

## **Chinese as a Foreign Language Courses at the University of Hong Kong**

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*As Chinese Language is one of the popular subjects at HKU, from 2017 to 2018, there are about 657 foreign students (undergraduates or exchange students) studying Chinese as a Foreign Language courses. In addition, there are about 296 students study Cantonese as a Foreign Language Courses. In this paper, we want to demonstrate our curriculum design of Chinese as a Foreign Language courses from Level One to Level Eight and Cantonese as a Foreign Language Courses from Level One to Level Two at the University of Hong Kong.*

*Keywords: Chinese as a foreign language course, Cantonese as a foreign language course, objectives, course description, assessment, learning outcomes*

### **INTRODUCTION**

As China can still enjoy a high GDP growth rate for the next decade, there is a rapid increase in the number of foreign students coming to Beijing, Shanghai and Hong Kong to study Mandarin. Meanwhile, Hong Kong is truly an international financial center in the world, therefore, a lot of students also come to Hong Kong to study Cantonese in order to find a job in Hong Kong after they graduate. As Chinese Language is one of the popular subjects for them to choose, from 2017 to 2018, there are about 657 foreign students (undergraduates or exchange students) studying Chinese as a Foreign Language courses. In addition, there are about 296 students studying Cantonese as a Foreign Language Courses.

In this paper, we want to demonstrate our curriculum design of Chinese as a Foreign Language courses from Level One to Level Eight and Cantonese as a Foreign Language Courses from Level One to Level Two at the University of Hong Kong:

I. *CHINESE AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE COURSES:*

Level one (basic: zero beginners)

Level two (basic)

Level three (basic)

Level four (Intermediate)

Level five (Intermediate)

Level six (Higher-Intermediate)

Level seven (Advanced)

Level eight (Advanced)

II. *CANTONESE AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE COURSES:*

Level one (Beginners)

Level two (Basic)

The medium of instruction of above courses is Mandarin Chinese and Cantonese with supplement of English. We would like to introduce course outline above courses in this paper.

## **CHINESE LEVEL ONE**

### **Objectives**

This course is for foreign students who do not have previous knowledge of Chinese. It will give students with no previous knowledge of Chinese a foundation. It covers 4 main areas: speaking, listening, reading and writing which will require pinyin-word processing and actual writing of Chinese characters.

### **Course Description**

This course will use *The Rudiments of Mandarin* (chapter 1 to 5) as the textbook. It allows students to know about 150 Chinese Characters and some useful sentences in daily life and around 65 important grammar points.

### **Assessment**

Quiz, dictations, home assignments, written test and oral test will be used to assess the students' reading, writing, listening and speaking ability.

### **Learning Outcomes**

On successful completion of the course, students should be able to demonstrate an ability to communicate effectively in basic Chinese using correct pronunciation and tones. Students should be able to identify and write 150 frequently used Chinese characters and 200 common words. Students should be able to communicate in speech and writing by using the basic grammar structures of modern Chinese.

## **CHINESE LEVEL TWO**

### **Objectives**

This intensive course is intended for student whose native language is not Chinese. After completing the beginner's Chinese course, he or she has demonstrated an ability to communicate effectively in basic Chinese using correct pronunciation and simple sentence patterns of modern Chinese in speaking and writing.

This course helps the students enhance their engagement and motivation in Chinese language learning, develop their knowledge in Chinese culture and establish a more solid foundation of Mandarin in a non-target language environment.

### **Course Description**

The course will use a textbook (chapter 6 to chapter 10 of The Rudiments of Mandarin) to continue what the students has learnt in Level One. Level Two allows students to know about another 150 Chinese Characters and some useful sentences in daily life and another 65 important grammar points. In Level Two, students have opportunities to have the role plays, creative writing based on the words and expressions they have learned in class and presentations. The course provides an interactive learning environment for students to increase the opportunities in studying the target language in non-target language environment and mastering more practical phrases and expressions from the in-class activities.

