

# Master of Arts Programme in Chinese Linguistics and Language Acquisition (2008-09)

## Background

With China playing an increasingly important role in the global economy, the study of Chinese as a second/foreign language has assumed a new significance. While over 30,000,000 people are reportedly studying Chinese, and the demand for Chinese language teaching has been continually on the rise, there has been a relative lack of research support for this field, especially in the areas of Chinese linguistics and the acquisition of Chinese as a first or second language. To respond to this global need for theory-based training in the learning and teaching of Chinese as a second/foreign language, the *Master of Arts Programme in Chinese Linguistics and Language Acquisition* (漢語語言學及語言獲得文學碩士) will be launched in the 2008-2009 academic year.

The programme aims to provide linguistically competent talents with systematic training in Chinese language structure and the acquisition of Chinese, to help them develop a firm grasp of the complexities of the language, and an informed understanding of the teaching and learning of Chinese in monolingual and multilingual communities.

The programme appeals to current and prospective Chinese language teachers and students of Chinese the world over who are interested in a scientific understanding of the cognitive processes underlying language learning and teaching. It also seeks to create a diversified study environment, bringing to the university promising students from countries and regions in Asia and other continents.

The Programme will emphasize the interdisciplinary nature of the study of the Chinese language, its use and its acquisition, focusing on the analysis of Chinese from a comparative and typological perspective, and the study of language learning in the context of language emergence, language change and cognitive development.

## Aims and Objectives

The MA Programme in Chinese Linguistics and Language Acquisition aims at providing a rigorous training at the postgraduate-level for primary/secondary language teachers who are teaching Chinese as a second/foreign language, and for professionals who wish to advance themselves in the study of Chinese language and Chinese language learning. At the theoretical level, the programme equips students with a solid grounding in Chinese linguistics and introduces them to current issues and findings in research on the learning and teaching of Chinese.

The programme has the following objectives:

- (a) to enable students to acquire a rich understanding of the systematic design of Mandarin Chinese, through providing them with principled accounts of Chinese language phenomena, in comparison to other languages and Chinese dialects;
- (b) to equip students with methodological tools for the analysis of Chinese language structure, and for the empirical study on learners of Chinese, as well as the dynamics of the teaching and learning process.
- (c) to enhance students' understanding of the complexities of second/foreign language learning and second dialect learning in the context of multi-lingual and multi-dialectal communities.

## Expected Learning Outcomes

- (a) Students will achieve a theory-based and informed understanding of the structure of Chinese, and of the major findings related to the acquisition of the core features of Chinese as a first or



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second/foreign language.

- (b) Students will be familiar with selected methodological tools used in the analysis of language form, language acquisition, and language performance, such as computerized corpora, naturalistic and experimental methods of data collection, data recording, data processing, and frameworks for analysis.
- (c) Students will be able to approach a teaching and learning problem with a deep appreciation of the complex array of variables underlying the learning of Chinese as a second/foreign language, and as a second dialect, in multilingual and multidialectal settings.
- (d) Students will gain practical experience in investigating the language through supervised training in conducting linguistic research under laboratory conditions, or engaging themselves in experimentally teaching Chinese as a second/foreign language, against the background of theoretical and typological understanding of the structure of Chinese and current developments in language acquisition.

## Study Scheme

Students are required to complete a total of 27 units, including 15 units of required courses and 12 units of elective courses.

## Course List

Course Title	Unit
<b>Required Courses (15 units)</b>	
Foundations in Linguistics and Applied Linguistics	3
Topics in Chinese Language Acquisition	3
Topics in Chinese Syntax and Semantics	3
Topics in Chinese Phonetics and Phonology	3
Linguistics and Language Teaching	3
<b>Elective Courses (12 units)</b>	
Foundations in Linguistics I	3
Foundations in Linguistics II	3
Topics in Contemporary Chinese Linguistics	3
Topics in Comparative Grammar	3
Topics in Language Acquisition	3
Topics in Sign Language Research	3
Topics in Sociolinguistics	3
Topics in Language Change	3
Topics in Pragmatics	3
Special Topics in Linguistics	3
Seminars in Linguistic Research	3
Research Project	6
Field Practicum	3
Chinese Culture and the Teaching of Chinese	3
Chinese Language Curriculum and Assessment	3



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## Course Descriptions

### Required Courses:

#### **Foundations in Linguistics and Applied Linguistics**

This course introduces students to foundational concepts in the study of linguistic competence, and trains them in analytical methods for the comparative study of grammar. The course is concerned with how comparative analysis of language structure can shed light on the mechanisms and processes of language learning in naturalistic and pedagogic contexts. The course also aims to familiarize students with the complex factors affecting language acquisition and language use in multilingual and multidialectal communities.

#### **Topics in Chinese Language Acquisition**

This course aims to introduce the major tenets of generative and usage-based approaches to language acquisition, with a focus on the characteristics of the learner and the learning situation in first and second language. The course familiarizes students with the basic methodology and tools for analyzing acquisition data. It critically surveys the major findings on the acquisition of Chinese as a first language and as a second language.

