Teaching Chinese in International Contexts

Issue 4, April 2015

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编者语

值此春暖花开，万物复苏的季节，我们《国际中文新视野》也迎来了开刊以来的第四期。正是每期有来自世界各地不同教育岗位的教授、老师以及其他中文教育工作者的贡献，才得以支持我们杂志作为一个学术平台，为大家分享对外汉语教学的心得和学术研究的成果。

2015年4月刊的主题为“书法教学”。书法是中国文化中不可或缺的一部分，因为这不仅是一种沟通方式，更是一种审美的艺术。此外，书法也是对外汉语教学中融合语言与文化教学为主体的一个重要组成部分，透过书法教学让学生进一步欣赏汉字的优美。本期以书法教学为主题，旨在为对外汉语教师提供与书法教学相关的理论研究及经验分享，从而进一步推动书法教学的研究和实践。在本期的学术专栏这个版块，来自卡内基梅隆大学的李惠文和于月明两位老师运用项目评估的方法对该校开展中国书法课的需求性进行了评估并制定了相应的行动计划。本学期的教学天地有两篇文章。首先，来自University of Texas at Brownsville的Mingtsan Pierre Lu教授根据自己多年的教学经历，为初级中文学习者的书法教学和学习提出了八点宝贵的意见和建议。除此之外，来自密歇根州立大学孔子学院的韩威老师和大家分享了中国篆刻教学的案例。最后，在本期的技术与资源版块，来自密歇根州立大学的林金锡教授介绍了中国可以快速制作书法字谜和练习书法的网站－中文全字库。

我们衷心地感谢以上作者对本杂志的贡献和分享。我们也诚挚地欢迎更多的中文教育工作者与我们分享你们的教学心得和研究成果。下一期杂志2015年6/8月合刊为开放主题，我们欢迎任何与对外汉语教学相关的学术文章，教学分享，及资源介绍。下一期的投稿截止日期为2015.7.31. 欢迎您积极投稿，如果您对本杂志有任何意见和建议，也欢迎您不吝赐教。

编委会
2015年4月
Assessing Needs for a Chinese Calligraphy Course in the University Context
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Teaching Hanzi Shufa (Chinese Calligraphy) to Beginning Learners of CFL
Mingtsan Pierre Lu, University of Texas at Brownsville

“Culture of Chinese Seals” Lesson Design
Wei Han, Michigan State University

书法网站介绍－中文全字库
Chin-Hsi Lin, Michigan State University
This study assessed the need to offer a Chinese calligraphy course at Carnegie Mellon University. Program evaluation methods and techniques were used to examine the need from multiple aspects including literature review, cross sectional investigations and qualitative analyses. The results indicated: (1) as the essential form of Chinese culture, Chinese calligraphy is both domestically and internationally loved and practiced; (2) a great number of top universities in the United States have begun offering introductory courses in Chinese calligraphy; (3) a substantial need for the course exists among students of the university. Therefore, it is necessary for Carnegie Mellon University to offer a Chinese calligraphy course to better serve the students’ needs and maintain the university’s academic competitiveness and advantages. In order to satisfy the identified need, an action plan was developed.

Keywords: needs assessment, course design, curriculum, Chinese calligraphy, action plan
1. Introduction and definition

A needs assessment, one major type of program evaluation, is a systematic approach to identifying social problems, determining their extent, and accurately defining the target population to be served and the nature of their service needs (Rossi, Lipsey, & Freeman, 2004). It is an effective method to clarify problems and identify appropriate interventions or solutions (Fulgham & Shaughnessy, 2008), which therefore, helps direct finite resources towards developing and implementing a feasible and applicable solution (Altschuld & Kumar, 2010).

This assessment was intended to evaluate the need to offer a Chinese calligraphy course at Carnegie Mellon University and provide rationale for the decision-making process. Chinese calligraphy is defined by Cihai (an authoritative, comprehensive Chinese dictionary) as “用毛笔书写篆、隶、正、行、草各体汉字的艺术 [the art to write the stylistic scripts of Chinese characters including the seal, clerical, regular, running, and cursive scripts, using Chinese writing brush]”. It has been widely practiced both in China and overseas, and has played a very important role in defining and refining Chinese culture. The Chinese calligraphy course of interest was an introductory one intended mainly for undergraduate students who were planning to major or minor in Chinese Studies at Carnegie Mellon University (CMU).

CMU is a globally competitive university with more than 90 academic programs. Chinese Studies is one of the largest undergraduate programs. Every year there are more than 500 students enrolled in various levels of Chinese culture and language courses. Throughout the decades since its establishment, the Chinese Studies program has developed a relatively stable set of curricula. In order for the department to add a Chinese calligraphy course to the existing well-running curriculum, an assessment was required to identify whether or not there was a need for this course. A needs assessment was conducted for this purpose.

Three types of methods were employed in the study including (1) literature and historical research, (2) cross-sectional investigations, and (3) qualitative analyses (Figure 1). The first type was to evaluate the historical and cultural significance of Chinese calligraphy. The second focused on between-university comparison on calligraphy course offering. Finally, the third involved student and faculty surveys. Interview and focus group were also conducted for triangulation purposes (Durst, MacDonald, and Parsons, 1999). The results of needs
achieved by applying these approaches at CMU were used to develop an action plan.

2. Needs from the literature – to promote this treasure of Chinese culture and tradition to the whole world

2.1 Chinese calligraphy as a carrier of Chinese history and culture

Chinese calligraphy “began with the creation of Chinese characters” (Qian & Fang, 2007, p. 100). It has existed in China for at least three thousand years (Li, 2009; Qiu & Mattos, 2000). Before regular modern pens and computers were invented, calligraphy was used as a primary way of record-keeping and communication. Therefore, it was a key component in people’s daily lives. Starting from the Han dynasty (208 BC – 220 AD), as new and different scripts were developed, calligraphers began to study how to write calligraphy more aesthetically and artistically. It was then that calligraphy was first regarded as an art form of writing Chinese. This made people realize and appreciate the aesthetic value of calligraphy.
From the Sui dynasty (581-619 AD) to the Qing dynasty (1644-1911 AD), the Imperial Civil Service Examination System was set up and employed to select knowledgeable and talented individuals for civil services in China. During this long period of Chinese history, calligraphy served as a requisite for all candidates to be qualified for a government position. Therefore, it was widely understood that calligraphy was a crucial course that students and trainees were required to take. As a result, calligraphy became one of the four most important skills (i.e., musical instrument playing, chess playing, calligraphy writing, and painting) when evaluating a person’s scholarship.

