

Division of Humanities
Tentative Course Syllabus

Course Code: HUMA 5230
Course Title: Languages of China: Anthropological and Cognitive Dimensions [C][PU]
Course Offered in: Spring 2024
Course Instructor: Professor Min Zhang

Course Description:

This course has several interrelated objectives: (1) To familiarize students with core concepts and methodology employed by functional linguists and linguistic anthropologists in analyzing human language as individual and social communicative behavior; (2) to sensitize students to the nature, sources, and consequences of linguistic and cultural diversity, particularly in China and her periphery, and facilitate their recognition that language is not fixed, disembodied or self-contained, but intimately related to culture, social relations, human biological makeup, and personal experience; (3) To foster academic discourse among students from various disciplines in the Humanities, and stimulate thoughts through cross-disciplinary interaction.

The course is divided into four topic areas: (A) Introduction, (B) Historical dimensions of Chinese languages, (C) Cognitive-cultural dimensions of Chinese languages, and (D) Socio-cultural dimensions of Chinese languages. Here, “Chinese languages” or “languages of China” include not only varieties of the Han Chinese (Chinese dialects, or Sinitic languages), but also non-Han minority languages spoken in China and her neighbors. Special emphasis will be put on Southern Chinese varieties (such as Cantonese, Hakka, etc.) and South China minority languages (such as Tai-Kadai languages).

Course Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs):

1. Strengthen awareness of linguistic and cultural diversity in China.
2. Understand how language as a complex adaptive system is shaped by sociohistorical, cultural, and cognitive processes.
3. Analyze structuring principles of Chinese and non-Han minority languages of China with core concepts and methods employed by cognitive-functional linguists and linguistic anthropologists.

**Division of Humanities
Tentative Course Syllabus**

Course Outline:

Topics will be selected from the following list:

Topic 1: Introduction: language and culture; nature versus nurture

Topic 2: Sapir-Whorf hypothesis and subjunctives in Chinese and English

Topic 3: What typology can inform us: Unity-in-diversity

Topic 4: Space, time, and metaphorical cognition

Topic 5: Sound symbolism in Chinese and other languages

Topic 6: Deixis in Chinese and other languages

Topic 7: More on spatial expressions in Chinese and other Sino-Tibetan languages

Topic 8: Reduplication and Coordination Compounding in Chinese and Sinosphere languages

Topic 9: Agricultural vs. Pastoral: A geographical typology of East Asian languages

Topic 10: Sprachbund of East Asia and Mainland Southeast Asia

Topic 11: Iconicity as reflected in Chinese and other languages

Topic 12: Categorization and related issues

Topic 13: Classifiers in Chinese and Tai-Kadai: How categories reveal about the mind?

Topic 14: Chinese languages from the perspective of ethnography of speaking

Topic 15: Bilingualism, biculturalism, diglossia, and code selection

Planned Assessment Tasks:

Class discussion/participation/assignment: 40%

Term paper: 60%

Three samples of readings:

- (1) 陳保亞 1993.《語言文化論》(中國西南邊疆民族經濟文化研究叢書), 昆明: 雲南大學出版社。
- (2) 鄧曉華 1993.《人類文化語言學》, 廈門: 廈門大學出版社。
- (3) 李如龍 1998.《漢語地名學論稿》, 上海: 上海教育出版社。