

Division of Humanities
Tentative Course Syllabus

Course Code: HUMA 1060
Course Title: Introduction to Mandarin Chinese Grammar [C] [PU]
Course Offered in: Spring 2026
Course Instructor: Professor Zhang Min
Office Hours: To be announced at class; and by appointments

Course Description: The course introduces students to basic concepts in Mandarin Chinese grammar and fundamental techniques of grammatical analysis. Differences between Chinese and English as well as between Mandarin and Cantonese will also be highlighted. Topics include word structure and sentence structure of Mandarin Chinese, and characteristics of Chinese grammar, etc.

Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs)

By the end of this course, students should be able to:

1. summarize how grammar works using the fundamental concepts of morphology and syntax;
2. categorize morphemes, words, phrases and sentences in Mandarin Chinese according to their grammatical behaviors;
3. identify the major similarities and differences in grammar between Chinese and English;
4. apply the concepts and analytical techniques to uncover rules and regularities from written Chinese data collected online or retrieved from large corpora;
5. analyze the syntactic and semantic structure of a Chinese sentence

Assessment and Grading

This course will be assessed using criterion-referencing and grades will not be assigned using a curve. Detailed grade descriptors for the major assessment are provided below, outlining the criteria used for evaluation.

Assessments:

Assessment Task	Contribution to Overall Course grade (%)	Due date
Attendance	10%	04/02/2026-08/05/2026
Quiz 1	25%	18/03/2026 (tentative) *
Quiz 2	25%	15/04/2026 (tentative) *
Final examination	40%	To be arranged by ARRO

* Assessment marks will be released within two weeks of the assessment date.

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Mapping of Course ILOs to Assessment Tasks

Assessed Task	Mapped ILOs	Explanation
Attendance	ILO1, ILO2, ILO3, ILO4, ILO5	Attendance is taken in the form of online exercises on Chinese morphology and syntax, administered during each class via the HKUST iPRS system. Regular attendance is vital for grasping the foundational concepts of morphology and syntax (ILO1) and participating in the practical categorization and analysis drills required for all other outcomes.
Quiz 1	ILO1, ILO2, ILO4	Focus: Chinese Morphology. This quiz evaluates students' ability to identify and categorize grammatical units and word structures (ILO2) and apply analytical techniques to determine "wordhood" in Chinese (ILO4).
Quiz 2	ILO1, ILO2, ILO4, ILO5	Focus: Chinese Syntax. This assessment evaluates students' ability to identify and classify syntactic units and structures (ILO2), as well as to apply appropriate analytical techniques to the analysis of syntactic structures in Chinese (ILO4 and ILO5).
Final examination	ILO1, ILO2, ILO3, ILO4, ILO5	As a comprehensive summative assessment, the final exam covers all topics. It places heavy emphasis on high-order analytical skills (ILO5) and the ability to distinguish grammatical differences between Chinese and English (ILO3).

Final Grade Descriptors:

Grades	Short Description	Elaboration on subject grading description
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A	Excellent Performance	Demonstrates a profound and precise understanding of Mandarin morphology and syntax. The student exhibits exceptional accuracy in identifying grammatical units (ILO2) and analyzing complex syntactic structures (ILO5). They can masterfully apply concepts to novel linguistic data from corpora and provide sophisticated comparative analyses between Chinese and English (ILO3).
B	Good Performance	Shows a solid and accurate understanding of Chinese grammar. The student competently categorizes words and phrases (ILO2) and is proficient in identifying the syntactic and semantic structures of standard sentences (ILO5). They consistently provide correct accounts for the main differences between Chinese and English grammar (ILO3).
C	Satisfactory Performance	Possesses an adequate grasp of core subject matter. The student can describe basic grammatical concepts and identify straightforward grammatical units and sentence patterns (ILO2). They can perform basic structural analysis (ILO5) but may struggle with nuanced examples or complex expressions.
D	Marginal Pass	Demonstrates a basic, though sometimes incomplete, understanding of Chinese grammar. The student shows a minimal ability to categorize grammatical units (ILO2). Their attempts at syntactic analysis (ILO5) are often inaccurate, and they show limited capacity for identifying cross-linguistic differences (ILO3).
F	Fail	Demonstrates an insufficient understanding of the course material. The student fails to correctly answer questions on fundamental grammatical units (ILO1) and cannot accurately analyze the structure of Chinese words or sentences (ILO5).

Course AI Policy

Students are strongly encouraged to use generative AI tools to support and enhance their academic work in this course. These tools can serve as valuable aids for (1) learning and study (reviewing course material, preparing for quizzes and exams, exploring new examples of concepts, brainstorming and exploring different perspectives on course topics during your independent study); and (2) exercises (aiding in the analysis of linguistic data), including Take-Home Exercises (課後練習) and Tutorial Exercises (導修課練習).

