

## Course Descriptions

# Master of Arts in Linguistics

## Introduction

*Master of Arts Programme (MA) in Linguistics (语言学文学硕士)* features an interdisciplinary approach. It is designed to introduce students to current theories in linguistics and their various applications to language typology, language acquisition, language teaching as well as culture and society, which are presented in a comparative framework.

The programme provides training in linguistics, with the aim to:

- Help students develop sensitivity towards the complexities of language structure and use;
- Develop students' understanding of the characteristic properties of language;
- Enhance student's linguistic awareness regarding language development and language proficiency.

## Programme Structure

The programme is offered in both full-time and part-time modes. The full-time mode covers a normal period of one academic year while the part-time mode covers a normal period of two academic years. Students are required to complete a total of 24 units of courses, including 6 units of required courses and 18 units of elective courses.

## Course List

Course Title	MOI	Unit
<b>Required Courses (6 units)</b>		
Foundations in Linguistics I	E	3
Foundations in Linguistics II	E	3
<b>Elective Courses (18 units)</b>		
Topics in Contemporary Chinese Linguistics	P/E	3
Topics in Comparative Grammar	P/E	3
Topics in Language Acquisition	E	3
Topics in Sign Language Research	E	3
Topics in Sociolinguistics	E	3
Topics in Language Change	E	3
Topics in Pragmatics	E	3
<b>Special Topics in Linguistics</b>		
Linguistics and Language Teaching	E	3
Approaches to English Grammar	E	3
Seminars in Linguistic Research	E	3
Research Project	E	6

(MOI: Medium of instruction; P: Putonghua; E: English)

## Course Descriptions

### Required 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 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.

### Elective Courses:

#### 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, and modality. 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 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.



## Qualifications for Admission

### 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.



### 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.

### Approaches to English Grammar

This course introduces students to various approaches to the study of English grammatical constructions. The approaches adopted may include formal, functional or cognitive perspectives. Students are encouraged to analyze grammatical constructions in terms of form-function relationships, cognitive processing and information flow. This course is designed to enhance students' sensitivity to the interactive aspects of grammatical analysis.

### 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 electives 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.

### Qualifications for Admission

The applicants must meet the general qualifications for admission of the Graduate School of the Chinese University of Hong Kong (<http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/gss>), and must possess a bachelor's degree or equivalent from a recognized tertiary institute. All applicants are required to submit a written statement explaining the purpose of their application and the focus of their academic interests. 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.

**Application Deadline** 29 February 2008

### Tuition Fee (Provisional)

HK\$72,000 per annum (Full-time)  
HK\$36,000 per annum (Part-time)

### Contact Methods

Department of Linguistics and Modern Languages  
Room G8B, Fung King Hey Building  
The Chinese University of Hong Kong  
Shatin, N.T., Hong Kong  
Tel No.: (852) 2609 7911  
Fax No.: (852) 2603 7755  
Website: <http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/lin>  
Email: [lin@cuhk.edu.hk](mailto:lin@cuhk.edu.hk)



Master of Arts Programme in  
Linguistics  
2008-09

語言學文學碩士



Department of Linguistics and Modern Languages  
The Chinese University of Hong Kong