### **Assessment**

According to the students' evaluation and their assessment results, the course not only enhanced students' Mandarin language proficiency but also facilitate in-depth study of particular aspects of Chinese language, such as sentence patterns, usage of expressions as well as of Chinese culture, such as request in a polite way, different ways to address people and etc.

### **Learning Outcomes**

After completing the Level One and Level Two course, the students will finish the textbook, The Rudiments of Mandarin. At that moment, students should master 130 important grammatical points, 400 common vocabulary words and 300 Chinese characters. They can also conduct a 250-character speech as well as a role play script on a given topic. The course provides an interactive learning environment for students to increase the opportunities in studying the target.

## **CHINESE LEVEL THREE**

### **Objectives**

This course is for foreign students who have an equivalent competency Level Two or New HSK Level 2. It aims to further develop students' audio-lingual proficiency as well as raise their reading and writing ability to a higher level. Students use information obtained from their course to converse with Chinese people, and present speeches based on the assigned topics. Emphasis will be placed on everyday topics and common patterns, so that students experience communication in Chinese.

### **Course Description**

This course will cover New Practical Chinese Reader Book II (lesson 15 to lesson 20), including vocabulary, notes, grammatical explanation, characters and drills.

1. Accuracy and Fluency of Pronunciation:
  - a. Review Pinyin System.
  - b. Pronunciation Clinic: tones will be the focus.
  - c. Sentence:
2. Six Chinese Communication Skills are emphasized:
  - a. Confirming;
  - b. Commenting;
  - c. Enquiring;
  - d. Comparing;
  - e. Describing;
  - f. Disagreeing.
3. Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing skills will be enhanced.

### **Assessment**

Quizzes, dictations, workbooks, worksheets, in-class activities, mid-term test, final test will be used to assess the students' reading, writing, listening and speaking ability.

## **Learning Outcomes**

On successful completion of the course, students should be able to communicate effectively with complex Chinese sentences using correct pronunciation. Students should also demonstrate the ability to communicate in speech and in written form using the more complex grammar structures of modern Chinese. Students should also master 150 of the most frequently used Chinese characters in addition to the 300 basic Chinese characters learned in Level One & Level Two.

## **CHINESE LEVEL FOUR**

### **Objectives**

This course is intended for foreign learners who have completed Level Three and prepare to take New HSK Level 3 test. It aims to develop the student's overall language skills through reading and discussion of contemporary affairs. Students will not only distinguish the difference between written language and spoken language, but will also gain the ability to understand, and speak Chinese in a variety of situations. At the end of the course, students should be able to learn to read and write at a higher level than Level Three.

### **Course Description**

This course will cover New Practical Chinese Reader Book II (lesson 21 to lesson 26) which including the following aspects:

1. Understand intermediate-level conversation by native speakers:
  - a. More listening exercises in everyday conversations;
  - b. Some lectures in Chinese culture and language.
2. Communicate in intermediate-level using accurate and clear sentences:
  - a. Talking about Sports Matches;
  - b. Discussion on Beijing Opera and a past experience;
  - c. Making an appointment or a date with someone;
  - d. Talking about the Plan and Making Suggestions.
  - e. Talking about the Changing Circumstances and Living conditions;
  - f. Talking about an Incident; Making complaints.
  - g. Talking about language studies.
3. Reading and Writing:
  - a. Reading short articles (around 500 Chinese characters) on different topics;
  - b. Mastery of the 150 most frequently used Chinese characters and review of the 450 characters learned in Beginning Chinese courses; the focus will be on simplified characters.
  - c. Write short essays starting off at about 250 characters and gradually increasing to 400 characters.

### **Assessment**

Quizzes, dictations, workbooks, worksheets, mid-term test, final test, oral presentation and listening exercises will be used to assess the students' reading, writing, listening and speaking ability. In the final test which include a reading comprehension with 500 Chinese characters and essay writing with at least 300 Chinese characters. Normally 80% of Level Four students perform good in reading comprehension and 70% of the students perform good in essay writing.

### **Learning Outcomes**

On successful completion of the course, students should be able to:

1. Read short articles (around 500 Chinese characters) on different topics
2. Write short essays of up to 400 characters.

