Confucius Temple in Nanjing City

Photo credit to Jun Guo

Why Chinese?

- Chinese is the most widely spoken language in the world with approximately 1,197,000,000 people speaking Chinese, therefore 14% of the global population speaking Chinese.

- Business - As well as China, Mandarin is spoken in countries such as Malaysia, Taiwan, Singapore, and Indonesia, so if you do business in these countries then it would be beneficial to converse in their language. Mark Zuckerberg is wowing audiences across the world with his new Chinese Skills, especially those important business executives in China. In fact, there are many top CEO's that speak Chinese as a second language.

- Travel - If you can speak Mandarin "the world is your oyster" as you travel across Southeast Asia.

- Culture - With thousands of years of history, Chinese culture is endlessly fascinating. Whether your interests are in history, architecture, music, or cuisine, a knowledge of Mandarin will enrich your understanding of Chinese culture.

Chinese Courses

Fall Semester

CHIN1010 Beginning Chinese I (5 Credits)
Introduces modern Chinese (Mandarin), developing all four skills (speaking, listening, reading, and writing) and communicative strategies. No previous knowledge required.

CHIN2110 Intermediate Chinese I (5 Credits)
This course in intermediate Mandarin Chinese is designed for students who already have knowledge of basic Chinese learned either through taking CHIN 1010 and CHIN 1020, or through some other relevant experience.

Spring Semester

CHIN1020 Beginning Chinese II (5 Credits)
This is the continued study of Chinese after completing CHIN1010 or equivalent, students will further develop the four skills of the language in a communicative context.

CHIN2120 Intermediate Chinese II (5 Credits)
This course is designed for students who already have knowledge of basic Chinese learned either through taking CHIN1010, CHIN1020 and CHIN2110 or through some other relevant experience.

Chinese
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Chinese

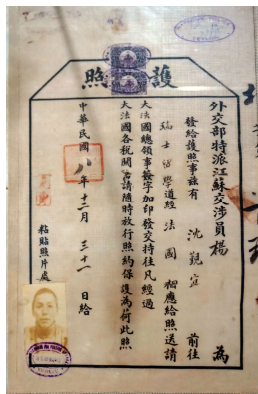*Dept of Languages and Cultures*
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Picture from a 1912 Chinese schoolbook

Is Chinese Difficult?

In many ways, Mandarin Chinese is much easier to learn than European languages. Here are some features which make Mandarin easy:

- no subject/verb agreement
- no plurals
- no conjugations
- no tenses
- simple numbering system which is applied to dates and time expressions
- simple conditional sentences
- simple prepositions

Chinese passport from 1920

5 Interesting Facts About Chinese

1. One of the six official languages of United Nations

2. If almond sharpens your brain then Chinese too!

According to research, people who've learned Chinese use both left and right sides of the brain to distinguish words from one another that have the same intonation.

3. Why is it called Mandarin?

Why a different word for the language, Chinese? Mandarin in English means official of the Chinese empire. It further has its origins in the Portuguese word 'mandarim', which comes from the Malay language word 'menteri', which is derived from Sanskrit 'mantrin', meaning "minister or counselor". One hell of a roller coaster ride this explanation was!

4. One of the fastest growing languages in the world

In United States Chinese is getting one of the most emerging foreign languages after Spanish.

5. Some famous faces!

Facebook CEO & Founder Mark Zuckerberg flabbergasted a group of students at Beijing University by talking in Chinese. Other famous people that speak Mandarin include former ormer Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd and former US Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner, who studied Chinese at Beijing University.

Chinese Characters

The writing system is another reason to learn Chinese! Learning to read and write Chinese characters will give you a lifetime of intellectual stimulation. The real beauty of the language is revealed in the writing. There are thousands of Chinese characters, but they are not randomly constructed. There is a system to their design, and understanding that system makes it much easier to learn new characters.

How many characters do I need to know?

There are more than 80,000 Chinese characters, but most of them are seldom used today. For basic reading and writing of modern Chinese, you only need a few thousand. Here are the coverage rates of the most frequently used Chinese characters:

- Most frequently used 1,000 characters: ~90% coverage rate

- Most frequently used 2,500 characters: 98.0% coverage rate

- Most frequently used 3,500 characters: 99.5% coverage rate