The 16th International Conference on

Teaching and Learning Chinese in Higher Education

**What is correct Chinese? What should be taught? Prescriptivism and norms in TCFL**

Henning Klöter

Humboldt University of Berlin

TCFL in the 21st century faces a certain dilemma. On the one hand, the Chinese language is undergoing rapid and thorough changes, which can roughly be described with catchwords such as “Europeanized Chinese” (*ouhua Hanyu*), internet language (*wangluo yuyan*) and linguistic influence from Taiwan and Hong Kong (*Gang-Tai yuyan*). At the same time, the Chinese government continues to make great efforts in the field of language planning and standardization (*guifan*). As a result, there is no shortage of reference works that clearly define correctness in pronunciation, the use of words and syntactical constructions. With the international spread of the HSK examination during the past decades, prescriptivism in TCFL has reached new dimensions. In my talk I will first address the theoretical and historical foundations of linguistic norms underlying TCFL. I will then propose and discuss the hypothesis that the growing dominance of prescriptive approaches in TCFL affects the perception of linguistic variation and thus prevents learners from developing competence to use language appropriately according to situational needs. I will conclude by making some recommendations as to how to integrate linguistic norms and authentic variation in the TCFL classroom.