

flashCube as of April 15, 2006

A. General

1. These are preliminary instructions for the use of the flashCube testing program. More detailed instructions (with illustrations), will be incorporated in future updates of Chinese 1 and 2, as well as in Chinese 3 when it is made available on OCW within a few months. Though flashCube also incorporates data from Japanese textbooks, the focus of this introduction will be on using the Chinese material.

2. flashCube is a program that allows students to test themselves on vocabulary, phrases and other material, including material found in *Learning Chinese: A Foundation Course in Mandarin*, the basic textbook for Chinese 1, 2 and 3 at MIT. flashCube also has a number of specialized functions that allow users to keep track of errors, create tables and search online dictionaries.

3. flashCube data is stored in dot-txt files (Mandarin.txt, Japanese.txt). If properly downloaded, dot-txt files should cohabit with the PinYin.jar file in the Datafiles folder. At the time of this writing (4/06), updated sound files and other data are still being prepared for the Mandarin.txt file. This material will be added to the file as it becomes available so that users will be able to download it and upgrade their own Mandarin.txt files from the OCW link. The Mandarin.txt file should be completely stocked by mid-summer, 2006.

B. Beginning

4. Opening the flashCube.jar file displays the startup screen for flashCube, version 2.82.5(c). The screen shows a 'flashCube', edged by basic instructions and functions, the latter listed across the top (files, search, options, etc.). To get started, enter any nine digit student ID number (e.g. 999999999 or 123456789).

5. The dot-txt files can be loaded into flashCube either by clicking the appropriate face of the 'floating flashCube' (top for Mandarin, right side for Japanese) on the startup screen, or by using the loading functions under FILE.

6. Testing involves loading one or more lessons, selecting a prompt (English, pinyin or Hanzi), saying, or otherwise responding to the (audio or visual) cue with your own answer, and then:

- You confirm your answer by clicking on the screen to read or hear flashCube's 'answer';
- After comparing your answer with that of flashCube, you may want to keep track of right or wrong answers. If so, click either the 'green check' or the 'red cross'. flashCube will keep track of your answer (so you can focus your future practice on problematical items), and provide the next cue. Continue in this fashion through the lesson.

- Alt-right arrow advances the cues one at a time (without displaying answers) for conversational review (ie, you respond to one line of the conversation with the next); Alt-left arrow allows reverse movement. Audio (when available) can be produced by clicking the loudspeaker icons.

flashCube can be set to display the traditional set of characters, or the simplified; placing the mouse over a particular character toggles it to the other set – whichever is set to non-default. Clicking the two yellow audio icons produce either English audio (1-loudspeaker) or Chinese audio (2-speaker) – in those cases for which audio exists.

7. Font selection (top right)

Select Font: you need to select a font such as Arial Unicode MS, that can display English, Pinyin and Hanzi (both sets).

C. Detailed functions

8. FILE:

Show startup screen: This returns you to the startup screen.

Select Lessons: Left click selects one or more lessons; right click de-selects. The names of lessons selected will be listed on the startup screen.

Select All Lessons: This function should not be used if there are a lot of lessons in the data file. [If you do select all lessons, reload Mandarin.txt to clear.]

Load Mandarin.txt (or Japanese.txt): loads the data files.

The remaining options under FILE allow you to make specialized datafiles with weak vocabulary (noted by flashCube on the latest run through), historically weak vocabulary (compiled from earlier run throughs), or remaining vocabulary, and then load them into flashCube for focused practice.

9. SEARCH

Dictionary, Dictionary ignoring tones, etc.: These functions display various kinds of local dictionaries (ie based on the data in the dot-txt files) or lists (compiled by clicking the green check or red cross icons).

CEDICT = Chinese-English Dictionary: Allows you to search the CEDICT dictionary.

Search English, Search PinYin, etc.: The dictionary allows search for English words or Chinese words written in Pinyin or Hanzi. It also allows a search for words by beginnings or by endings, etc. Items to be searched can be entered in the text line on the upper right of the flashCube window.

10. OPTIONS

Quiz from English: gives cues in English, answers provided in pinyin and Hanzi.

Quiz from Pinyin: gives cues in pinyin, answers provided in English and Hanzi

Quiz from Hanzi: gives cues in Hanzi, answers provided in English and pinyin.

When switching from one cue mode to another, it may be necessary to click through a few flashcubes to engage the new mode.

Select flashcubes at Random: material can be cued in the order that it is found in the dot-txt file (which is also the textbook order); or it can be presented in an order different from that of the text. Normally *non*-random order would be selected while working through a unit or lesson; random order for reviewing the whole.

Display Statistics: Select this function to display % correct in the current lesson after each answer.

Quiz from Romanzi or Untoned PinYin: For testing tones. Select this function, along with Quiz from Pinyin to get cues in pinyin minus the tone diacritics; answers provided in toned pinyin, English and Hanzi.

Play English Sound; Play PinYin Sound: Checking this function will allow you to hear cues in English or Chinese (when soundfiles are available).

