



# MANDARIN AB INITIO

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Mandarin ab initio is a language acquisition course for students having little or no experience with Chinese languages. Learning a language is more than simply acquiring vocabulary and understanding some grammatical rules.

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## Summary

The Mandarin ab initio course aims to develop the receptive, productive and interactive skills to a high level of communicative competence. While providing a solid framework in terms of grammar and vocabulary, the Mandarin ab initio course is organised into a number of cultural and thematic topics related to three themes: individual and society, leisure and work, urban and rural environment in which grammatical structures and vocabulary can be practised. The topics provide the students with opportunities to practise and explore the language as well as to develop intercultural understanding. Through the development of receptive, productive and interactive skills, students are enabled to communicate and interact appropriately in a defined range of everyday situations.

## Syllabus Overview

The Mandarin ab initio course:

- Focuses on developing critical character writing skills early and often. This is done using character sheets to develop correct stroke order. Work will be evaluated by a teacher.
- Utilises a number of technical and social solutions to maximise communicative speaking opportunities.
- Encourages students to be actively productive in their use of Mandarin.
- Utilises professionally recorded native speakers of Mandarin Chinese. The audio recordings are also available as a web-based resource, and for download, for continuing drill and practice.
- Provides students with opportunities for further understanding of both language and culture using authentic and contextual video.

This course is designed to integrate three main areas: language, texts and themes. These are interconnected and studied concurrently; they have intercultural understanding at their centre.

The language component of the course is designed so that receptive, productive and interactive skills may be developed in an integrated way. To that end, Mandarin ab initio students may be involved in many different forms of communication and a wide variety of texts, such as newspaper, telephone conversations, class discussions about a written text, informal conversations, conferences, drama, and e-mails. Furthermore, students are expected to develop accuracy and fluency in expression, and control over vocabulary, register, grammar, pronunciation and intonation.

The syllabus features three themes: individual and society, leisure and work, urban and rural environment subdivided into twenty topics that develop students' language competency and knowledge of different text types in a range of real situations. A range of texts are accessed in the course. Language skills are not developed in isolation but rather through the use of a wide range of contemporary materials such as advertisements, newspaper and magazine articles, catalogues, forms, instructions, and much more. Teachers and students collaborate to choose texts that address the students' needs and interests.

Intercultural understanding is at the centre of the course design. Students are expected to become familiar with aspects of the everyday life and culture of the world of the Mandarin language through the texts they study. The study of particular features of the culture is not an end in itself but a means by which the students learn about a different way of life, and consequently develop their language skills.

## Prerequisites

No prior study of Chinese is expected. The language ab initio courses are language learning courses for beginners, designed to be followed over two years by students who have no previous experience of learning the target language.

