than 880,000 tourists of all kinds came from China, an increase of nearly 70% over 2015¹⁶. Although the number of tourists is outside the top ten, it ranks second in tourism consumption in the UK¹⁷ before the Covid outbreak. According to the statistics of the Universities UK International in 2019, Chinese students accounted for a quarter of the total number of overseas students in the UK, contributing about 5 billion pounds to the economy¹⁸.

The UK's emphasis on developing China-UK relations also stems from its pragmatic cultural tradition. The UK was the first (1950) Western country to recognize the People's Republic of China, and also the first (2015) to join the AIIB with capital injection among the G7 countries. The UK regards Chinese as a language of "economic strategic importance", which reflects the views and attitudes of the government and society towards Chinese language learning and teaching. In the 2017 British Council's report *Languages for Future*, Chinese is ranked as the second most important language after Spanish. A special survey of British business leaders in 2018 shows that three-quarters of them believe that Chinese language skill is of great use for students' future careers¹⁹. The continuous growth in trade, investment and various exchanges between China and the UK is the economic basis for Chinese to be regarded as the fourth most important language for the future of the UK²⁰. The rapid development of Chinese language learning and teaching in the UK is also a result of the continuous strengthening of Sino-UK language education exchanges and of the push by Confucius Institutes and Confucius Classrooms, especially in primary and secondary schools.

The UK language policy and Sino-British educational cooperation and exchanges are important drives for the development of Chinese education in the UK too. The change in the UK foreign language education policy provided an opportunity for Chinese language to be accepted as a recognised modern foreign language in schools, and the increasing exchanges and coopera-

¹⁵ UK House of Commons Library, <<https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-7379/CBP-7379.pdf>> (access: 14.07.2020).

¹⁶ Inbound visits to Britain from China, online: <<https://www.visitbritain.org/markets/china>> (access: 13.06.2022).

¹⁷ 2019 inbound data: Top 10 markets, online: <<https://www.visitbritain.org/2019-snapshot>> (access: 13.06.2022).

¹⁸ International facts and figures 2019, online: <<https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/sites/default/files/uploads/UUKi%20reports/intl-facts-figs-19.pdf>> (access: 10.06.2022).

¹⁹ British Business Leaders Believe Speaking Mandarin Chinese Will Give Students a Career Boost. <<http://ci.ioe.ac.uk/2018/04/11/british-business-leaders-believe-speaking-mandarin-chinese-will-give-students-a-career-boost/>> (access: 10.06.2022).

²⁰ Languages for the Future (2013). <<https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/languages-for-the-future-report.pdf>> (access: 13.06.2022).

tion between the two countries in the field of education have undoubtedly contributed to the clear statement and decision made on the learning and teaching of Chinese by the British leaders and the government. All this has accelerated the integration and development of Chinese education in the British national education system.

In 2005, China and the UK started the education summit, which in its sixth annual meeting in 2011 signed the UK China Partners in Education Action Plan, which includes a language education exchange and cooperation agreement. This was followed in 2012 by the launch of the China-UK High-level People-to-People Dialogue. Former Prime Minister David Cameron mentioned on a number of occasions the importance of British students learning Chinese language, and in 2013, he also proposed the target to double the number of Chinese learners in the UK to 400,000 by 2020²¹. He also supported the cooperation between the British Council and Hanban at that time. It was when he was in office in 2016 that the British government made a commitment of 10 million pounds to set up the Mandarin Excellence Programme (MEP) for a period of five years, with the aim to promote Chinese education in state secondary schools. This was the first time in the UK that the government allocated funding to support the teaching of a foreign language. In 2021, the government announced that it would extend the project for another three years with ear-marked funding. In 2018, the Scottish government allocated 750,000 pounds to set up a special scholarship to support students to study Chinese and experience Chinese culture and life in China.

Relatively speaking, the development of Chinese education in the UK is less affected by factors other than the market demand. For example, the Conservative Party Human Rights Commission published a report titled *China's Confucius Institutes: an inquiry by Conservative Party Human Rights Commission*²² in February 2019. The report was obviously suspicious of what Confucius Institutes do, and cited some criticisms and doubts about the development of Confucius Institutes in the UK. The report also recommended a comprehensive review of the Confucius Institutes in the United Kingdom, but the Confucius Institutes in the United Kingdom and their operations did not seem to have been adversely affected. There is not much negative media coverage of the Confucius Institutes, nor has any Confucius Institute been closed down in the UK.

The main challenge for Chinese language education in the UK is its long-term sustainable development, especially in state schools. With regards to the degree to which Chinese is integrated in the national education system,

²¹ David Cameron urges UK schools to teach Mandarin. <<https://www.ft.com/content/056eb1da-5ccd-11-e3-81bd-00144feabdc0>> (access: 04.12.2013).

²² Online: <https://conservativepartyhumanrightscommission.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/CPHRC_Confucius_Institutes_report_FEBRUARY_2019-1.pdf> (access: 10.06.2022).

as almost all Chinese language teaching in the state primary schools is related to or supported by Confucius Institutes/Classrooms, it is just in the first stage; Chinese language teaching still lacks scale at GCSE level, so is in the second stage; but appears in the third stage at A level since it is somewhat comparable to a couple of other main foreign language in the number of examination takers. The success of Mandarin Excellence Programme has undoubtedly consolidated the position of Chinese in the foreign language education system, but there were concerns about how to guarantee the necessary resources to ensure the continued in-depth development of Chinese education in secondary schools²³ before the government extension of the programme was announced. Even though the project has now received the extended government funding, it is not certain whether there will be any new supportive measures from the government in the future.