To learn calligraphy, one must learn the rules. Over several thousand years, Chinese calligraphy has developed five primary scripts (Seal, Clerical, Regular, Running, and Cursive) as well as Lesser scripts. All these scripts share basic calligraphy rules, although each has its unique visible appearance. These rules cover stroke writing, component layout, character shaping, composition of the entire work and others. This makes performing calligraphy writing similar to drawing or painting. To make or evaluate high-level calligraphy works, extra rules were also established. Based on these rules, for example, good calligraphy should be able to express the essence of the content and convey the calligrapher’s mental and emotional state. To apply these rules, or in other words, to produce good calligraphy work, calligraphers need to apply their technical skills and talents in the stroke/character/component sizing, lining, spreading, coloring, coordinating, and (writing) pacing. From the audience’s perspective, however, a piece of calligraphy cannot only be viewed by the techniques and physical attributes. Another important dimension is the hidden insights, which may include the dynamics, rhythm, emotion, and even the calligrapher’s personality. The beauty and complexity of Chinese calligraphy has developed this art form to be called 无言之诗，无形之舞，无图之画，无声之乐 [wordless poetry, figureless dance, imageless picture, and soundless music] (Liu, 2012). Western scholars have given praises to Chinese calligraphy that it contains the beauty of an image in painting, the beauty of dynamism in dance, and the beauty of rhythm in music (Guo, 1995). Additionally, the calligraphy writing techniques must be directed by traditional Chinese philosophical ideas such as the balance between Yin and Yang from Taoism, and the golden mean from Confucianism (Qian & Fang). Calligraphy
requires additional effort from both the performer and the evaluator, such as *qing* [mood, emotion], *qi* [energy, vital force], *shen* [spirit], *jing* [realm, standing], *yun* [elegance], *fa* [discipline], *yi* [expressiveness], *fengge* [style], and *qidu* [manner] (Ni, 1999). Therefore, Chinese calligraphy is the quintessence of Chinese culture (Chen, 2003).

As time went on, calligraphy fully developed its form by absorbing components from other cultural forms including Chinese language, ideas on aesthetics, and philosophy (Qian & Fang). According to Peveto (2010), Chinese calligraphy “began at the dawn of China’s history and has continued throughout the centuries to the present, remaining a significant element in Chinese culture,” so “understanding its role in history and society allows a glimpse into China’s past and its present” (p. 44). Therefore, by studying and practicing calligraphy, people can learn those components and deepen their understanding of Chinese culture. This is especially true for students of Chinese language and culture.

### 2.2 Benefits for personal development of morality, personality, and health

In addition to seeking deeper understanding of Chinese culture and enjoying its beauty, people treat calligraphy as a means of developing good morality, personality, and improving physical and mental health. This benefit is supported by multiple research studies. A longitudinal study conducted by Zhou, Liu, and Sang (2005) showed that calligraphy practice had a significant positive effect on 13 personality factors such as warmth, reasoning, and emotional stability. Another study conducted by these researchers (2009) also indicated that children with calligraphy experience showed positive emotional intelligence development. Kao (2006) studied Chinese calligraphic handwriting for health and behavioral therapy. Positive effects were found on multiple dimensions related to health such as (1) cognitive improvements in reasoning, judgment, facilitation, and hand steadiness in children with mild retardation, and (2) enhanced memory, concentration, spatial orientation, and motor coordination in Alzheimer's patients. Findings also included positive behavioral changes in individuals with autism, Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD), Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), psychosomatic diseases of hypertension and diabetes, as well as mental diseases of schizophrenia, depression, and neurosis. In addition, practicing Chinese calligraphy is commonly accepted as a contributing factor to longevity. Kwok et al. (2011)
investigated the effects of calligraphy therapy and proved that it was effective for enhancing cognitive function in older people with mild impairment. Ni (1999) also reported the moral development benefits from practicing calligraphy. It is very likely that practicing Chinese calligraphy has additional benefits yet to be discovered.

2.3 Influence and impacts in the world

Chinese calligraphy has not only borne great significance domestically, but also produced great influences internationally. In Asian countries such as Japan, Korea, and Singapore, calligraphy is widely practiced and highly valued. In Korea, Chinese was used as the official script even after the invention of Hangul in 1447, until the 19th century (Encyclopedia Britannica). Calligraphy is also widely practiced in Japan and has been incorporated in the current school curriculum (Department of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology of Japan) (see http://www.mext.go.jp/b_menu/shingi/chukyo/chukyo3/004/siryo/05081601/005.htm). In the West, Picasso was fascinated by the interplay of Chinese characters, the strengths and economy of their construction, and stated, “If I were born Chinese, I would not be a painter but a writer. I’d write my pictures” (Claude Roy, 1956) (see http://www.cipherjournal.com/html/picasso_notes.html). Additionally, traces of Chinese calligraphy can also be easily recognized in the paintings of another famous European artist, Henri Mattise (Li, 2009). Hence, it can be said that the beauty and significance of Chinese calligraphy has been recognized and appreciated around the world for many years.

