

## The Hong Kong Polytechnic University

### Subject Description Form

*Please read the notes at the end of the table carefully before completing the form.*

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|--|---|
| <b>Subject Code</b>                                      | CBS1M41   |
| <b>Subject Title</b>                                     | Chinese Language: Myths vs Facts  |
| <b>Credit Value</b>                                      | 3   |
| <b>Level</b>   | 1   |
| <b>Pre-requisite/<br/>Co-requisite/<br/>Exclusion</b>    | Nil   |
| <b>Objectives</b>  | <p>Chinese is the most widely spoken language in the world, which has numerous geographical variations. It also has a system of writing so obviously different from the alphabetic scripts. Perhaps most Westerners and no little proportion of native speakers mistakenly believe a number of erroneous claims about Chinese language, for example that (a) Chinese is the hardest language to learn in the world; (b) Chinese has no grammar; (c) Chinese is monosyllabic, or (d) Chinese is pictographic. The subject aims to help students to debunk the many myths and inaccurate claims about the spoken and written forms of Chinese language. In the process, an understanding on the evolution of Modern Chinese language will be developed. The subject is designed equally for both native and non-native speakers of Chinese, who would like to develop an informed understanding of the language. No specific level of Chinese language is required.</p> |
| <b>Intended Learning Outcomes</b><br><br><i>(Note 1)</i> | <p>Upon completion of the subject, students will be able to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Develop an informed understanding of the evolution of modern Chinese language;</li> <li>b. Develop an informed and personally relevant understanding of the linguistic structure of Modern Chinese;</li> <li>c. Describe intellectually the characteristics of Chinese language, including its phonology, syntax, and scripts;</li> <li>d. Evaluate whether a claim on the Chinese language is sound or unsound; and</li> <li>e. Compare in an informed way the difference between Chinese language and other languages.</li> <li>f. Enhance students' literacy skills in reading and writing</li> </ol>   |

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| <p><b>Subject Synopsis/<br/>Indicative Syllabus</b><br/><i>(Note 2)</i></p> | <p>Defining Chinese Language</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where did Chinese language come from?</li> <li>• Does everyone in China speak Chinese?</li> <li>• How many dialects are there in Chinese?</li> <li>• Are they dialects or different languages of China?</li> <li>• Is Mandarin one of the dialects?</li> <li>• How Mandarin became China’s official language?</li> <li>• What are the differences between Mandarin, <i>Putonghua</i>, <i>Guoyu</i> and <i>Huayu</i>?</li> </ul> <p>The sounds of Chinese</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does Chinese have a complex phonology?</li> <li>• What are the areas of phonology that make the Chinese Language difficult to master?</li> </ul> <p>The grammar of Chinese</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are Chinese words monosyllabic?</li> <li>• Does Chinese have word class?</li> <li>• Does Chinese have case, tense, aspect, mood?</li> <li>• What are the basic Chinese grammar rules?</li> <li>• How is Chinese grammar different from English?</li> <li>• What are the major differences between early Mandarin and modern Mandarin?</li> </ul> <p>The Chinese writing system</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When did Chinese first write?</li> <li>• Is the Chinese script pictographic?</li> <li>• Are ancient Chinese characters still legible for modern Chinese person?</li> <li>• Why does Chinese have two concurrent writing systems?</li> <li>• Does simplified Chinese characters with fewer strokes make learning easier?</li> <li>• Are Japanese and Chinese characters the same?</li> <li>• How does the phonetization of Chinese evolved from Matteo Ricci?</li> <li>• Should Chinese be romanized?</li> <li>• What are the differences among Hanyu Pinyin, Zhuyin Fuhao and Wade-Giles? Which one should you learn?</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>Teaching/Learning Methodology</b><br/><i>(Note 3)</i></p>             | <p>The subject will contain both lectures and seminars. The lectures are to provide key concepts and theories enhanced with web-based demonstrations. As seminars are designed to be more interactive in nature, students are required to reflect on the assigned readings critically in those discussions. The project and final term paper are also designed to facilitate learning of this subject.</p>   |

