

Teo-Chew

Spoken in: China, Malaysia, Singapore, Cambodia, Vietnam, Thailand, and Indonesia.

Region: in China: eastern Guangdong province including Chaozhou, Shantou, Jieyang, Chaoyang, Puning, Chao'an, Raoping, Huilai, and Shanwei.

Total speakers: About 10 million in Chaoshanan and approximately 2-5 million speakers overseas.

Genetic Classification: Sino-Tibetan Chinese Min Min-nan Teochew

The Teochew is a Chinese language and dialect of Minnan spoken in the Chaoshan region of eastern Guangdong. No native Teo-Chew script has ever been successfully devised and popularised to date, and Mandarin characters have been used to represent the written Teo-Chew language. The rebus method has been used to represent Teo-Chew sounds.

Modern Teochew evolved from the more archaic Min-Nan. Between the 9th and the 15th century, a group of Min people migrated south from Fujian to the coastal region of eastern Guangdong known as Chaoshan. This migration was most likely due in part to over-population in Fujian.

Due to geographical isolation from Fujian and influences from Cantonese and the later Hakka, Teochew evolved into a separate language.

Currently SSWAHS Health Care Interpreter Service employs 2 FTE Teochew interpreters and 2 sessional interpreters.