3. Needs perceived from the course offerings in the United States universities

In 2012, a cross sectional study was conducted to examine whether a Chinese calligraphy course was offered in the top 50 U.S. universities (CMU was ranked 24th). The reason for this sampling method instead of a random sample was to obtain universities comparable in competitiveness. Newsweek’s 2011 list of top universities was used. The data was obtained by checking the course listings of each university, spanning the Fall 2011 to Spring 2014 school years. These three consecutive years covered all the recent courses offered on a termly, yearly, or biyearly basis.
The result showed that about half of the upper 25 universities (48%) offered such a course as well as another 6 of the lower 25. The percentage itself is not a big one. However, a need still existed because Carnegie Mellon University was aiming to sustainably develop its competitive advantage in the United States and in the world. This competitiveness included not only computer science and engineering but also foreign languages and culture.

4. Needs identified from Carnegie Mellon University

A faculty member who ran CMU’s Chinese Calligraphy Club decided to start a needs assessment in the spring of 2011. Because club flyers were only given to students that were taking Chinese classes, no more than six students were expected during the club’s opening day. Surprisingly, a total of eleven students registered for the club, and it was suggested that more would have been present if students could take this class for credit. During a faculty program meeting, there was encouragement to design new courses that would meet the needs and interests of student learning. This triggered the current study design.

An expert on curriculum quality control was consulted with the preliminary ideas of the new Chinese calligraphy course offering. Nine critical questions were generated from the communications:

1. Would it be desirable to offer such a course for credit?
2. Where might this course best fit in the Chinese Studies curriculum?
3. How and why would this be seen as the appropriate level? Would this be envisioned as an elective for Chinese Studies majors and minors?
4. What might be the goals, nature and learning outcomes of this course? What would it include? For how many credits?
5. Will the course cover learning and practicing the art of calligraphy, and history/cultural content related to the topic?
6. What kinds of assignments, activities, and assessment would be built into the course?
7. Would/could the course be conducted in Chinese?
(8) Would one envision pre-requisites for this course? If so, what would they be?

(9) If there would be "lab" or materials fees for the course, would there be a need to consult with the human resource manager about this, and perhaps others who have this experience?

Two suggestions were also made by the expert:

(1) To communicate with the program's key faculty members in a more substantive way about this possible addition to the curriculum;

(2) To gather information about the calligraphy course offered by the School of Design and have a conversation with the instructor.

These questions and suggestions were all considered in the instrument design and action plan development stages.

4.1 Identification of stakeholders

*Stakeholders* are entities or individuals that are affected by the program to be established, closed, changed, or operated. They normally include program funders, clients, non-client community members, and program managing staff. According to this definition, the stakeholders in this study were identified as

(1) the target students of the course,

(2) faculty of Chinese language or culture,

(3) department administrative staff, and

(4) the Department of Modern Languages and the Chinese Studies program.

Students were identified as the “clients” of the course offering. Whether the course would be offered or not mainly depended upon the degree of the students’ need. If the course was ultimately offered, many factors, such as syllabus, course contents, amount of credits available, and course level, would have direct influence on the students’ likelihood too take the course. Since this course was designed for students of Chinese language and/or culture, it is targeted to a total of 298 students that are currently taking any Chinese course.

The second group of stakeholders referred to faculty members of Chinese language and culture. Through their daily interactions and research, these instructors clearly knew
their content areas and were familiar with the needs for other subject areas that could help their students build a better scheme of knowledge. Also, the new course would need instructors and assistants, who had the ability to share some of the resources from other courses of the program. With a strong understanding of the potential impacts from the calligraphy course, these faculty members could evaluate the necessity or importance of this course. Since there are only a small number of instructors in the Chinese Studies program and everyone has their own perceptions of the relative content areas, all of them were included in the study as informants.

Another group of participants was the administrative staff in charge of the registration, teaching, and quality control of the course. This group was small but very important because they were very sensitive to the feasibility of any course in terms of course level, cost for the department, facilities involved, and appropriateness in the broader view of all languages courses. They would need to find a time period for the new course, calculate the cost and expenses, evaluate the budget, and make arrangements for facilities and materials needed. To involve them in the study was a must. A total of two staff members were included in the study.

The department and the program would have the final decision for whether to add this course, since they would ultimately fund and host this course. Specifically this group had two participants, the head of the department and the coordinator of the Chinese Studies program, and upon conclusion of the needs assessment the data and suggestive report were submitted to them for final approval.

4.2 Research questions and instruments

This research was intended to answer four main questions:

(1) Are there enough potential students to take the course?

(2) Is the course essential and/or necessary for the curriculum development of the program and the department?

(3) Will the resources (e.g., instructors & facilities) and policy allow for the course offering?
(4) What can be done to meet the needs?

Figure 2. Research questions and addressing sequence

Figure 2 shows the sequence and condition for the questions being addressed. The first question was used to determine if there was a need among students and the size of the need. If there was no need at all, or if the need was very small, it would not make sense to continue with this assessment. If the need was large enough, the assessment would move on to address the second question of whether or not it complements other Chinese courses or other subjects in the department curriculum. Next, the course would need sufficient logistical resources, which included but were not limited to, instructors, teaching materials, classrooms, class time, and budget. Finally, provided that the course proves to be useful, necessary, and feasible, an action plan would need be developed to produce an official course offered to students.
For the above questions to be answered, two surveys and two interview protocols were employed. The first survey was for students and contains six items (see Appendix A). Item 1 was gathering the students’ knowledge of Chinese calligraphy. It could potentially be used to correlate with their willingness to take the course. Items 2 and 3 were the key questions uncovering the need for this course. Item 4 aimed to address the required vs. elective course attribute for Chinese major, minor or other types of students. Item 5 and 6 were used to collect the students’ suggestions on class frequency and contents to be covered. In addition, there were two demographic items identifying students’ course level and major/minor status (see Appendix A for the survey format and detailed information).

The second survey was for the instructors of Chinese language and/or culture. Similar to the survey for students, this survey also contained six response items (see Appendix B) and two demographic items. The response items addressed the instructor’s perception of the course offering’s necessity and importance (Item 1 – 3), academic credit of the course based on the estimated workload (Item 4), and the contents to be covered (Item 5). The last item checked how the faculty might be engaged when the course is offered (Item 6). One demographic item identified the course level(s) the instructor teaches, and the other was an open-ended question asking the instructors to provide any other comments. The purpose of this survey was to assess the course necessity from the instructors’ perspectives, and how the course fits into the program-wide course curriculum (see Appendix B for the survey format and detailed information).

