



The University of  
**Nottingham**

UNITED KINGDOM · CHINA · MALAYSIA



# THE CHALLENGE OF CHINA

## A regional event for gifted linguists

**Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> March 2015 at the University of Nottingham**

The Challenge of China was a regional event specifically aimed at gifted linguists and designed around Chinese culture, the Chinese language (Mandarin) and the business opportunities that China offers. We wanted to excite and challenge those students who are good at picking up languages, so that they would think seriously about taking a language like Chinese ab initio at university level. The event was hosted by the University of Nottingham and offered in partnership with the Confucius Institute.

We asked schools for students between Years 9 and 12. This was a wide age range, but since Chinese would be a new language for all of them, they were all starting from the same point. When they arrived, we split them into teams of mixed school and mixed age, with each team receiving the name of one of the Chinese New Year animals. The ability to work with people you don't know and of different ages is important in the work place, and once the students had overcome the shock of being split from people they knew, the teams worked very well!



We were delighted to receive students from Nottingham Academy, St. George's Academy from Sleaford, Stamford Welland Academy, Nottingham Girls Academy, Birkdale School from Sheffield, The Brunts Academy from Mansfield and ST. Saviour's and St. Olave's School all the way from London.

After an ice breaker based on the Chinese new year animals so that the students could get to know one another and the business people there, Dr. Sarah Dauncey from the University of Nottingham gave a keynote talk about the rise of China as an important business partner for the UK, and her experience of learning Mandarin.

For this event we decided to break away from our traditional format for language master classes and try something new. The teams were asked to design and produce a sample of a product that they could market and sell to Chinese teenagers, but instead of separating out our cultural activities, we integrated them into the challenge and the students were given a choice of which ones they wanted to go to – based not only on their personal preferences, but also on what they potentially needed to do well in the business challenge. Whilst everyone experienced a basic Mandarin taster, the cultural sessions included Further Mandarin, Restaurant Etiquette, Food, Geography, and Calligraphy.



Towards the end of the afternoon, instead of a formal presentation as we normally offer, we introduced a trading session, where each team had to sell their product to the other teams in the room. They

were assessed on their selling presentation, their effort to use Mandarin within the discussions, and the use of Chinese manners. Of course, how much of their product they sold also came into the equation!

With the teams being made up from students from different schools, every school went back with having won part of a prize.

**Student comments included:**

*"It was great fun and I would gladly do it again"*

*"Oyster Sauce is amazing"*

*"It was great!"*

*"It has made me want to take up Chinese in the future at University. I really enjoyed the day, thank you :)"*



**Teacher comments included:**

*"Very enjoyable day. I think my students will have benefited from it and it encouraged them to consider learning Chinese in the future. "*

*"It was a fantastic opportunity"*

*"The activities were great"*

*"Keep organising these events! They are fantastic – thank you!"*

*"Great insight into Chinese culture"*

*"As usual, a wonderful day!"*

**Thank you**

We would like to thank the Confucius Institute for their wonderful support for this event and organising some brilliant activities:



- Dr. Jinrong Meng
- Beibei Yeli
- Aiyu Wu
- Zhuo Sun
- Qinshao Yin
- Yalan Wang
- Ran Yuan
- Sujing Xu
- Lan Lo

We would also like to thank the University of Nottingham for providing the impressive venue and refreshments, in particular Tara Webster-Deakin, as well as Dr Sarah Dauncey for her excellent keynote talk.

**Contact**

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