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However, the use of generative AI is strictly prohibited during formal, closed-book assessments. The major graded components of this course, including the quizzes and final examination, are designed as closed-book assessments where no electronic devices are permitted. As a result, students will not have the opportunity to use these tools to complete assessment tasks.

Communication and Feedback

Assessment marks will be communicated via Canvas within two weeks of completion. Feedback on assessments will include model answers, marking criteria, and detailed explanations. Students who have further questions about the feedback including marks should consult the instructor (via the Inbox of the Canvas site) within five working days after the result of the assessment is released.

Course Outline:

Week	Topics
1-2	Part I: Introduction 導論
3-5	Part 2: Word Structure (Morphology) of Mandarin Chinese 漢語詞法
7-12	Part 3: Chinese Syntax 漢語句法
13	Part 4: Conclusion – Characteristic of Chinese Grammar 結語：漢語語法的特點

Part I: Introduction 導論

- 1.1 What is grammar 什麼是語法
- 1.2 Linguistic signs 語言符號及其關係
- 1.3 Properties of grammatical structure 語法結構的屬性
- 1.4 Only God can make a tree 語法構造的層次性
- 1.5 The autonomy of grammar 語法的自主性

Part 2: Word Structure (Morphology) of Mandarin Chinese 漢語詞法

- 2.1 Grammatical Units 語法單位
 - 2.1.1 What is grammatical unit 什麼是語法單位
 - 2.1.2 Morpheme: The smallest grammatical unit 語素：最小的語法單位
 - 2.1.3 Morphemes and characters 語素和漢字
 - 2.1.4 Identification of Chinese morphemes 辨認漢語語素的基本原則
 - 2.1.5 Classification of morphemes 語素的類別
- 2.2 Wordhood 詞及詞與非詞的界定

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- 2.2.1 What is word 詞是什麼
- 2.2.2 Composition of words 詞的構成
- 2.2.3 Identification of words 詞與非詞的判定
- 2.3 Chinese Compounds 複合構詞法
 - 2.3.1 Roots and affixes 構詞成份：詞根和詞綴
 - 2.3.2 Compounding 複合詞的結構類型
- 2.4 Affixation 附綴式合成詞
- 2.5 Summary: characteristics of Chinese morphology 小結：漢語詞法結構的主要特點

Part 3: Chinese Syntax 漢語句法

- 3.1 Introducing Syntax 句法概述
- 3.2 Parts of Speech 詞類劃分的原則與實踐
- 3.3 Numerals, Classifiers, and Numeral-Classifier Phrase 數詞、量詞和數量結構
- 3.4 Nouns and Subcategories of Nouns 名詞及時間、處所、方位詞
- 3.5 Determiner, Adverb, Preposition, and Conjunction 區別詞、副詞、介詞、連詞
- 3.6 Structural Analysis of Sentences 句子結構的分析
 - 3.6.1 Tree diagrams 層次分析法
 - 3.6.2 Complex sentences 複句
- 3.7 Syntactic and Semantic Issues of Verbs 與動詞相關的句法、語義問題
 - 3.7.1 Typical and atypical verbs 典型的動詞和不典型的動詞
 - 3.7.2 Aspects 動詞的「體 aspect」
 - 3.7.3 Thematic relations 動詞和動名之間的語義關係
- 3.8. Ambiguity, Transformation, and Semantic Features 句法歧義、變換、語義特徵
 - 3.8.1 Syntactic ambiguity 句法歧義
 - 3.8.2 From ambiguous sentences to ambiguous constructions 從歧義句到歧義句式
 - 3.8.3 Transformational analysis 變換分析
 - 3.8.4 From transformation to semantic feature analysis 從變換分析到語義特徵分析
 - 3.8.5 Valence and index of ambiguity 動詞的價與歧義指數

Part 4: Conclusion – Characteristic of Chinese Grammar 結語：漢語語法的特點

- 4.1 Major Differences between Chinese and English 漢語與英語的主要語法差異

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4.2 Major Differences between Mandarin and Cantonese 普通話與粵語的主要語法差異

4.3 Grammar and Language Use 語法與語言運用

Topics for Tutorials: (tentative - subject to change)

1. 「語素分析」
2. 「詞與非詞的判定」
3. 「複合詞的分析」
4. 「附綴詞及複雜複合詞的分析」
5. 「短語結構分析、副詞用法分析」
6. 「虛詞分析」
7. 「複雜句法結構的分析」
8. 「層次分析、虛詞分析及詞類劃分」
9. 「詞類分析」
10. 「詞類分析及語義結構分析」
11. 「綜合練習」

Major readings:

1. 朱德熙. 1982. 《語法講義》，北京：商務印書館。
2. 陸儉明、沈陽. 2003. 《漢語和漢語研究十五講》，北京：北京大學出版社。
3. 陸儉明. 2005. 《現代漢語語法研究教程》，北京：北京大學出版社。