The first interview question list was designed for the administrative staff, and contained five open-ended questions (Appendix C). These questions checked whether there were sufficient teaching materials for a new course, and if the future budget could sufficiently support the course offering. Also, the staff checked the available times of classrooms, as well as instructional equipment and student/instructor schedules. In addition, the questions required the interviewees to think about any possible barriers that may or may not be detrimental to the course offering. After consideration of all these factors, the staff would have a clear idea about the feasibility of the course.
The second interview question list contained five open-ended questions constructed for both the department head and the program coordinator (Appendix D). They provided insight into whether the department and program policies support the content of the new course, whether the program or department will be better off with the new course, whether the instructors met academic qualifications, and whether there were any potential risks to the improvement of the program/department.

4.3 Method and procedure

The surveys were emailed to the faculty members, while the instructors forwarded the surveys to the students that were currently taking any Chinese courses. In the email, an emphasis was placed on honest responses in order to produce results that best meet their needs. Students were informed to turn in their response either through email or in class. For students who chose in-class submission, the instructors collected all the responses and delivered them to the researcher.

Face-to-face interviews were conducted. There were a total of four interviewees in this study. The department registrar and the human resource manager represented the administrative staff population. The program coordinator and the department head represented the decision holder population. A week before the interview, an email was sent to each of the interviewees introducing the purpose of the study and interview, its format, and the expected date and time. In the email, the interviewees’ offices were suggested as the interview location for convenience. Since the department head was very busy during that period of time, she emailed her response. All other participants attended the interview in person.

After the data was collected and analyzed, a focus group was held between the two potential instructors and program coordinator to discuss all the important topics identified with an aim to sketch a rough framework for the course. Topics discussed covered the nature of the course, target students, frequency of the course, basic content to teach, and difficulties that may exist. The result of the analysis was reported, and an action plan was drafted.

4.4 Result

4.4.1 Needs of students
Based on the department policy, a language course can be offered if there are at least 8 students registered. The Chinese language/culture course’s early dropout rate (before the add/drop deadline) is roughly 25% on average in some sample classes, according to yearly observations. Technically, 11 (obtained by $8 + 8 \times 30\%$) registered students are needed to reach the minimum number required to offer a course.

In this study, degrees of needs will be defined as follows:

1. Fair need: 11 – 20 students willing to register
2. Moderate need: 21 – 30 students willing to register
3. High need: 31 or more students willing to register

Ninety-nine students, out of a total of 289, have returned complete and valid responses, resulting in a response rate of 34.3%. Although this rate is not high, the main interest of this study was to quantify the absolute number of potential students. Among the respondents, 51 students (50%) reported that they would definitely take the course if it was offered, and another 31 (30%) said they would most likely take it. The result shows a very high need for the course among the students. In addition, 45.5% of the students suggested that it be offered on a semester basis, while another 46.5% suggested a once-per-year offering. The majority of students, 92.9%, prefer that the calligraphy course be offered as an elective, and 95% would like the course to cover the history, culture, and philosophy behind Chinese calligraphy, and writing skills and practices.

4.4.2 Feasibility from the faculty and administrative staff

All of the 10 faculty members returned complete and valid responses. Every faculty member believed that a Chinese calligraphy course was important and necessary for students majoring or minoring in Chinese. Two faculty members offered to be instructors for the course, while the rest indicated willingness to serve as supporting staff. Regarding the teaching content, all agreed that it should cover the history, culture, and philosophy of Chinese calligraphy, as well as writing practices, which is the same content as the students’ responses. However, there was no agreement on the number of course units and course level.

The administrative staff considered the operational system of the department. They reported that the course could fit into the current course system. There were course numbers
available at multiple levels, classrooms that could be reserved without any difficulty, and several dates and times that were also available. Class information could be posted very quickly for students. The human resource manager reported that there was no considerable concern from a budget standpoint due to an estimated expense of only $100 for the teaching materials needed.

4.4.3 Responses from the decision holders

Based on the result of the interviews and the focus groups' survey, both the program coordinator and the department head agreed that a Chinese calligraphy course should be offered. They did not have any concerns but suggested that the course be well designed with rich cultural content. They believed that the instructors that offered to teach the course were qualified and were authorized to begin developing the course. The final decision was to be made and announced once a curriculum report was submitted and approved.

4.5 Action plan

Based on the needs identified from multiple aspects, it was decided that the Chinese calligraphy course was to be offered in the fall semester of 2013. To make this realized, the following action plan was developed.

(1) Vision and mission of the course

Vision: Students would not only be trained to have a good understanding of Chinese characters and their cultural and philosophical background, but also be able to appreciate the art and beauty in Chinese calligraphy.

Mission: To help students gain knowledge of the history, culture, and philosophy, build up basic skills of calligraphy writing and analysis, and obtain benefits in the development of morality, personality, intelligence, and health from learning and practicing Chinese calligraphy.

(2) Course design

The Chinese calligraphy course was designed as a nine-unit elementary-level language related culture course. It covered topics on calligraphy history, language development, Chinese philosophy, styles and genres, basic writing methods, writing practice, and analysis and appreciation of calligraphy works. It would be offered twice a
week, each lasting 80 minutes. Two instructors would co-teach this course for the first year.

(3) Agenda and timelines

The instructors would submit the assessment report within two weeks. Within one week after the report was approved, instructors would begin designing the course. Detailed course design needs to be worked out as soon as possible because it would involve a complex process, with multiple iterations. Working agenda is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Agenda of Chinese calligraphy course offering preparation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Deadline</th>
<th>Task finished</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>March 31</td>
<td>Course description drafted (learning goals, course format, teaching methods, course content, and learning outcome assessment method)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 30</td>
<td>Course description finalized and posted (course number, class date/time, classroom, syllabus, textbook information); and course registration available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 31</td>
<td>Teaching materials purchased or ordered (textbooks, writing brushes, paper, ink, practice books)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 30</td>
<td>Teaching plans drafted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 15</td>
<td>Sufficient number of students registered; teaching plans finalized</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This agenda was aimed to fill the gaps in needs for a calligraphy course identified from the needs assessment. Although the deadlines were established, it would still have been better if the tasks were completed earlier to accommodate any unexpected issues that may have arisen. In addition, this action plan needed to be revised accordingly based on actual situations and new concerns that arose. Regular meetings were arranged between the instructors and other related members to address these situations.