#### **Topics in Chinese Syntax and Semantics**

This course aims to acquaint students with fundamental issues in the syntax and semantics of the Chinese language and the related theoretical implications. Through an investigation of a rich array of data, students will have the opportunity to appreciate the inner workings of the Chinese language with regard to its structural and semantic properties, to enrich and broaden their understanding of linguistic theories and methodologies, to develop skills in analyzing Chinese phrases and sentences, and to defend their analysis systematically.

#### **Topics in Chinese Phonetics and Phonology**

This course introduces general aspects of modern Chinese phonetics and phonology, including both segmental and prosodic characteristics. Students will be trained to compare and analyze sound patterns of standard Chinese and other Chinese dialects from different theoretical approaches. The final goal of the course is to provide students with a solid foundation for further phonological research.

#### **Linguistics and Language Teaching**

The course aims to highlight the relevance of linguistic studies to language teaching. Various pedagogical issues such as curriculum development, teaching methodology, language assessment, language development and professional teacher training will be discussed in light of theories of general and applied linguistics. Students are encouraged to reflect upon their language teaching experience and problems and seek an explanation from the perspective of theories and issues in general and applied linguistics.

### Elective Courses:

#### **Foundations in Linguistics I**

This course introduces students to a unified approach to language as a complex structure represented in the minds of its speakers. Empirical linguistic data will be drawn across languages to enable students to understand the intimate relation between language and the human mind. On the basis of this understanding, students are led to explore the core areas of linguistics. The exploration starts with natural language sound systems and phonological components of grammar. These will be explained with



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basic concepts and recent theoretical advances in linguistic studies alongside new findings in language acquisition. Students will learn to apply these concepts and ideas to tackle linguistic problems.

## **Foundations in Linguistics II**

This course is a continuation of the exploration into the core areas of linguistics. It introduces students to core areas of linguistics in addition to those covered in Foundations in Linguistics I, including the lexical, morphological, syntactic and semantic systems of grammar, as well as their implications for language acquisition. Students will continue to learn to tackle linguistic problems and formulate their own analyses to enhance their understanding of the relationship between language and the human mind.

## **Topics in Contemporary Chinese Linguistics**

Recent findings in Chinese linguistics will be discussed on the basis of language universals and language specificity. Students will learn to analyze the Chinese language in terms of its sounds, word formation, sentence and discourse structures by using modern linguistic techniques. They will also learn to investigate into a variety of modern Chinese language to achieve a better understanding of the language.

## **Topics in Comparative Grammar**

This course examines similarities and differences between Chinese (Mandarin and Cantonese) and other languages, including English. The topics to be introduced will centre on current issues such as word structure, verb classes and syntactic alternations, clause structure, tense and aspect, modality, etc. The objective of the course is to sharpen students' sensitivity to linguistic structure and function through practice in comparative analysis and enhance their understanding of the universality and the typological differences between languages. Students will learn to apply core linguistic concepts to empirical investigations.

## **Topics in Language Acquisition**

The acquisition of first language by children has been considered a remarkable feat. How do children accomplish this feat so rapidly and effortlessly? What are the stages they go through in mastering the different aspects of language? What does the development of language in children tell us about the human language faculty? These questions will be examined in light of modern linguistic theory, and nativist and interactionist accounts will be compared. Topics in second language acquisition will also be covered. Questions such as how interlanguage grammars develop in adults and the role of the mother tongue in the construction of interlanguage grammar will be addressed.

## **Topics in Sign Language Research**

This course provides an introduction to a relatively new area of linguistic exploration: sign language as a natural language system. We will lead students into a variety of disciplinary studies that adopt sign language as a focus of research. Examples of these disciplines are linguistics, language in education, language and brain, language and cognition, language development, language and society, and language and culture. The course aims to tackle these issues in light of the current developments in sign language research and see how they shed light on our understanding of deaf issues.

## **Topics in Sociolinguistics**

This course explores human language in the broader context of culture and society. How does language relate to culture and world-view? How does language interact with social structure, gender and individual identity? To what extent do men and women talk differently? How does language reflect



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relations of power and status between the speakers? The use of pronouns, politeness markers and other linguistic features will be examined. Exploration of these topics aims to enhance students' awareness of language as a cultural phenomenon and sharpen their sensitivity toward the nuances of language use in relation to cultural complexities, with special reference to Hong Kong culture.

### **Topics in Language Change**

This course examines how functional categories emerge and evolve over time. These diachronic phenomena will be analysed from both crosslinguistic and language-specific perspectives, with a special focus on East Asian languages (including Chinese dialects). Discussions focus on general principles underlying the process of language change, as well as motivations and mechanisms underlying semantic extensions. Issues such as the debates on (non) unidirectionality in semantic extensions are also closely examined.

### **Topics in Pragmatics**

This course encourages students to reflect on deeper issues of language use, among them questions such as why language is structured in a particular way, how language deploys certain discourse strategies and grammatical devices to convey meaning effectively, and how cultural context and world knowledge invite certain kinds of interpretations. It provides students with the opportunity to analyse their own language learning experience, addressing among others questions such as: What types of errors do I make in different contexts, and why? Drawing data from English, the course will follow a discussion format, and will look at many specific examples of the learner's evolving language system.