11. Chinese-Japanese (under OPTIONS)

Modifies Hanzi functions, eg: You can set the mouse-hover function to show definitions in the status bar at the bottom of the window. (The definitions and pronunciation data are from CEDICT.) You can set Hanzi to display in traditional form and toggle to simplified, or vice versa, to display in simplified and toggle to traditional.

12. FONTS, MOUSE BEHAVIOR, etc. (under OPTIONS)

Allows change in the font size of text displayed in the flashCube window; allows you to affect mouse behavior and dictionary search behavior.

13. UTILITIES (under OPTIONS)

Allow Text Area Editing: Allows user to change the flashCube screen from a display area to an input area. By checking 'Allow Text Area Editing' and '(Un)display text', you can copy text into the flashCube window and use the mouse-hover function to display a word-by-word pronunciation and meaning in the status bar. UTILITIES has a number of other functions that will be described more fully in the final version of these instructions.

14. The line of numbers and titles to the right of OPTIONS shows certain current statuses. Using the entry <1 144 mandarin.txt 4-old 123BE> as an example, we can interpret the information as follows:

1 = number of lessons loaded;
144 = number of items in that lesson (ie number of flashCubes);
mandarin.txt = the source of the data;
4-old = the name of the lesson;

123BE is a status indicator for the SEARCH function:

black is activated, grey is inactivated;
1 is English search field;
2 is Pinyin search field;
3 is Chinese characters search field;

B indicates search for the item as a beginning only (cat, catalogue, catenary),
E, as an end only (cat, ducat).

The keyboard shortcuts ALT-1, ALT-2...ALT-5 allow you to toggle items 1,2,3,B,E respectively.

D: Data

15. Mandarin Data so far (April 17, 2006): The flashCube Mandarin.txt file contains the following data:

A: Sounds and Symbols of Chinese (with Audiofiles):

Initials = pairs of syllables, selected to show Initial contrasts
Rhymes = pairs of syllables, selected to show Rhyme contrasts
Tones = pairs of syllables, selected to show Tonal contrasts

B: Vocabulary, phrases, dialogues, and rhymes for new Units 1 – 4; Units 5-12 and the Audiofiles are in preparation.

1	=	Unit 1 vocabulary and phrases
1.7.5-Dial		Unit 1 Dialogue 1.7.5
1.1-Rhyme		Unit 1 Rhyme 1
1.2-Rhyme		Unit 1 Rhyme 2
2	3	4
2.9-Dial	3.4.1a-Dial	4.1-Dial
2.1-Rhyme	3.4.1b-Dial	4.2-Dial
	3.4.1c-Dial	4.1-Rhyme
	3.7.1-Dial	4.2-Rhyme
	3.12-Dial	Majors
	Geog names	Universities

C: Vocabulary and phrases for Chars 1 – 6 (with other Char units to come); the Character Units will not have Audiofiles.

1-CHARS	2-CHARS	3-CHARS
4-CHARS	5-CHARS	6-CHARS

D: Vocabulary, phrases, dialogues and rhymes from an earlier version of *Learning Chinese: A Foundation Course in Mandarin*. Even though the material in the OLD lessons is often re-ordered or otherwise changed in the new, the early OLD lessons have Audiofiles, which makes them a useful resource for listening practice. You will need to explore the OLD files to find those parts that correspond best to the new lessons.

1-OLD	2-OLD etc.	6-OLD etc.
1-Dial-OLD	3-OLD etc.	7-OLD etc.
1.1-Rhyme-OLD	4-OLD etc.	8-OLD etc.
1.2-Rhyme-OLD	5-OLD etc.	9-OLD etc.

hanzi-5-OLD
hanzi-6-OLD
hanzi-7-OLD
hanzi-8-OLD

E: Vocabulary for several readers, used at the late beginning to intermediate levels:

LADY	=	Vocabulary for Fred Fang-yu Wang's <i>Lady in the Painting</i> . Yale University, New Haven, CT: Far Eastern Publications. ISBN 0-88710-043-0.
DH-1 to 7	=	Vocabulary for Lesson 1-7 of Phyllis N. Zhang et al, <i>David and Helen in China, Part 1</i> . Yale University, New Haven, CT: Far Eastern Publications. 1999. ISBN: 088 710-194-1
Zhuyingtai	=	Vocabulary for Christina Lindell, <i>The Student Lovers</i> . Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1975. ISBN: 0-8248-0225-X

16. The Japanese data file (Japanese.txt) contains vocabulary from *Japanese: the Spoken Language, Part 1*, by Eleanor H. Jordan with Mari Noda, Yale University Press, 1987, as follows:

The vocabulary opposite core dialogues from all 3 volumes; lessons 26a and 27a have audiofiles, for demonstration purposes;
All vocabulary for the Jordan Kanji texts, kanji 9-24;
4 lessons of supplementary vocabulary from Japanese 6 (MIT in-house material);
1 sushi lesson, with pictures.

(The Japanese data is stored as romanization, and converted to kana; beginning students can turn off the kana, and display hiragana.)

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