5. Conclusion and discussion

Chinese calligraphy, as both a historical method for documentation and communication, as well as a form of artistic expression, has produced great influences both in China and in the world. It is a great cultural treasure not only for China, but also for the world. Both historical and empirical evidence clearly demonstrate a compelling necessity to pass on
this knowledge and skill from generation to generation through teaching and training. This assessment specifically concluded that a Chinese calligraphy course was both highly needed and feasible to be offered at Carnegie Mellon University.

In the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (2001), different cultures are no longer regarded as national properties, but rather as the common heritage of humanity. To promote an awareness of the positive value of cultural diversity, the declaration encourages all levels of education to take actions on both curriculum design and teacher education. This research was an attempt to fulfill the encouragement by conducting an assessment and a course offering trial.

The role of the needs assessment was to engage a broader range of stakeholders rather than just students, encourage fairness of evaluation, and produce useful and valid results (Bloom, 2010; Weaver & Cousins, 2004). It was intended to reflect these merits involved within this approach. However, it is possible that some unidentified stakeholders were missed, which may have affected the validity and other dimensions of the assessment. This weakness should be avoided through learning from other research studies and continuing to improve the design of the needs assessment.

Adding a new course in a higher education institution through a needs assessment is a leading trial in this field. There is currently a lack of established methodology, as well as research for this application. Some tools employed such as the survey and interview questions may not have been able to reflect the reality (i.e., needs) and other situations. Other methods may need to be employed to supplement the evidence obtained. The procedures should be standardized and researchers trained to reduce any inconsistencies in the results.

Finally, since this assessment was conducted within one department, just a small number of faculty and staff were available to provide data. Therefore, information collected may not have been representative enough. Other ways need to be explored to rectify the potential bias that may exist. A process evaluation may be conducted to check the performance of the teaching and learning to see if the needs were accurately identified and sufficiently satisfied.
References


Dear All,

This survey is used to assess the needs for a Chinese calligraphy course at Carnegie Mellon University. Please take a few minutes to provide your opinion by choosing the best option for the following survey items, and return your finished survey to your instructor. Your response will be kept in strict confidentiality. If you have any questions, please contact Professor Li, principal researcher, by email (haven@andrew.cmu.edu). Thank you for your time and cooperation!

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Please circle the choice that best matches your situation.

1. I have ____________ about Chinese calligraphy before.
   ① heard a lot  ② heard a little  ③ never heard

2. Chinese calligraphy, as a course, would be ____________ to me.
   very interesting  somewhat interesting  moderately interesting  somewhat uninteresting  very uninteresting
   ①  ②  ③  ④  ⑤

3. If the University offers a Chinese calligraphy course from next semester on, I would ____________ take it.
   definitely  most likely  likely  less likely  definitely not
   ①  ②  ③  ④  ⑤

4. I suggest that Chinese calligraphy should be ____________. (Check all that apply)
   ① a required course for Chinese majors
   ② an elective course for Chinese majors or minors
   ③ an elective course toward GenEd requirement
   ④ offered to no students.

5. Chinese calligraphy course should be offered ____________ .
   ① once every semester
   ② once every year
   ③ once every two years
   ④ other (please specify): ___________________________________________
6. The Chinese calligraphy course should teach _______________. (Check all that apply)
   ① the relevant history
   ② how to write
   ③ the relevant culture
   ④ other contents such as (Please list one or two):

Please answer the following questions about yourself.

1. You are ________.
   ① a Chinese major
   ② a Chinese minor
   ③ an undergraduate of another major
   ④ a graduate student

2. You are taking ________ Chinese course(s). (Check all that apply)
   ① 100-level (elementary)
   ② 200-level (intermediate)
   ③ 300-level (advanced)
   ④ 400-level (advanced)

Thank you for answering the above questions!
Appendix B

Survey of the Needs for a Chinese Calligraphy Course for Faculty of Chinese

Dear All,

This survey is used to assess the needs for a Chinese calligraphy course for undergraduate students at Carnegie Mellon University. Please take a few minutes to provide your opinion by circling the best option for the survey items, and return your finished survey to Huiwen Li (principal researcher) in any of the following three ways.

(1) Put it in my mailbox in our main office;
(2) Highlight your answer and email the survey back to: calligraphy.course.design@gmail.com;
(3) Hand it to me.

Thank you for your time. Your early response is greatly appreciated!

------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

1. It is ___________ to offer a Chinese calligraphy course to students in Chinese major at the University.

   very necessary          somewhat necessary          moderately necessary          somewhat unnecessary          very unnecessary

   ①                       ②                       ③                       ④                       ⑤

2. It is ___________ to offer a Chinese calligraphy course to students in Chinese minor at the University.

   very necessary          somewhat necessary          moderately necessary          somewhat unnecessary          very unnecessary

   ①                       ②                       ③                       ④                       ⑤

3. It is ___________ to offer a Chinese calligraphy course to students in NON-Chinese major or minor at the University.

   very necessary          somewhat necessary          moderately necessary          somewhat unnecessary          very unnecessary

   ①                       ②                       ③                       ④                       ⑤

4. In terms of the workload in your mind, Chinese calligraphy most likely is a _______ unit course.

   ① 0
   ② 6
   ③ 12
5. The Chinese calligraphy course should cover ____________. (Check all that apply)
   ① the relevant history
   ② the relevant culture
   ③ how to write
   ④ other (Please specify): ________________________________

6. I would like to _______________ of the Chinese calligraphy course:
   ① be an instructor of
   ② be a supplementary helper of
   ③ be some other supportive resource of
   ④ do nothing for

Please answer the following questions about yourself.

