

Course description

This course introduces basic concepts in linguistics such as consonant, vowel, morpheme, constituent, topic and comment, which help students to describe and analyze the structure of the Chinese language with emphasis on sounds and grammar. Moreover, these concepts will enable students to identify the similarities and differences among major Chinese dialects, especially those between Cantonese and Mandarin. Furthermore, characteristics of the non-Han languages spoken in the neighboring areas will be compared with those of the Chinese dialects in order to highlight the bi-directional influences between the two groups.

Intended learning outcomes

- Analyze the structure of the major Chinese dialects, and by extension other languages, with the learnt skills and analytic tools
- Identify the similarities and differences among major Chinese dialects, especially those between Cantonese and Mandarin, and those between Chinese and other languages from a linguistic perspective
- Articulate the complexity of the linguistic situation in China and its neighboring areas

Major topics to be covered (tentative)

Part I: Introduction (Week 1)

Part II: Chinese phonology (Week 2 – Week 7)

1. Speech sounds
2. Tones
3. Syllable structure

Part III: Chinese morphology (Week 8)

1. Morpheme and word
2. Word-formation processes

Part IV: Chinese syntax (Week 10 – Week 12)

1. Word classes
2. Sentence elements

3. Characteristics of Chinese grammar (e.g. a SVO language, an isolating language and a topic-prominent language)

Part V: Topics in sociolinguistics (Week 13)

Assessment

Pop-up quizzes (short-answer questions) **No Make-up!!** 40%
Final (a 2-hour exam: MC questions, short-answer and long-answer questions) 60%

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