

B.A. (Honours) in Contemporary English Studies

Course Title	: Language as Play
Course Code	: ENG3372
Recommended Study Year	: 3 rd or 4 th 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	: Discipline Elective (Contemporary Language Strand)
Prerequisite(s)	: Nil
Co-requisite(s)	: Nil
Exclusion(s)	: Nil
Exemption Requirement(s)	: Nil

Brief Course Description

This course is derived from the insight that language play (that is, the use of language for no obvious reason apart from enjoyment) is in fact a very pervasive and purposeful human activity, and that it is a highly motivating factor in language learning and use. More than this, it recognizes language users do not only react to language but also contribute to it.

Aims

This course aims to introduce students to a dimension of language that rarely figures in English Studies curricula yet whose importance is now coming to be recognised. It will familiarise students with the role of language play in the cultural life of speakers of English, (re-)acquaint them with the various linguistic mechanisms that underpin language play (ambiguity, rhyme, the writing system), and expose them to various endeavours where language play is a factor. The course also has the general aim of providing learners with an opportunity to become creative users of English and enhance their language proficiency by undertaking activities in motivating circumstances.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course students will

1. be aware of the importance of play in language use and learning;
2. be aware of the cultural dimension of language play;
3. be able to be more creative with language;
4. have revised their knowledge of the major linguistic systems of English (grammatical, semantic, lexical, pragmatic, phonological, graphological) and be able to apply this to the analysis of language play.

Indicative Contents

1. The role of language play in language use and learning; the 'ludic' function of language
2. Linguistic factors:
 - ambiguity (phonological, grammatical, semantic, lexical, pragmatic)
 - rhyme
 - the writing system of English
3. The role of language play in areas such as
 - L1 acquisition
 - social interaction
 - the internet
 - newspaper headlines
 - advertising
 - joke-telling
 - cryptology
 - comedy
 - light verse: limericks; the work of Ogden Nash, Tom Lehrer, Lewis Carroll, Edward Lear
 - rap lyrics
 - word (letter) games, e.g. crosswords, scrabble
4. Products of language play (indicative):
 - puns, spoonerisms, tongue-twisters, malapropisms, riddles, palindromes, anagrams, pangrams, acrostics, misprints, etc.

Teaching Method

The approach will be very much student-centred. Only short introductions to topics and the related metalanguage will be teacher-centred. Students will be involved in a wide range of activities such as the playing and analysis of language games or the analysis and creation of advertisements involving language play.

Measurement of Learning Outcomes

Students will be assessed via

1. tests of the concepts introduced on the course (outcomes 1, 2 and 4 above);
2. presentations of their analysis of various products of language play (outcome 4);
3. a portfolio of their own creative language play (outcome 3).

Assessment

100% continuous assessment

Recommended Readings

- Crystal, David, *Language Play*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1998.
Crystal, David. (various editions), *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Language* (ch. 11), Cambridge: CUP.
Cook, Guy, *Language Play, Language Learning*, Oxford: OUP, 2000.
Ross, A., *The Language of Humour*, London: Routledge, 1998.

Source Material (indicative)

- Augarde, Tony, *The Oxford Guide to Word Games*. Oxford: OUP, 1984.
Baring-Gould, W.S., *The Lure of the Limerick*, London: Granada, 1974.
Bryson, Bill, *The Mother Tongue*, New York: Avon Books, 1990.
Lederer, Richard, *Anguished English*: Robson Books, 1987.
Lederer, Richard, *Crazy English*, New York: Simon & Schuster, 1989.
Lederer, Richard, *The Miracle of Language*, New York: Simon & Schuster, 1991.
Newby, Peter, *The Mammoth Book of Word Games*, London: Robinson Publishing, 1995.
Singh, Simon, *The Code Book*, New York: Random House, 1999.

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/>.