1. You are teaching ________ Chinese course(s). (Check all that apply)
   ① 100-level (elementary)
   ② 200-level (intermediate)
   ③ 300-level (advanced)
   ④ 400-level (advanced)

2. If you want to have a further discussion with me, please provide your contact information below:

Thank you for answering the above questions!
Appendix C

Interview Protocol for the Administrative Staff

Place of Interview:  
Job Position of the Interviewee:  
Date of Interview:  
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Hello! We are developing a new Chinese calligraphy course for undergraduate students at Carnegie Mellon University. In order to assess if the course is needed, important, and offerable, we have designed a number of questions for students, faculty, and relevant staff members. Here we have five questions for you to answer. Please provide your opinion and thoughts honestly. Thanks for your great support!

Questions:

(1) From your official perspective regarding teaching materials, classrooms, class time, and budget, how feasible is it for Modern Languages Department to offer a Chinese calligraphy course to the undergraduate students?

(2) What concerns are there in your mind if this course to be offered?

(3) What concerns are addressable on your side?

(4) What are the hurdles that may not be overcome temporarily or permanently?

(5) How will the issues not addressable affect the course offering?

Thanks for answering these questions. If you have other concerns, you can reach us at haven@andrew.cmu.edu.
Appendix D

Interview Protocol for the Program Coordinator and the Department Head

Interview Place: Interview date:
Interviewee’s job position:

--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Hello! As you know, we are developing a new Chinese calligraphy course for undergraduate students at Carnegie Mellon University. In order to assess if the course is needed, important, and offerable, we have designed a number of questions for students, faculty, and relevant staff members. The preliminary analyses show a substantial need for the course among the undergraduate students in Chinese major or minor. Here we also have four questions for you to answer. Please provide your opinion and thoughts honestly. Thanks for your great support!

Questions:

(1) From your official perspective regarding the course fitfulness for the curriculum system, program or department policy and operation, and instructor qualification, how feasible is it for Modern Languages Department/Chinese Studies program to offer a Chinese calligraphy course to the undergraduate students?

(2) Will the department or program be better off with the new course to be added?

(3) Two instructors, A and B, offered to teach the course. According to your knowledge, how academically qualified are they?

(4) What potential risks do you see that may impede the improvement of the program and/or the department?

(5) What concerns do you have?

Thanks for answering all the questions! Please contact me by email if you have any concerns or other thoughts.
This short reflection article aims to share the author’s experience and thoughts on teaching Hanzi *Shufa* (Chinese calligraphy) to beginning learners of Chinese as a Foreign Language (CFL). Three things are worth noting. One, it has been argued by many scholars that beginning learners of CFL are different from intermediate and advanced CFL learners (e.g., Lu, Hallman, & Black, 2013; Lu, 2011). Novices are not familiar with the language and often need more scaffolding. Two, Shufa is a term that has been promoted and recommended to replace Chinese calligraphy by international academic and scholarly communities, such as the American Society of Shufa Calligraphy Education (ASSCE), due to its broader scope and better-defined identity. Indeed, calligraphy pieces created by people who use Hanzi-related characters in different parts of the world and by people who write artistic calligraphy based on Hanzi-related characters may be in Korean Hanja, in Japanese Kanji, in Taiwanese Hanji, in Vietnamese Hantu, or in Chinese Hanzi. In addition, Shufa has a broader, and probably better, definition of what is usually termed Chinese calligraphy, such as the implication of principles of good writing as in *Laws of Writing*. Therefore, this article uses the term Shufa. Three, though the author has over 20 years of experience teaching Shufa to native Mandarin speakers in Taiwan and China as well as to various levels of CFL learners in the United States, the perspectives raised here are mainly based on his and his colleagues’ experience, observation, and opinion. However, the author and his colleagues have witnessed many benefits and advantages of these tips shared in this article for Shufa teaching and learning. Eight points.
listed below are provided as instructional idea, tips, or suggestions for calligraphy teaching and learning, especially for beginning learners of CFL.

1. **Brush holding.** Traditionally, the arguably *correct* brush holding pose or method is to use our three main fingers (the thumb, index, and middle fingers) to grab the brush, and use the remaining two fingers (the ring and pinky fingers) to lightly support the brush and the other three fingers. However, it is in doubt whether holding a brush like this may help learners of CFL learn Shufa better, it often takes a lot of time and effort to do the seemingly meaningless correction to hold brush in a certain way. First, there is no scientific evidence that holding the brush in such a conventional way will help CFL students better learn Shufa. Second, for certain types of characters and Shufa, such as the Seal type, the Clerical type, and even the Grass type, it may be better to hold the brush differently to produce better and prettier Shufa works. Third, many Shufa teachers and masters, such as Master Lin-Ze Chu and Master Li-Hua Lin, argue that there is no one correct method of holding a brush when writing Shufa. The author also believes that there is not a correct way that novel Shufa learners have to follow in order to learn to write Shufa well. In fact, the author suggests that for beginning learners of CFL who wish to learn Shufa well, they should try grabbing a brush with their thumb on one side and the other four fingers on the other, as if you are tightly holding a fist with a thick pen in it. The author and his colleagues have seen beautiful Shufa works produced out of this free-style brush holding method.

