Course Objectives

The primary objective of the Introductory Tibetan language course is for students to develop oral skills that will allow them to communicate with members of different Tibetan communities. This course focuses on modern standard Lhasa dialect, which is customarily used (at least as a lingua franca) by both Tibetans within Tibet and communities in exile. Reading and writing skills are also introduced, since students are required to include names and terms written in Tibetan script and/or scholarly transliteration (i.e. the Wylie system) in their papers and research projects. Although we expect dedicated students will be able to achieve intermediate communication skills, students wishing to interact substantively with Tibetan speakers during their independent study project (ISP) should nevertheless expect extensive collaboration with a translator.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, students should be able to:

- Converse in elementary Tibetan in the context of interacting with homestay families, community members and excursion participants
- Understand grammatical basics of the Tibetan language and the ways the language diverges from their native language
- Employ Tibetan in appropriate cultural contexts (for example, using the Honorific forms when speaking with elders)

Course Methods

Each week entails: ten hours of teaching (grammar and vocabulary sessions, drills, and sessions with conversation partners). While on excursion, formal language classes will be intermittent, but students will nevertheless be expected to use their previously gained language skills in the field and will be evaluated on these efforts.

*This syllabus is representative of a typical semester. Because courses develop and change over time to take advantage of unique learning opportunities, actual course content varies from semester to semester.

Copyright © SIT, a program of World Learning
Useful Texts


Course Description

This course exposes students to basic colloquial Tibetan vocabulary, grammar, and sentence structures, with an emphasis on enabling students to gain oral proficiency. This course aims to prepare students to put their language skills to practical use in Boudha and during the ISP research period. Through a combination of formal class and oral training with Tibetan conversation partners, students can expect to achieve the necessary skills to carry on a simple conversation in modern Tibetan.

The course is composed of two components: grammar study and language practice, which is split between drills and conversational practice with language partners.

- **Grammar class:** Native Tibetan speakers teach selected points of grammar as well as expressions useful in daily life. Students memorize vocabulary lists in addition to submitting written homework (one hour/five days a week).
- **Drills:** Students verbally apply the skills learned in grammar classes (one hour/five days a week).
- **Language Partners:** Students work in pairs with conversation partners, native Tibetan speakers, to practice what has been learned in grammar classes (half an hour). Students and conversation partners also engage in general conversation (half an hour; total: one hour/two days a week).

Course Requirements and Evaluation

1. Active class participation (25%)
2. Homework assignments (25%)
3. Quizzes (25%)
4. Final exam (25%)

Estimated ACTFL oral proficiency interviews are conducted at the end of the semester to provide a measurement of students’ overall linguistic progress. Both the course grade and the ACTFL score are reported on the SIT transcript.

Policies

Students’ attendance at all language classes is required. Every unjustified missed class reduces the student’s final grade since a zero is factored in for each missed quiz. Students are expected to participate fully in and be prepared for all sessions. Students are asked to refer to the SIT Study Abroad Handbook for policies on academic integrity, ethics, and student behavior.

*This syllabus is representative of a typical semester. Because courses develop and change over time to take advantage of unique learning opportunities, actual course content varies from semester to semester.*

Copyright © SIT, a program of World Learning