| <b>Assessment Methods in Alignment with Intended Learning Outcomes</b><br>(Note 4)   | <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th rowspan="2">Specific assessment methods/tasks</th> <th rowspan="2">% weighting</th> <th colspan="6">Intended subject learning outcomes to be assessed (Please tick as appropriate)</th> </tr> <tr> <th>a</th> <th>b</th> <th>c</th> <th>d</th> <th>e</th> <th>f</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1. Exercises and Assignments</td> <td>40%</td> <td>√</td> <td>√</td> <td>√</td> <td>√</td> <td></td> <td>√</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2. Required Reading</td> <td>10%</td> <td>√</td> <td>√</td> <td>√</td> <td>√</td> <td></td> <td>√</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3. Essay</td> <td>50%<br/>(10% from ELC)</td> <td>√</td> <td>√</td> <td>√</td> <td>√</td> <td>√</td> <td>√</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Total</b></td> <td><b>100 %</b></td> <td colspan="6"></td> </tr> </tbody> </table> | Specific assessment methods/tasks | % weighting | Intended subject learning outcomes to be assessed (Please tick as appropriate) |  |   |   |   |  | a | b | c | d | e | f | 1. Exercises and Assignments | 40% | √ | √ | √ | √ |  | √ | 2. Required Reading | 10% | √ | √ | √ | √ |  | √ | 3. Essay | 50%<br>(10% from ELC) | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | <b>Total</b> | <b>100 %</b> |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|--|--|-----------------------------------|-------------|--|--|---|---|---|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|------------------------------|-----|---|---|---|---|--|---|---------------------|-----|---|---|---|---|--|---|----------|-----------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|--------------|--------------|--|--|--|--|--|--|
|  | Specific assessment methods/tasks  |                                   |             | % weighting  | Intended subject learning outcomes to be assessed (Please tick as appropriate) |   |   |   |  |   |   |   |   |   |   |                              |     |   |   |   |   |  |   |                     |     |   |   |   |   |  |   |          |                       |   |   |   |   |   |   |              |              |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  | a                                 | b           |  | c  | d | e | f |  |   |   |   |   |   |   |                              |     |   |   |   |   |  |   |                     |     |   |   |   |   |  |   |          |                       |   |   |   |   |   |   |              |              |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | 1. Exercises and Assignments   | 40%                               | √           | √  | √  | √ |   | √ |  |   |   |   |   |   |   |                              |     |   |   |   |   |  |   |                     |     |   |   |   |   |  |   |          |                       |   |   |   |   |   |   |              |              |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | 2. Required Reading  | 10%                               | √           | √  | √  | √ |   | √ |  |   |   |   |   |   |   |                              |     |   |   |   |   |  |   |                     |     |   |   |   |   |  |   |          |                       |   |   |   |   |   |   |              |              |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 3. Essay   | 50%<br>(10% from ELC)  | √                                 | √           | √  | √  | √ | √ |   |  |   |   |   |   |   |   |                              |     |   |   |   |   |  |   |                     |     |   |   |   |   |  |   |          |                       |   |   |   |   |   |   |              |              |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>100 %</b>   |                                   |             |  |  |   |   |   |  |   |   |   |   |   |   |                              |     |   |   |   |   |  |   |                     |     |   |   |   |   |  |   |          |                       |   |   |   |   |   |   |              |              |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| <p>Explanation of the appropriateness of the assessment methods in assessing the intended learning outcomes:</p> <p>A number of exercises and small assignments, each with different focus and covering specific topics, will be given to students to help them grasp the basic concepts and to develop their abilities in identifying the structure of the Chinese language.</p> <p>Towards the end of the study period, students will be required to conduct a project on resolving a problem in Chinese language and to produce an 2,000-word essay containing in-depth discussion of a linguistic phenomenon. This final piece of work would require students to make use of the knowledge learnt in this subject and to demonstrate that they have achieved the intended learning outcomes.</p> |  |                                   |             |  |  |   |   |   |  |   |   |   |   |   |   |                              |     |   |   |   |   |  |   |                     |     |   |   |   |   |  |   |          |                       |   |   |   |   |   |   |              |              |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| <b>Student Study Effort Expected</b>   | Class contact:   |                                   |             |  |  |   |   |   |  |   |   |   |   |   |   |                              |     |   |   |   |   |  |   |                     |     |   |   |   |   |  |   |          |                       |   |   |   |   |   |   |              |              |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | ▪ Lectures 2 x 13  | 26 Hrs.                           |             |  |  |   |   |   |  |   |   |   |   |   |   |                              |     |   |   |   |   |  |   |                     |     |   |   |   |   |  |   |          |                       |   |   |   |   |   |   |              |              |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | ▪ Seminars 1 x 13  | 13 Hrs.                           |             |  |  |   |   |   |  |   |   |   |   |   |   |                              |     |   |   |   |   |  |   |                     |     |   |   |   |   |  |   |          |                       |   |   |   |   |   |   |              |              |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Other student study effort:  |                                   |             |  |  |   |   |   |  |   |   |   |   |   |   |                              |     |   |   |   |   |  |   |                     |     |   |   |   |   |  |   |          |                       |   |   |   |   |   |   |              |              |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | ▪ Exercises, Assignments and Essay   | 40 Hrs.                           |             |  |  |   |   |   |  |   |   |   |   |   |   |                              |     |   |   |   |   |  |   |                     |     |   |   |   |   |  |   |          |                       |   |   |   |   |   |   |              |              |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | ▪ Reading  | 30 Hrs.                           |             |  |  |   |   |   |  |   |   |   |   |   |   |                              |     |   |   |   |   |  |   |                     |     |   |   |   |   |  |   |          |                       |   |   |   |   |   |   |              |              |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | <b>Total student study effort</b>  | <b>109 Hrs.</b>                   |             |  |  |   |   |   |  |   |   |   |   |   |   |                              |     |   |   |   |   |  |   |                     |     |   |   |   |   |  |   |          |                       |   |   |   |   |   |   |              |              |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| <b>Reading List and References</b>   | <b>Required Reading</b><br>Chen, Ping. <i>Modern Chinese: History and Sociolinguistics</i> . Cambridge University Press, 110 Midland Avenue, Port Chester, NY 10573-4390, 1999.  |                                   |             |  |  |   |   |   |  |   |   |   |   |   |   |                              |     |   |   |   |   |  |   |                     |     |   |   |   |   |  |   |          |                       |   |   |   |   |   |   |              |              |  |  |  |  |  |  |

