

Chinese Language Study at the University of Arizona

Chinese at the University of Arizona has had a long history. The Chinese language program is the oldest Chinese program in Arizona. It has been offered to undergraduate and graduate students at the University of Arizona for more than 50 years, first at the Department of Oriental Studies, and later at the Department of East Asian Studies (EAS). The language program has been under the direction of Feng-hsi Liu since 1991. Since the establishment of EAS in 1990, the language program has grown substantially in course offerings, enrollment and teaching staff.

Course offerings

From the 1960's to the early 1990's, Chinese was offered at three levels: Elementary Chinese, Intermediate Chinese and Advanced Chinese in reading, writing and conversation. During this time each course was offered once a year, e.g. Chn 101 in fall only and Chn 102 in spring only. Since 1990, the Chinese program has gone through several stages of development:

- 1993, expansion of Elementary Chinese: EAS started offering Chn 101 and Chn 102 in both fall and spring.
- 1996, expansion of Intermediate Modern Chinese: EAS started offering Chn 201 and Chn 202 in both fall and spring.
- 2001, addition of one more level of language courses: Third-Year Chinese was instituted; the existing Advanced Chinese courses were designated as fourth-year Chinese.
- 2006, EAS established Study Abroad program in Nanjing.
- 2008, EAS started offering Chn 101 and Chn 102 in the summer program.

Today the Chinese language program offers a four-year sequence of language courses. Each semester 10 sections of language course are offered, with an enrollment of around 200 students per semester.

Teaching team

Basic language courses (Elementary Chinese and Intermediate Chinese) are team-taught, while Third-Year Chinese and Advanced Chinese courses are taught by one instructor. Currently, the teaching team consists of one faculty member, Feng-hsi Liu (director of the language program), two instructors Cindy Shih (joined EAS 1999), and Xia Zhang (joined EAS 2007), and seven or eight graduate teaching assistants who are PhD or MA students in East Asian Studies. Each course is under the direction of either a faculty member or an instructor. The division of labor of is as follows:

Chn 101	Elementary Chinese	Cindy Shih
Chn 102	Elementary Chinese	Xia Zhang
Chn 201	Intermediate Modern Chinese	Xia Zhang
Chn 202	Intermediate Modern Chinese	Cindy Shih
Chn 403/404	Third-Year Chinese	Feng-hsi Liu

Shih, Zhang and Liu work closely with teaching assistants during a semester. Regular TA meetings are held. In addition, new teaching assistants are required to take a teaching methods course. Beginning in fall 2013, the teaching methods course is taught by a new faculty member, Wenhao Diao, who is a specialist in second language acquisition and teaching.

Study Abroad

In 2006 EAS partnered with a US company, Yangtze International Study Abroad (YISA), along with the department of Political Science and the department of Anthropology, to start a study abroad program at the Nanjing Normal University. Students participating in the program could directly receive UA credits. The program was popular with students. Each semester 10-15 students enrolled in the YISA program. By the time students were in an Advanced Chinese course, most of them had spent a summer or a semester in YISA.

Unfortunately, the YISA program was discontinued in 2012. Currently preparations are underway to establish a study abroad program at Xiamen University. The program is expected to begin in summer 2015.

There are also opportunities to study Chinese in Taiwan. Each year two students in Chinese classes are awarded a scholarship to study in Taiwan for a period of two to nine months.

EAS curriculum and teacher training

Chinese language study is closely related to Chinese teaching. Besides offering Chinese classes, EAS also trains future language professionals in its graduate program. In early 2000's, EAS began accepting students into the graduate program focusing on Chinese language teaching or acquisition. Graduate students take courses in EAS as well as courses offered by the program of Second Language Acquisition and Teaching. Most of these students receive financial support working as Chinese language teaching assistants; in this way they receive training in both the theory and practice of language teaching. Until 2013, only one faculty member in the department, Feng-hsi Liu, worked in Chinese linguistics. In fall of 2013, a second Chinese linguist, Wenhao Diao, joined the department. With two faculty members, EAS is now able to offer a more extensive curriculum in language teaching and acquisition.

Career placement of graduates in the linguistics program has been excellent. Several of the PhD graduates are now faculty members at US colleges and universities, e.g. Western Kentucky University, Tufts University, Air Force Academy, BYU-Idaho and Northern Arizona University. MA graduates have been even more in demand. Most of them have been employed immediately after graduation, by one of the local K-12 schools in Tucson. Thus by training future Chinese teachers EAS also contributes to the growth of Chinese teaching in the local community.

Outreach

Beyond the University of Arizona, in Tucson there are also a number of other venues that offer Chinese, including the Pima Community College, the Chinese Cultural Center, which offers Chinese classes each Sunday, the recently established Confucius Institute, and K-12 schools. In recent years Chinese has been added to the curriculum of world languages in many K-12 schools in Tucson. To reach out to students and teachers at K-12 schools and in the Tucson community, EAS engages in two types of activities:

1. Annual Southern Arizona Language Fair: The language fair is geared toward K-12 students and is held on the campus of University of Arizona. Language tables that feature foreign languages and cultures are displayed. In addition, K-12 students participate in speech contests in categories such as drama and poetry. EAS language faculty members, instructors and graduate teaching assistants serve as judges. We are always impressed with the Chinese speaking abilities of the contestants.

2. Occasional workshops for K-12 teachers: In the past five years, we have conducted three such workshops.

In the fall of 2009 EAS hosted Western Conference of the Association of Asian Studies, and EAS received funding to host a workshop as part of the conference on Chinese language teaching for secondary school teachers. The language program director, Feng-hsi Liu, conducted the workshop. Dr. Matthew Christensen from BYU, Dr. Michael Paul and Dr. Lei Shen from BYU-Idaho, who have had extensive experience running the STARTALK program in BYU, were invited as guest speakers. EAS Chinese instructors and teaching assistants also did demonstrations on how to teach specific features of Chinese. About 25 people attended the workshop. In the feedback several teachers commented that they would like to have more of this type of workshop.

In the fall of 2010 the Chinese Cultural Center hosted a teacher training workshop for the teachers in their Chinese program. EAS graduate student Ke Peng (now faculty member at Western Kentucky University) conducted the workshop for them.

In the fall of 2013 the Confucius Institute hosted a Chinese teaching workshop for K-12 teachers. EAS faculty member Wenhao Diao conducted the workshop. The workshop was well attended, with more than 20 participants.

Projects underway

EAS is currently working on two projects to further strengthen the Chinese language program and EAS.

The study abroad program: We will partner Xiamen University and start a summer intensive program there. The first offerings are expected to begin in summer 2015.

The other project concerns the establishment of a teacher certification program in Chinese teaching in an MA program, in collaboration with College of Education. This will be a three-year program where students takes both courses in Chinese language and pedagogy and courses that

are required for teacher certification in Arizona. Students that complete this program will be ready for Chinese teaching positions in Arizona K-12 schools.