Moreover, the scale and methods of local Chinese teachers' education and training in the UK are far from being able to meet the needs of the current development of Chinese language education. In 2019 alone, more than 300 Chinese teachers were dispatched from China to the UK through the Confucius Institute and the British Council's Language Assistant programme. There were also hundreds of Chinese teacher volunteers and teachers who came via other channels (e.g. as regional education exchange programs) to teach Chinese in schools in the UK. The numbers of both Confucius Institutes and Confucius Classrooms in the UK rank the first in Europe, and state schools are very dependent on this, due to insufficient funding. Among the local teachers of Chinese in the UK, there are only a handful of them who are not ethnic Chinese.

The problems faced by Chinese community schools are somewhat different. In terms of funding, these schools have long been forced to face the reality, that is, not to rely on government funding but on tuition fees and fundraising to finance their operation. The challenges that follow are in the areas of human resources, teaching quality and market competition. As they are community based charitable organisations, most Chinese community schools charge low course fees, and their administrators and teachers mainly work as volunteers. As a result, it is difficult to ensure the quality of teachers and their teaching, and changes in student profile in the recent years have made this problem more acute than ever before. In addition, the number of private Chinese language schools is increasing in the last few years. Although these schools have higher course fees, their teaching quality is usually quite good. Since they attract many potential community Chinese school students, it has increased the pressure on traditional community Chinese schools.

²³ Mandarin Excellence Programme Evaluation Report 2019/2020, online: <<https://ci.ioe.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/MEP-Evaluation-Report-2019-20.pdf>> (access: 13.06.2022).

Many Chinese schools have been affected and forced to make some changes for their survival.

The increase in the number of institutions teaching Chinese, the slowdown in the growth of the number of students and the market demand have also affected the enrollment of many institutions. For example, a well-known university in London not only saw a drop in the number of degree students learning Chinese in 2019, but also a huge decrease in the number of Chinese language learners in its language center, by about a quarter compared with the previous year. University Chinese courses and other institutions teaching Chinese are all confronted with the challenge of the market competition for students.

Finally, it is the question of how to seamlessly connect and develop cooperatively between Chinese teaching led and provided by Confucius Institutes and local foreign language teaching provision with regards to Chinese learning and teaching. In primary and secondary education, school-based Confucius Institutes and their Confucius Classrooms are promoting the gradual integration and localisation of Chinese education in line with the British teaching and national curriculum requirements.

However, most of the Chinese teaching in university-based Confucius Institutes, by contrast, remains peripheral to the UK higher education system in terms of the courses and assessments offered, except for some guest teaching that the Confucius Institutes take on at the host university for its credit bearing courses. Another important factor that can impact the sustainable development of Chinese teaching is the quality of teaching (Li 2019), and the quality is undoubtedly related to the standards.

A 2019 study of the Confucius Institutes in the UK shows that there has been very few empirical research carried out by Confucius Institutes concerning their teaching of Chinese language and the retention rate is hardly mentioned when reporting the number of learners. All foreign language examinations in the UK are certainly linked to *the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*. But the mismatch between the HSK and the Framework has not yet been sorted out (Zhang 2016) for HSK-oriented courses at the Confucius Institutes, which affects teaching as well as the institutes, including learners' perception of the quality of relevant courses and even of the comparability of the test in terms of competence levels. Another problem that remains to be resolved for Confucius Institutes is how they can cooperate and integrate more closely with the Chinese teaching in British universities and other institutions so that their expected market-oriented Chinese teaching can achieve its financial independence as soon as possible so as to ensure their sustainable development.

5. Conclusions

The language teaching in the UK faces greater challenges after the Brexit in 2019, but it may also provide opportunities for Chinese teaching to develop and expand. Foreign language education in the UK is often said to be far from being satisfactory, and this is still the case today (Languages in the UK 2019). However, the examination results of Chinese language in secondary school have always been outstanding, demonstrating the effectiveness and competitiveness of the Chinese language teaching in the UK.

Although the Chinese language teaching in the UK is not evenly developed in terms of integration stages and across regions, its overall development has been relatively smooth and stable. There is still much room for its development in primary and secondary schools, but this will to a large extent depend on the availability of qualified teachers and teaching resources.

It is likely that the number of Chinese learners in secondary schools has passed its peak, or can even start to decrease (Britain Council *Language Trends* 2015/16), if without new measures such as the MEP. There were many reasons for the decline in the numbers of Chinese examination takers for both GCSE and A level in 2019, and this drop could be seen as being just temporary.

In the next few years, as the students of the MEP begin to take the examinations, the numbers will probably pick up again. Nevertheless, it will take a long time if Chinese intends to catch up or overtake the three major European foreign languages. Just like private schools, Chinese teaching in the university and lifelong education sector will continue to fluctuate with changes in market demands.

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英国汉语教育发展现状分析

【内容提要】

本文在简要介绍英国与其中文教学发展基础之上，首先对英国中文教育近几年的发展情况做了综合性概述，然后对英国中文教育之特点、发展和问题进行了初步的探讨和分析，并对“脱欧”后英国中文教育的发展趋势提出了预测。