3. Demonstrate the ability to communicate in intermediate-level Chinese using accurate, clear and fluent sentences;
4. Demonstrate the ability to understand intermediate-level conversation by native speakers.
5. Demonstrate mastery of 150 of the most frequently used Chinese characters in addition to the 650 characters which have already been learned and recognized in Level One to Level Three.

## CHINESE LEVEL FIVE

### Objectives

This intensive course is intended for foreign learners who have completed CHIN9504 (Chinese as a Foreign Language Level IV) or have attained equivalent competence to Chinese Proficiency Test (New HSK) *Level III*. It aims to increase students' communicative and linguistic competence in listening, speaking, reading, writing, and translating. It also provides in-depth study of Chinese culture and society.

### Course Description

This course will cover New Practical Chinese Reader Book III (lesson 27 to lesson 32). It familiarizes students with 150 core sentences, 450 new words, and 200 most frequently used Chinese characters in addition to the Chinese characters acquired from previous levels.

### Assessment

Quizzes, presentations, essays, home assignments, written tests and oral tests will be used to assess the students' reading, writing, listening and speaking ability.

**TABLE 1**  
**ASSESSMENT OF LEVEL FIVE**

Assessment methods	Weighting (%)
1. Dictations	5
2. Workbook	15
3. Quiz	10
4. In-class Presentation	10
5. Essay	20
6. Midterm	20
7. Final	20

### Learning Outcomes

On successful completion of the course, students should be able to:

1. Speak accurate, clear and fluent sentences. Students are encouraged to engage more in complex dialogues on special topics according to lessons in the textbook.
2. Enhance students' listening ability. Guided listening comprehension will be used to train students' listening skills systematically. By the end of the course, students will be able to understand more conversations at normal speed carried out by native speakers.
3. Read short articles (around 500 Chinese characters) on different topics for training in reading comprehension.
4. Write short essays gradually increasing to 400 to 450 characters.

### **Class Demo**

For language learning, technology provides venues and makes it easy for learners to regulate their language learning. New technologies offer the potential for autonomous language learning, especially in the context of “globalized online spaces”. And technology is changing the face of organizations and having impact on the nature of informal learning. So in order to achieve the learning outcomes, many e-learning strategies are used in the language learning class. For example:

1. Movie reviews. In lesson 28, the topic is Chinese culture of gift-giving. In order to enhance students listening ability and help students understand more conversations at normal speed carried out by native speakers, students watched a section about gift-giving of Chinese movie “Personal Tailor”, then students were encouraged and invited to express their different opinions.
2. Movie dubbing. In lesson 29, students learn “Disciples are not necessarily inferior to their teachers. Teachers are not necessarily wiser than their disciples”. In order to encourage students to engage more in complex dialogues on this topic, and to give students more chance to make comments, a movie section of “Three Idiots” were chose and students were encouraged to dub the movie section into Chinese and then make comments.
3. Write stories based on illustrations. In order to foster students’ interest in writing in Chinese and improve their writing skills, students were encouraged to write stories based on a series illustrations and then gave a presentation about their stories.

## **CHINESE LEVEL SIX**

### **Objectives**

This intensive course is intended for foreign learners who have completed CHIN9505 (Chinese as a Foreign Language Level V) or have attained an equivalent level of competency. It aims to increase students’ communicative and linguistic competence in listening, speaking, reading, writing, and translating. It also provides in-depth study of Chinese culture and society.

### **Course Description**

This course will cover New Practical Chinese Reader Book III (lesson 33 to lesson 38). It familiarizes students with another 600 new words, 200 most frequently used Chinese characters, in addition to 1600 Chinese characters and 150 core sentences learnt. The course will be conducted mainly in Chinese.

### **Assessment**

Quizzes, presentations, essays, home assignments, written tests and oral tests will be used to assess the students’ reading, writing, listening and speaking ability.

