

B.A. (Honours) in Contemporary English Studies

Course Title	: Introduction to Language
Course Code	: ENG2101
Recommended Study Year	: 2 nd Year
No. of Credits/Term	: 3
Mode of Tuition	: Lecture-tutorial mode
Class Contact Hours	: 2-hour lecture per week 1-hour tutorial per week
Category	: Required Course
Prerequisite(s)	: Nil
Co-requisite(s)	: Nil
Exclusion(s)	: Nil
Exemption Requirement(s)	: Nil

Brief Course Description

This course introduces students to the study of language. It covers such basic questions as the nature of human language, the importance of language in society, the major perspectives for studying language, the acquisition and use of language, as well as language variation and language change. Students are not only given an exposure to the basic concepts and theories, but they are also encouraged to examine various kinds of language data as well as use their own experience and knowledge as learners and users of language in Hong Kong to deepen their understanding of language.

Aims

The course aims to enable students to:

1. To raise consciousness about the importance of language in human society;
2. To encourage an open mind and inquisitive attitude towards language;
3. To get acquainted with a variety of perspectives in looking at language;
4. To foster appreciation of the richness and complexity of language and language use;
5. To encourage reflection on language use and language learning situations;
6. To introduce basic concepts in linguistics as a preparation for later courses.

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:

1. Demonstrate awareness of major theories concerning the origins and functions of human language;
2. Identify the nature and unique features of human language in relation to other species;
3. Display an understanding of the development in the modes of speech and writing in human language;
4. Describe the major stages in the historical development of languages, with a focus on the English language;
5. Identify formal aspects of the English language and the semiotic potential of languages;
6. Distinguish features related to social and cultural variation across languages.

Indicative Contents

1. Language and non-language; criteria for distinguishing; language and communication; functions of language;
2. Writing and speech; origins of language; history of writing; technological developments;
3. Levels of language: grammar (syntax and morphology), lexis, semantics, pragmatics, discourse, phonetics and phonology;
4. Language variety and change: historical, geographical, social; language families; language and dialect;
5. Language and the mind; competence and performance; learning and acquiring languages.

Teaching Method

The course adopts an interactive approach to understanding concepts and topics related to understanding of language. Classes will be conducted in Lecture and Tutorial modes.

Tutorials

Students will be quizzed on the topics learnt and will also be asked to conduct more extensive discussions in smaller groups during tutorials in order to raise pertinent questions and identify important issues as well as attempt to provide answers about the topics they are trying to learn. They will be given assignments in preparation of the tutorial discussions before they come to class. They may be asked to submit a group or individual write-up on the tutorial discussions as is appropriate.

Term Paper

Students will be asked to write a term paper based on either desk or field research or both. They can form teams of 4-5 students in carrying out the research if warranted by the topic. Students should submit a paper proposal outlining the topic area, the research questions and an outline of content for formal approval.

Measurement of Learning Outcomes

The progress of learning will be measured through class discussions, exercises, presentations, a mid-term test, a term paper, and a final test.

No.	Assessment Method	Learning Outcome
1.	Attendance and Participation	1 – 6
2.	Mid-term Test	1,2,3,4
3.	Oral Presentation	1 – 6 (Any one)
4.	Final Term Paper	1 – 6 (Any one)
5.	Final Test	1 – 6

Assessments

No.	Assessment Method	Percentage
1.	Attendance and Participation	10%
2.	Mid-term Test	20%
3.	Oral Presentation	10%
4.	Final Term Paper	20%
5.	Final Test	40%

Required Readings

Yule, G. (2006). *The Study of Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Dawson, & Phelan, M. (2016). *Language files: Materials for an Introduction to Language and Linguistics* (Twelfth edition.). The Ohio State University Press.

Supplementary Readings

Brown, S. and S. Attardo (2005). *Understanding Language Structure, Interaction and Variation* (2nd edition) University of Michigan Press
Aitchison, J. (2000). *The Seeds of Speech*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
Ashby, M. & Maidment, J. (2005). *Introducing Phonetic Science*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Clark, E. (2016). *First language acquisition* (3rd ed). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Coulmas, F. (2003). *Writing Systems*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
Crystal, D. (2003). *The Cambridge Encyclopaedia of the English language*. Cambridge: : Cambridge University Press.
Jaszczolt, K. M. (2002). *Semantics and Pragmatics: Meaning in Language and discourse*. London: Longman.
Denison, D., and Hogg, Richard. (2006). *A history of the English language*. Cambridge: CUP.
Mey, J. L. (2001). *Pragmatics: An introduction*. Oxford: Blackwell. Second edition.
O'Grady, W., J. Archibald, M. Aronoff and J. Rees-Miller (2005). *Contemporary Linguistics* Bedford/St. Martin's Press.
Payne, T. (2006). *Exploring Language Structure* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Van Gelderen, Elly. (2006). *A history of the English language*. Amsterdam: Benjamins.
Zimmermann, T. and Sternefeld, W. (2013). *Introduction to Semantics: An Essential Guide to the Composition of Meaning*. De Gruyter.

There will be lecture notes and directed readings from the media and internet sources plus a selection of articles and reviews that are appropriate to the level of the course which will be made available on the university intranet.

Important Notes:

- (1) Students are expected to spend a total of 9 hours (i.e. 3 hours of class contact and 6 hours of personal study) per week to achieve the course learning outcomes.
- (2) Students shall be aware of the University regulations about dishonest practice in course work, tests and examinations, and the possible consequences as stipulated in the Regulations Governing University Examinations. In particular, plagiarism, being a kind of dishonest practice, is “the presentation of another person’s work without proper acknowledgement of the source, including exact phrases, or summarised ideas, or even footnotes/citations, whether protected by copyright or not, as the student’s own work”. Students are required to strictly follow university regulations governing academic integrity and honesty.
- (3) Students are required to submit writing assignment(s) using Turnitin.
- (4) To enhance students’ understanding of plagiarism, a mini-course “Online Tutorial on Plagiarism Awareness” is available on <https://pla.ln.edu.hk/>.