### Reference Reading

- Bagley, Robert W. "Anyang Writing and the Origin of the Chinese Writing System." Chapter 7 (pp. 190–249) in Stephen D. Houston, ed., *The First Writing*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.
- Chen, Ping. "Toward a phonographic writing system of Chinese: A case study in writing reform." (1996): 1-46.
- DeFrancis, John. *The Chinese language: Fact and fantasy*. University of Hawaii Press, 1986.
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- Erbaugh, Mary S. *Difficult Characters: Interdisciplinary Studies of Chinese and Japanese Writing. Pathways to Advanced Skills Series, Volume 6*. Foreign Language Publications. 198 Hagerty Hall, 1775 South College Road, Columbus, OH 43210, 2002.
- Gil, Jeffrey. "Will a character based writing system stop Chinese becoming a global language? A review and reconsideration of the debate." *Global Chinese* 6.1 (2020): 25-48.
- Kane, Daniel. *The Chinese language: Its history and current usage*. Tuttle Publishing, 2006.
- Lee, Keekok. *Warp and Weft, Chinese Language and Culture*. Strategic Book Publishing, 2008.
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- Takashima, Ken-Ichi. *A Little Primer of Chinese Oracle-Bone Inscriptions with Some Exercises*. Beltz Verlag, 2019.
- Tsu, Jing. *Kingdom of Characters: The Language Revolution that Made China Modern*. Riverhead Books, 2022.
- Wang, William SY. "The Chinese language." *Scientific American* 228.2 (1973): 50-63.
- Wei, Li, and Zhu Hua. "Soft power struggles: A diasporic perspective on the competing ideologies and innovative practices regarding the Chinese writing system." *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 25.5 (2021): 737-753.

#### Note 1: Intended Learning Outcomes

Intended learning outcomes should state what students should be able to do or attain upon subject completion. Subject outcomes are expected to contribute to the attainment of the overall programme outcomes.

#### Note 2: Subject Synopsis/Indicative Syllabus

The syllabus should adequately address the intended learning outcomes. At the same time, overcrowding of the syllabus should be avoided.

#### Note 3: Teaching/Learning Methodology

This section should include a brief description of the teaching and learning methods to be employed to facilitate learning, and a justification of how the methods are aligned with the intended learning outcomes of the subject.

Note 4: Assessment Method

This section should include the assessment method(s) to be used and its relative weighting, and indicate which of the subject intended learning outcomes that each method is intended to assess. It should also provide a brief explanation of the appropriateness of the assessment methods in assessing the intended learning outcomes.

(Form AR 140) 8.2020