2. **Centered tip technique.** The centered tip technique is perhaps one of the most important techniques that every Shufa writer or calligrapher has to master. Its importance has been documented and promoted over centuries. To better teach the centered tip technique in writing or producing Shufa, the author suggests that beginning learners of CFL who wish to learn Shufa well start with the Seal type of Shufa or the Clerical type of Shufa. The Seal type of Shufa uses only the centered tip technique and can serve as a great start for beginning learners of Shufa. The Clerical type of Shufa also uses a majority of the centered tip technique. The Seal and Clerical types of Shufa can help learners be more controlled, steady, and stable when writing Shufa. This opinion is consistent with several ASSCE scholars’ arguments in the International Hanzi Shufa Education Conference (e.g., Lu, 2012).
3. **Pictographs, indicatives, and ideographs.** The author suggests the use of pictographs, indicatives, and ideographs in the beginning phases of Shufa learning. As we know that pictographs, indicatives, and ideographs are the most basic characters or forms of characters derived mainly from their meanings and shapes, they serve as elements and components of other types of characters, such as the semantic-phonetic compounds, which count for over 90% of all the Hanzi characters being used today. Early introduction of pictographs, indicatives, and ideographs will help learners recognize more radicals of a word and better understand the etymological changes of words (Lu, 2011; Lu, Hallman, and Black, 2013). Therefore, the author suggests demonstrating, practicing, and teaching these types of characters to beginning learners of Shufa at an early stage.

4. **Class practice and regular practice through homework assignments.** From different observations across various schools and regions, it seems many teachers of Shufa do not assign sufficient homework for learners to practice at home. Due to the frequent schedule of Chinese language classes in most high school and college settings, where class takes place on each weekday teachers sometimes limit Shufa practice to be only in class, “while the teacher is on site to help.” The author suggests that both class practice and homework practice are important and should have equivalent emphasis. Practice makes perfect. Unlike other forms of performing arts, calligraphy works can be kept for future record, for learning improvement, for possible publication, and for further communications and idea exchanges. Regular practice through homework assignments will help learners review what has been covered in Shufa classes (Lu, 2013).

5. **Exhibition and/or class presentation.** An effective curriculum design is to include an exhibition or a class presentation at different times of the course. An exhibition or a class presentation of learners’ Shufa works will set a goal for the Shufa course’s learning and push learners to learn and produce better Shufa works. In addition, learners from the same class get to see how their classmates progress and learn from others. Exhibitions and/or class presentations may collaborate with other departments or fields, such as fine arts, modern languages, and history, etc. The author suggests the inclusion of an exhibition or a class presentation at least once, in the middle and/or towards the end of the course. It has been
observed that even after the exhibition or class presentation, learners keep motivated to learn and write Shufa. Most learners enjoy their experience and keep their works afterwards.

6. **Inscription selection for imitation.** A good inscription can certainly help Shufa learners better imitate. Though teachers of Shufa are of great influence and importance on CFL students’ Shufa learning, the selection of appropriate inscriptions for Shufa learners can play a positive role. First, for the Clerical type of Shufa, the author suggests the Yi-Ying Inscription and the Shi-Cheng Inscription. Second, for the Seal type of Shufa, the author suggests Chao, Chi-Chien’s and Ho, Shao-Chi’s works. Third, teachers of Shufa should select inscriptions for learners to imitate based on individuals’ personal characteristics and unique hand-writing features. This may require at least one to two classes and about 20-30 minutes to find customized inscriptions. If teachers are able, it is encouraged that teachers write different types of Shufa inscriptions individually for different learners to imitate.

7. **Integration.** Shufa can be integrated using technology and in different fields of study. Many teachers of Shufa have used internet resources and new forms of technology to introduce Shufa. Many resources can be easily found in academic journals, magazines, books, and online communities (e.g., Lu & LaVaglio, 2014). With technology, learners may learn the order of strokes and the shapes of characters better. They also learn to better recognize characters with the help of technology. With interdisciplinary collaboration, ideas can be exchanged and communicated among not only teachers but also students in different fields. Collaboration can be with arts, literature, languages, philosophy, Asian studies, history, educational/ positive psychology, and even engineering, such as the famous Dr. Randy Pausch’s integration course with arts and computer science at CMU.

8. **Exposure opportunity.** Whenever possible, teachers of Shufa should arrange and encourage opportunities for Shufa exposure. Activities such as a field trip to local museums where Asian exhibitions are held, talks by guest speakers from international communities or by visiting scholars and/ or artists, and engaging in Asian cultural and heritage-related events and celebrations will greatly enhance learners’ interest. In addition, increased exposure opportunities help beginning learners see Shufa’s practical daily application in a lot of Asian cultures.
From the teacher’s perspective, the author has listed eight points above. Yet, it is also important that students’ thoughts and voices are heard. At the end of every class, the author asks for student feedback and reflections. Students have expressed several interesting things that they have learned and gained from Shufa: 1) Students of Shufa increase their level of innovation, creativity, and imagination through their artistic creations. 2) Many have reported that when they practice Shufa, they feel and embrace inner peace, harmony, calmness, and joy. 3) Students of Shufa have strengthened their handwriting and drawing ability, especially in penmanship and letter writing. They have also developed a sense of appreciation for lines and dots. 4) Many students have expressed that by learning Shufa, their ability to recognize ancient characters has increased and they are more able to read ancient literature books and articles (which are with traditional characters). In addition, they are more able to learn many Eastern Asian languages, such as Japanese, Korean, and Chinese. In conclusion, by sharing the author’s experience in teaching Shufa to both novices and advanced CFL learners, it is hoped that future Shufa educators and stakeholders can benefit from the article.

References


Lu, M. (2012). Instructional Methods and Learning Effectiveness of the Use of Seal Type Calligraphy for the Centered Tip Technique for Beginning Learners of CFL. Paper presented at the 8th International Conference on Hanzi Shufa Calligraphy Education (ASSCE 2012), Georgetown, TX.


## 1. Teaching objectives

Seals are an ancient Chinese art. They represent one’s status in ancient times. In ancient China, transactions were only completed with the authorized name seal of the participant. This unit provides a general introduction to Chinese seals. Students will learn about the history and application of Chinese seals as well as have some hands-on experience on how to use a Chinese seal.

