

# School of Humanities and Social Science

## Course syllabus

Course code & title: HUMA 5160; Chinese Phonetics and Phonology  
Course offered: Fall 2026  
Course instructors: Prof. Quentin Zhen QIN ([hmzqin@ust.hk](mailto:hmzqin@ust.hk))  
Course time: 15:00-17:50, Thursday (office hours: 13:45-14:45, Thursday)  
Course venue: Rm 5566, Academic Building  
Medium of Instruction: English (spoken and reading Chinese proficiency required)  
Office hours: 13:45-14:45, Thursday (instructor's office at Rm 3368)

### Course Description

The course is an introduction to the study of sounds in Mandarin Chinese (henceforth, Chinese). The course will cover fundamental concepts in phonetics and phonology and compare the sounds of Chinese with those of other languages. Other topics include: methodology, the typology, learning and evolution of sounds, the subgrouping of Chinese dialects, etc.

### Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs)

At the end of the course, you will be able to:

- Describe the characteristics of sounds in Mandarin and by extension to other languages with the learnt concepts
- Apply various methods to the study of sounds in languages
- Identify the rules governing sound change in languages

### Textbooks

1. Lin, Y. H. (2007). *The Sounds of Chinese*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. (copies are reserved for the course at HKUST library; a hard copy is highly recommended for your purchase).
2. Fromkin, V., Rodman, R., & Hyams, N. (2014). *An Introduction to Language*. 10<sup>th</sup> ed. Australia: Cengage Learning. (copies are reserved at HKUST library; earlier and latest editions are also fine).

### Tentative Schedule (subject to change)

| Week   | Date   | Topic                                         | Reading                                                  |
|--------|--------|-----------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|
| Week1  | Sep 03 | Course Overview                               | Lin §1                                                   |
| Week2  | Sep 10 | Introduction to the Chinese Language          | DeFrancis (1984) §3<br>Norman (1988) §1                  |
| Week3  | Sep 17 | Introduction to Phonetics                     | Fromkin §5                                               |
| Week4  | Sep 24 | Introduction to Phonology                     | Fromkin §6                                               |
| Week5  | Oct 01 | <i>National Day Holiday, no class</i>         |                                                          |
| Week6  | Oct 08 | Chinese Consonants                            | Lin §2<br><i>Wang &amp; Chen, 2020</i>                   |
| Week7  | Oct 15 | Chinese Vowels                                | Lin §3<br>Wan & Jaeger, 2003                             |
| Week8  | Oct 22 | Chinese Tones                                 | Lin §4<br>Wang et al., 2001,<br><i>Wang et al., 2004</i> |
| Week9  | Oct 29 | Chinese Tone Learning                         | Hao, 2012                                                |
| Week10 | Nov 05 | Chinese Tone Sandhi                           | Lin §9                                                   |
| Week11 | Nov 12 | Speech Variables - <i>Erhua</i>               | Zhang, 2008<br><i>Zhang, 2006</i>                        |
| Week12 | Nov 19 | A Research Seminar on Phonetics and Phonology |                                                          |
| Week13 | Nov 26 | Course Review and Project Consultation        |                                                          |
|        | Dec 10 | Written Report Due (18:00, afternoon)         |                                                          |

### Assessment (this course adopts criterion-referenced assessment, and grades are not assigned using a curve)

1. Class attendance and activity participation (individually assessed – 20%)
2. Homework assignments (6 assignments; individually assessed – 35%)
3. A summary of a suggested article (individually assessed – 20%);  
*RPg students' presentation is required, and 2 bonus points for TPg students' oral presentation.*
4. A written report on a topic of Chinese sounds (group-assessed – 25%)

### Attendance policy

You should attend live classes regularly and participate in group discussion activities in person. Poor attendance will have a negative impact on your performance, slow down the class pace, and consequently negatively impact other students' learning. In past experience, students who didn't do well in this course were those who routinely missed lectures.

### Quiz and assignment policy

As a general rule, NO late assignments will be accepted for credit unless:

- (a) You got **advance** permission from me to hand in an assignment late.
- (b) You could not submit the assignment on the day the assignment is due because of a serious illness or unexpected emergency. You need to turn in the assignment at the earliest possible opportunity with a written explanation of the situation and **proof documents**.
- (c) We go with "*Restrict ways of using generative AI tools for assessment*". You can use generative AI tools (e.g., chatGPT) to assist your understanding of materials. However, you are **prohibited** from using the GenAI tools to produce any content related to essay assessments (summary and written report).
- (d) In general, *non-essay* assignments/assessments will receive feedback within 10 working days.

### Plagiarism and misconduct policy

Plagiarism in homework assignments and the term paper, depending on the severity, will result in penalties in the range from a zero for that portion of your work, an F for the course, transcript citation, to suspension/expulsion from HKUST. For library guidelines on plagiarism and other resources on referencing/citation, see <https://libguides.ust.hk/referencing/plagiarism>. For HKUST policies on academic misconduct, see <http://ugadmin.ust.hk/integrity/student-1.html>.

### Required Readings

#### *Articles*

- Hao, Y. C. (2012). Second language acquisition of Mandarin Chinese tones by tonal and non-tonal language speakers. *Journal of Phonetics*, 40, 269-279.
- Wan, I. P., & Jaeger J. (2003). The phonological representation of Taiwan Mandarin vowels: A psycholinguistic study. *Journal of East Asian Linguistics*, 12, 205-257.
- Wang, Y., Jongman A., & Sereno J. (2001). Dichotic perception of Mandarin tones by Chinese and American listeners. *Brian and Language*, 78, 332-348.
- Zhang, Q. (2008). Rhotacization and the 'Beijing smooth operator': the social meaning of a linguistic variable. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 12, 201-222.

#### *Books (selected chapters)*

- DeFrancis, J. (1984). *The Chinese language — fact and fantasy (Chapter 3)*. Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press,
- Norman, J. (1988). *Chinese (Chapter 1)*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

### Suggested Readings

*Suggested Articles (a summary is required, 2 bonus points awarded to TPg volunteers for an oral presentation)*

- Wang, X., & Chen, J. (2020). The Acquisition of Mandarin Consonants by English Learners: The Relationship between Perception and Production. *Languages*, 5, 20.
- Wang, Y., Behne, D., Jongman A., & Sereno J. (2004). The role of linguistic experience in the hemispheric processing of lexical tone. *Applied Psycholinguistics*, 25, 449-466.
- Zhang, Q. (2006). Cosmopolitan Mandarin: Linguistic practice of Chinese waiqi professionals. *Journal of Asian Pacific Communication*, 16, 215-235.

#### *Suggested Textbooks (optional)*

1. Reetz, H., & Jongman, A. (2020). *Phonetics: Transcription, production, acoustics, and perception*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell. *The Chinese version “语音学：标音、产生、声学 and 感知。曹梦雪，李爱军（译），2018。中国社会科学出版社” is recommended.*
2. Ladefoged, P. (2015). *A Course in Phonetics*. Australia: Cengage Learning. (Earlier and latest editions are also fine).
3. Davenport M., & Hannahs S.J. (2010). *Introducing phonetics and phonology*. London: Hodder Education.