

HUMA1030 Structure of the Chinese Language [C]

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****Proficiency in written Chinese is required****

Instructor: Yuk Man Carine YIU

Email: yyiu@ust.hk

Office: Rm. 3339, Academic Building (Lift 3)

Office hours: Tue: 18:00-19:00 & Thur: 14:00-16:00

Course description

This course introduces basic concepts in linguistics such as consonant, vowel, morpheme, constituent, topic and comment, concepts 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 (ILOs)

- Use the basic concepts to describe and analyze the structure of the Chinese dialects, and by extension other languages
- Identify the similarities and differences among major Chinese dialects and languages in general
- Articulate the complexity of the linguistic situation in China and its neighboring areas

Mapping of course ILOs to assessment tasks

Assessed task	Mapped ILOs	Explanation
In-class closed book pop-up quizzes	ILO.1, 2 and 3	The quizzes are administered in-class unexpectedly to ensure presence and engagement, a measure that helps to achieve the ILOs. They also evaluate students' understanding of the basic concepts discussed during

		the lectures and prepare them for the group project.
Interim report	ILO 1, 2 and 3	The interim report evaluates students' understanding of the basic concepts discussed especially those that are pertinent to Chinese phonology by applying them to describe and analyze the data students collect.
Final report	ILO 1, 2 and 3	The final report evaluates students' understanding of the basic concepts discussed throughout the course by applying them to describe and analyze the data students collect.

Assessment and grading

1. In-class closed book pop-up quizzes (**No Make-up!!**): 50%
There will be **AT LEAST 5** in-class closed book pop-up quizzes, starting after the add-drop period, and the scores of the **BEST 5** quizzes will be counted. The aim of the quizzes is to test the understanding of the basic concepts discussed during the lectures. Therefore, class attendance and note-taking are necessary.
2. Group project (1-3 members): 50%
The aim of the group project is twofold. On the one hand, it provides students with a chance to design and conduct research. On the other hand, it aims to find out students' understanding of the basic concepts introduced by applying them to describe and analyze the data collected.
 - a. Interim report (due after Part II Chinese phonology) 25%
 - b. Final report (due on 9 May 2026) 25%

1% of the final grade will be deducted for each day of late submission

Final grade descriptors

Grades	Short description	Elaboration on subject grading description
A	Excellent performance	Demonstrates a comprehensive and precise understanding of the subject matter. Shows the ability to identify, describe and analyze the collected data with the basic concepts discussed and beyond, without fault
B	Good performance	Displays a solid and accurate understanding of the subject matter. Shows the ability to identify, describe and analyze the collected data with the basic concepts discussed with a high degree of accuracy.
C	Satisfactory performance	Has a good grasp of the subject matter. Exhibits the ability to identify, describe and analyze the collected data with the basic concepts satisfactorily.
D	Marginal pass	Shows a basic understanding of the subject matter and the ability to identify, describe and analyze the collected data with the basic concepts albeit with occasional mistakes.
F	Fail	Demonstrates insufficient understanding of the subject matter and the lack of ability to identify, describe and analyze the collected data with the basic concepts.

Course AI policy

Generative AI will not be allowed in the in-class quizzes and must not be used to compose the two reports. Anyone detected to have used it for the reports will receive a zero mark.

Academic integrity

Students are expected to adhere to the university's academic integrity policy. Students are expected to uphold HKUST's Academic Honor Code and to maintain the highest standards of academic integrity. The University has zero tolerance of academic

misconduct. Please refer to [Academic Integrity | HKUST – Academic Registry](#) for the University's definition of plagiarism and ways to avoid cheating and plagiarism.

Major topics to be covered (tentative)

Part I: Introduction

Part II: Chinese phonology

1. Speech sounds
2. Tones
3. Syllable structure

Part III: Chinese morphology

1. Morpheme and word
2. Word-formation processes

Part IV: Chinese syntax

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

References

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