The suggested topics for discussion and classroom activities are designed based on a brief introduction. Teachers may choose the topics and activities freely depending on the availability of the materials and the time frame of their lessons. With the discussion topics and classroom activities, the objectives of teaching are:

1. Students will learn about Chinese seals in terms of its history, materials and its historical applications.
2. In the unit, students will get a general understanding of Chinese seals and try to design a Chinese seal for themselves.
3. Students will learn how to make a Chinese seal.
4. Students will develop their own appreciation of Chinese seals and Chinese arts.
5. Students will learn how to use Chinese seals.
2. Brief introduction of Chinese seals

**Question A: What is a Chinese seal?**

(1) A Chinese seal is a seal or stamp containing Chinese characters used in East Asia as a signature on documents, contracts, art, or similar items where authorship is considered important.

(2) Chinese seals are typically made of stone, sometimes of wood, and are typically used with red ink or cinnabar paste. The word 印 ("yìn") specifically refers to the imprint created by the seal.

**Question B: What are the types of Chinese seals?**

(1) Zhuwen （朱文, lit. "red characters") seals imprint the characters in red ink, sometimes referred to as yang seals.

(2) Baiwen （白文, lit. "white characters") seals imprint the background in red, leaving white characters, sometimes referred to as yin seals.

**Question C: What do people usually use Chinese seals for?**

(1) Most people in China possess a personal name seal. Today, personal identification is often presented with a signature accompanied by a seal imprint.

(2) Seals are still used for official purposes in a number of contexts.
(3) Seals are often used on Chinese calligraphy work and Chinese paintings. Specialist carvers will carve the user's name into the stone in one of the standard scripts.

3. Classroom activities

Activity 1: Design a Chinese seal (For all levels)

Classroom activity:

The teacher will give a brief introduction about Chinese seals. After that, students will work in groups to discuss the patterns of Chinese seals. On that basis, each student will design a Chinese seal for themselves and then make a presentation, explaining the meaning of their design.

Required tools and materials:

1. Pictures of different patterns of Chinese seals.
2. Paper and red colored pencils.

Steps of classroom activity:

1. Give a brief introduction about Chinese seals to all students. The teacher should tell students that a seal is an ancient Chinese art. It represents one's status in ancient times and is used as an authorized signature for any kind of transaction.
2. Divide students into small groups of 4-6 students, depending on the class size.
3. Hand out pictures of different patterns of Chinese seals to students and let students discuss the patterns of the Chinese seals in their groups.
4. Each student will be asked to design a Chinese seal for themselves with red colored pencils.

The websites below may be helpful:

Free Online Chinese Seal Generator websites

http://www.purpleculture.net/chinese-seal-generator/

5. Each student will be asked to make a presentation, explaining the meaning of their design.
Activity 2: Let’s make a Chinese seal for ourselves! (For all levels)

Classroom activity:

At first, the teacher will give a brief introduction about Chinese seals and ask students to read an introduction of how to make a Chinese seal. After that, students will try to make a Chinese seal.

Required tools and materials:
1. A video about how to make a Chinese seal
   (link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1PPsf1TmMnA)
2. Pens
3. Plasticine
4. Paper and pencils
5. Seal paste

Steps of classroom activities:
1. Give a brief introduction about Chinese seals to students.
2. Have students watch a video about how to make a Chinese seal.
3. Show some Chinese characters to students (The teacher can decide which characters to display, for example, 人、口、手、山、我 etc. These characters have fewer strokes therefore students should be able to carve them more easily.)
4. Ask students to make Chinese seals with plasticine and a pen. Students can design their seals by themselves or make a seal with the Chinese characters shown in the previous step.
5. After that, students are asked to draw a large Chinese character on white paper and then affix their seals to it.
6. Students are encouraged to give their art work to each other as a gift.

Activity 3: Play a number game with Chinese seals (For lower levels)

Classroom activity:

Students will play a number game with Chinese seals. From this game, students will gain a general understanding of Chinese seals as well as recognize the Chinese characters for numbers 1 to 99.
**Required tools and materials:**

1. Ten Chinese seals with Chinese characters 一、二、三、四、五、六、七、八、九、十 on them separately (Teacher can make them with plasticine or erasers before class.)
2. Large white paper
3. Seal paste
4. Timer

**Steps of classroom activities:**

1. Give a brief introduction about Chinese seals to students.
2. Teach students how to count in Chinese and write numbers in characters.
3. Divide students into small groups of 4-6 students, depending on the class size.
4. Start a game match (Two groups in a match)

Match rules:

There are 2 groups in each match, an offensive group and defensive group.

1) The offensive group will freely choose 30 Arabic numbers from 1 to 99.
2) The defensive group needs to stamp these Arabic numbers with Chinese seals (There are only 10 Chinese seals with Chinese characters 一、二、三、四、五、六、七、八、九、十 on them separately. That means the students will need a permutation and combination)
3) At the same time, the offensive group will play the role of judge and timer.
4) After the first round, the two groups will reverse their roles and play the game again.
5) The group that displays the most correct numbers will be the winner. If there is a draw, the group that used the shortest amount of time will be the winner.
6. If there are more than 2 groups, they can play a round robin or elimination game.

**Activity 4: Chinese seals and traditional western wax seals (For higher levels)**

**Classroom activity:**

At first, the teacher will provide a brief introduction about Chinese seals and traditional western wax seals. After that, students are expected to understand the differences between Chinese seals and traditional western wax seals. After that, students will have some hands-on experience to learn about how to use them.
Required tools and materials:
1. Pictures of different Chinese seals. (Teachers can select pictures online by themselves)
2. A wax seal for demonstration
3. Wax
4. Chinese seals
5. Seal paste
6. Paper and envelopes

Steps of classroom activities:
1. Give a brief introduction about both seals to students.
2. Divided students into groups and then let students discuss the difference between Chinese seals and traditional western wax seals.
3. Show some pictures of different seals and seals parts to students, then have students differentiate Chinese seal from western seal.
4. Ask students to experience Chinese seals, by stamping them on paper or on other places.
5. After that, ask students to draw a large Chinese character on white paper and then affix their seals.
6. Show a video about how to use a wax seal to students.
   http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FgPaX9-Ykos
If it is possible, let students experience the wax seals, and stamp them on the paper or envelopes.
7. Students are encouraged to give their art work to each other as a gift.
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