**TABLE 2**  
**ASSESSMENT OF LEVEL SIX**

Assessment methods	Weighting (%)
1. In-class dictations & quizzes	18
2. Two compositions	20
3. Home works	12
4. Oral presentation	10
5. Mid-term & Final tests	40

## **Learning Outcomes**

On successful completion of the course, students should be able to:

1. Demonstrate an ability to communicate effectively in sophisticated Chinese using correct pronunciation.
2. Demonstrate a mastery of newly acquired most frequently used Chinese characters in addition to Chinese characters, words/phrases, and core sentences already been acquired in CHIN9501, CHIN9502, CHIN9503, CHIN9504 and CHIN9505.
3. Demonstrate an ability to communicate in speech and writing short essays of around 500 to 650 characters by using standard modern Chinese to discuss various topics.

## **CHINESE LEVEL SEVEN**

### **Objectives**

This intensive course is for foreign learners who have completed intermediate Chinese, that is, has demonstrated an ability to communicate in speech and writing short essays of around 500 characters by using standard modern Chinese to discuss various topics. It aims to enhance students' communicative competence, specifically targeting at speaking, reading and writing. Students will be exposed to Chinese society and culture through a greater variety of topical presentations and discussions. They will write short essays starting off at about 600 characters and gradually increasing to 800 characters by using varying sentence styles and structures.

### **Course Description**

Developing Chinese Advanced Speaking Course II (chapter 1 to 8) will be used as textbook. There is an increase in student demands for advanced Chinese language course. Most of the students want to explore more in Chinese society and political issues, such as concept of marriage, Only-Child Policy and etc. They have a strong motivation to express their opinions in the current political affairs and cultural topics. Some topics of the textbook (New Practical Chinese Reader IV), such as concept of marriage, woman issue and Only-Child Policy are selected. The students need to study the grammar and vocabulary of the selected chapters and enhance their ability to distinguish the spoken language and written language.

### **Assessment**

In addition to the regular quizzes and home assignment, the students are required to enhance their ability in writing and presentation on a given topic. After delivering the speech, the other student audiences will ask some questions according to the content and the speaker need to answer the questions. The course provides an interactive learning environment for students to improve their understanding and language skills used in the writing and presentation of an essay in Chinese. It's the student's opportunity to demonstrate their ability to communicate accurately, fluently, and coherently; to effectively deliver and express more complex ideas in a short speech; to master more frequently used Chinese characters, new vocabulary and complex sentence pattern/structures, phrases and core sentences already acquired in previous courses; and to demonstrate the ability to communicate, in writing, short essays using standard modern Chinese grammar and sentence structures to effectively present data, concepts, and ideas.

**TABLE 3**  
**ASSESSMENT OF LEVEL SEVEN**

Assessment Methods	Weighting (%)
1. Dictations	10
2. Home Assignments	20
3. Individual Presentation	15
4. Online Quiz	10
4. Movie Review	10
5. Group presentation	20
6. Final Composition	15

### **Learning Outcomes**

On successful completion of the course, students should be able to demonstrate improvement in an overall ability to communicate accurately, fluently and coherently in sophisticated Chinese using correct and appropriate diction. Demonstrate an ability to effectively deliver and express more complex ideas in short speeches. Students should also master more Chinese new words, complex grammar patterns/structures, set phrases and core sentences already acquired in previous courses. Students should also be able to write short essays and compositions by using standard modern Chinese grammar and sentence structures to discuss various social topics. The curriculum provides learning experiences that enable students to successfully achieve the course learning outcomes and well prepared for the higher-level Chinese studying, i.e., Chinese as a Foreign Language VIII (CHIN9508).

### **CHINESE LEVEL EIGHT**

Students taking CHIN9508 will continue the textbook *Developing Chinese Advanced Speaking Course II*, chapter 9 to 15. They will expose to Chinese society and culture through a variety of selected reading materials from well-known Chinese modern writers' works, newspapers and magazines, short stories and novels. In addition, students will write summaries of some of their reading assignments to enhance comprehension and strengthen writing ability. Students will also be asked to accurately and fluently expressing ideas in different topics in class. This course will also prepare for sentence structure analysis, punctuation usage, and fundamentals of rhetorical methods and classical Chinese.