### **Special Topics in Linguistics**

From time to time, a course focusing on a specific area of linguistics or applied linguistic research that is not covered in the regular linguistic programme may be offered.

### **Seminars in Linguistics Research**

The course aims to train students in conducting linguistic research. General research methodology will be introduced, with a focus on methods commonly used in linguistic research and analysis. Students may be required to take part in field trips and expeditions. Towards the end of the course, students have to submit a formal project proposal leading to a research project.

### **Research Project**

This is an individual, but guided investigation on a topic of linguistic interest, the findings of which must be presented in a standard report format. Consent of teacher on the topic is required. This course must be taken during the final term of study or as a final course after students have taken the prerequisite required and elective courses. Students who wish to take the course should obtain prior approval from the Graduate Division for their research proposals. Prerequisite: Seminar in Linguistics Research.

### **Field Practicum**

This course aims to encourage students to use their knowledge of linguistics they learn in the programme for professional or academic training opportunities in the form of supervised internships offered by organizations such as linguistics laboratories, educational institutes, or activities such as organized fieldtrips.

### **Chinese Culture and Teaching of Chinese**

The aim of this course is to strengthen participants' knowledge and effectiveness of Chinese Language



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teaching through a close examination of the relationship between Chinese Language teaching and Chinese culture. The course starts with an investigation of the general relationship between culture, education, and pedagogy. It will then look into the objectives and contents of the teaching of Chinese through its language system and various cultural domains, such as ethics, moral studies, philosophy, education, literature, traditional politics, etc. Based on the traditional and contemporary theories of literature, appropriate teaching materials and teaching methods will be explored.

## Chinese Language Curriculum and Assessment

This course provides participants' with an overview of the development of Chinese language curriculum and language assessment in Hong Kong from the perspective of curriculum and assessment theories. Topics covered include: (1) the evolution of the Hong Kong Chinese language curriculum; (2) a comparison of the Chinese language curriculum among different Chinese societies; (3) an evaluation of the current Hong Kong Chinese language curriculum; (4) development of school-based curriculum; (5) curriculum implementation and teacher professional development; (6) concepts, principles, and methods of language assessment; (7) specific topics related to Chinese language assessment in educational reform, such as Basic Competency Assessment, Learning Outcome Framework, school-based assessment, and assessment in the new senior secondary education.

## Period of Study

Study Mode	Normative Period
Full-time	1 year
Part-time	2 years

## General Qualifications for Admission

- (i) The applicant is required to meet the general qualifications for admission of the Graduate School of the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK):
- have a recognized Bachelor's degree in Linguistics or a related field, preferably with honours at second upper division or equivalent; and
  - fulfill the English Language Proficiency Requirements prescribed below before he/she is admitted:
    - Posses a pass grade in English in one of the following examinations:
      - Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination (AS Level)
      - Hong Kong Higher Level Examination
      - CUHK Matriculation Examination, or
    - Have a degree from a university in Hong Kong or an English speaking country, or
    - Submit one of the following scores for assessment by our Division:
      - TOEFL
      - GMAT (Verbal)
      - College English Test (CET) of PRC
      - IELTS

Please visit the homepage of the Graduate School of the CUHK at <http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/gss> for details.

- (ii) Proficiency in Chinese (Putonghua) is required.

**Application Period for Fall Admission** 1 January 2008 – 29 February 2008



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## Application Procedures

Application forms are obtainable at the General Office of Division of Linguistics (Room G8B, Fung King Hey Building, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Shatin, N.T., Hong Kong). Interested persons may visit the homepage of the Graduate School at <http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/gss> for details.

Completed applications and required supporting documents should be returned to the Division of Linguistics on or before 29 February 2008.

Supporting documents required include:

1. Completed Application Form/Submit Online Application Form (<http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/gss>);
2. Official transcripts from the University attended by the applicant\*;
3. Copies of Degree Certificates;
4. Documents showing the applicant has fulfilled the Graduate School's English Language Proficiency Requirement;
5. Confidential recommendations from two referees \*;
6. Application fee receipt (not necessary for credit card payment through online application);
7. Copies of identity card or passport; and
8. A written statement explaining the purpose of his/her application.

\* Official transcripts and confidential recommendations must reach the Division of Linguistics directly from the referees and the University attended by the applicant in sealed envelopes with the signatures of the referees and University's stamp respectively.

Applicants are most welcome to make their applications via the Internet (<http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/gss>). They should quote the "application no." generated for their applications when they send the hardcopies of their supporting documents to the Division of Linguistics.

**Application Fee**            HK\$180 (non-refundable) per programme

## Entrance Examination

Applicants may be required to attend an interview and take a written test as part of the admission process. Past academic record, work experience, references, and language abilities will be considered in the admission decision.

## Tuition Fee

Full-time (Provisional)	HK\$81,000 per annum
Part-time (Provisional)	HK\$40,500 per annum

## Contact Methods

### Division of Linguistics

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