

LANGUAGE & COGNITION ACROSS THE LIFESPAN

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This lecture will draw from the three areas in the title of the Summer School: LANGUAGE, COGNITION, & NEUROSCIENCE, with orientation to an East Asian perspective. For instance, special attention will be given to lexical tones & sinograms. Since it is the first lecture in the Summer School, Part I will provide a basic introduction to the central concepts in all three areas, including brief historical backgrounds for these concepts. Hopefully, this part will give all the students of the Summer School some common ground for participating in later activities.

Part II will discuss the development of cognition and language across the lifespan, beginning with fetal life. With the rapid growth of the brain after birth, supporting an ever increasing variety of perceptual, cognitive, and motor activities, most of language(s) is acquired before the body undergoes major changes associated with puberty. Neuroanatomical decline starts after the reproductive years, & accelerates typically after 60 years of age. As the body gradually atrophies, especially the brain, many cognitive and linguistic functions may become compromised by age-related pathologies. I will be concerned with both normal & abnormal developments in this two part overview.