### **CANTONESE LEVEL ONE**

#### **Objective**

This intensive course is intended for foreign learners who have no prior knowledge of Cantonese. The course introduces students to present-day Cantonese, with an emphasis on learning correct pronunciation through the Jyutping Phonetic Romanization transcription system and basic structure. It aims to develop fundamental oral communication skills through a variety of situational conversations in a highly interactive classroom, and to promote a better understanding of Chinese and Hong Kong culture.

#### **Course Description**

This course uses *Cantonese for Everyone (Jyutping version)* as the textbook. It introduces students to basic Cantonese, which covers the following aspects:

1. Introduction of the basic characteristics of the Cantonese dialect
2. Study of Cantonese phonetic system
3. Practice of useful expressions & numerals
4. Practice of everyday life vocabulary and situational conversation



## 5. Study of simple sentence structure & usage

### Assessment

Home assignments, written tests, oral tests and presentations will be used to assess the students' reading, writing, listening and speaking ability:

**TABLE 4**  
**ASSESSMENT OF CANTONESE LEVEL ONE**

Assessment methods	Weighting (%)
Class participation & exercises	10
Self-introduction	10
Group presentation	20
Two Jyutping reading tests	20
Mid-term written test	20
Final written test	20

### Learning Outcome

On successful completion of the course, students should be able to demonstrate a basic ability to communicate and express ideas in Cantonese using correct and appropriate expressions. They should also be able to demonstrate mastery of 400+ frequently used Cantonese words or short phrases, and about 100 sentence patterns/structures. On the other hand, after acquiring knowledge about Jyutping in the course, students can demonstrate an ability to write down any Cantonese sounds in Jyutping in order to check them with on-line dictionary. With this ability, they are also capable of reading out any Cantonese sounds written in Jyutping transcription, which allows them to continue learning Cantonese by themselves.

## CANTONESE LEVEL TWO

### Objective

This intensive course is designed for international undergraduate students, exchange and visiting students who are non-heritage learners and have completed Level One or can demonstrate equivalent competence in the placement test. It aims at strengthening students' mastery of Phonetic Romanization Transcription, the *Jyutping* system, and at enhancing students' competence in expressing themselves in Cantonese.

### Course Description

Instructors' handouts will be distributed at the beginning of the course. To give students further competence in spoken Cantonese as well as to consolidate knowledge gained in Level One, a greater emphasis will be placed on oral drills and listening comprehension. More advanced dialogues, more practical sentence patterns and a large range of useful words and expressions related to various aspects of everyday life will be introduced as well.

### Assessment

Class participation, home assignments, journal, 5-minute phone call, written tests, oral test, individual and group presentations will be used to assess students' reading, writing, listening and speaking skills.

**TABLE 5**  
**ASSESSMENT OF CANTONESE LEVEL TWO**

Assessment methods	Weighting (%)
1. Recite one's own journal	10
2. Make a phone call to the teacher	10
3. Jyutping reading test	10
4. Group presentation	20
5. Mid-term & Final written tests	40
6. Class participation & exercises	10

**Learning Outcome**

On successful completion of the course, students should be able to:

- Demonstrate mastery of 400 frequently used Cantonese words or short phrases, and about 100 sentence patterns/structures on top of previously acquired knowledge in Level One.  
Demonstrate a basic ability to communicate and express ideas in Cantonese using correct and appropriate expressions.  
Demonstrate an ability to write short message or speech on certain topics in *Jyutping* by using correct Cantonese grammar and sentence structures.  
Demonstrate an ability to write down or read out any Cantonese sounds in *Jyutping* in order to continue learning Cantonese by oneself with online dictionaries.

**CONCLUSION**

We are striving to make our curriculum better and more effective for students who want to study Chinese as a foreign language within a limit period of time. In order to enhance the outcome of Chinese learning, we always encourage students to study Chinese outside the classrooms, such as find a language exchange partner at HKU or go to mainland China during holidays. Thus they can totally immerse themselves in the target language context and acquire Chinese naturally. Studying Chinese at HKU and acquiring Chinese outside classroom will work hand in hand and guide the students towards the goal.