

School of Humanities and Social Science

Course syllabus

Course code & title: HUMA 5160; Chinese Phonetics and Phonology
Course offered: Spring 2026
Course instructors: Prof. Quentin Zhen QIN (hmzqin@ust.hk)
Course time: 9:00-11:50 am, Tuesday (office hours: 1:30-2:30 pm, Tuesday)
Course venue: Rm 2612B, Academic Building
Medium of Instruction: English (spoken and reading Chinese proficiency required)

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*. 10th ed. Australia: Cengage Learning. (copies are reserved at HKUST library; earlier and latest editions are also fine).

Course Schedule

Week	Date	Topic	Reading
Week1	Feb 03	Course Overview	Lin §1
Week2	Feb 10	Introduction to Phonetics	Fromkin §5
Week3		<i>Lunar New Year Break, no class</i>	
Week4	Feb 24	Introduction to Phonology	Fromkin §6
Week5	Mar 03	Introduction to the Chinese Language	DeFrancis (1984) §3 Norman (1988) §1
Week6	Mar 10	Chinese Consonants	Lin §2 <i>Wang & Chen, 2020</i>
Week7	Mar 17	Chinese Vowels	Lin §3 Wan & Jaeger, 2003
Week8	Mar 24	Chinese Tones	Lin §4 Wang et al., 2001, <i>Wang et al., 2004</i>
Week9	Mar 31	Seminar on Phonetics and Phonology (tentative)	
	Apr 07	<i>Mid-Term Break, no class</i>	
Week10	Apr 14	Chinese Tone Learning	Hao, 2012
Week11	Apr 21	Chinese Tone Sandhi	
Week12	Apr 28	Speech Variables - <i>Erhua</i>	Lin §9
Week13	May 05	Course Review and Project Consultation	Zhang, 2008 <i>Zhang, 2006</i>
	May 19	Written Report Due (12 pm, noon)	

Assessment (this course adopts criterion-referenced assessment, CRA)

1. Class attendance and activity participation (individually assessed – 20%)
2. Homework assignments (6 assignments; individually assessed – 35%)
3. A summary of a suggested article on Chinese sounds (individually assessed – 20%)
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.

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 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.

Supplementary Readings

Suggested Articles (an article summary is required for all, and an oral presentation is required for RPG students)

- 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.