

The Hong Kong Polytechnic University

Subject Description Form

Subject Code	CBS1A01V
Subject Title	Fun with Language
Credit Value	3
Level	1
Pre-requisite / Co-requisite/ Exclusion	None (Students from CBS/ENGL are excluded from taking this subject)
Objectives	<p>Whatever else people do when they come together, they talk. We live in a world of language. The possession of language distinguishes humans from other animals. To understand our humanity, one must understand the nature of language that makes us human.</p> <p>This introductory subject provides an overview of human languages and their interesting aspects. Principles pertaining to language use will also be introduced by making use of everyday examples in the local context. The purposes are to raise consciousness about language use and to remind everyone of the ways to have fun with language. This subject is suitable for those who are interested in language and do not have any prior knowledge.</p>
Intended Learning Outcomes	<p>Upon completion of the subject, students will be able to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> make intelligent and informed judgments concerning aspects of language; communicate effectively in speech and writing about linguistic issues; develop the ability to discuss varieties of language without prejudice and appreciate the scientific aim of describing and understanding language; identify and propose preliminary solutions to language problems in Chinese (Cantonese and Putonghua) and English, as and where appropriate, in a scientific manner; have a sufficiently deep understanding of linguistics to apply it, where desirable, to other areas of study or to employment.
Subject Synopsis/ Indicative Syllabus	<p><u>Chatterbox: an Introduction</u> What is Language? Language Universals. Animal Communication. Innate Language Capacity in Humans.</p> <p><u>The Tower of Babel: Language in Society</u> Languages of the World. Languages and dialects. Language contact. Language and social class. Language and culture.</p> <p><u>The Sounds of Silence</u> Spelling and Speech. Phonetics and Phonology.</p> <p><u>Building Blocks: patterns of Sentences</u></p>

	<p>Creativity of Sentence Formation. Basis of Grammaticality.</p> <p><u>How to Do Things with Words</u> Word and Sentence Meanings. Conversational Conventions. Speech Acts.</p> <p><u>Language Acquisition</u> First and Second Language acquisition and Learning.</p>																																							
<p>Teaching/Learning Methodology</p>	<p>Besides face-to-face lectures, discussions via Blackboard and web-based study materials will be used. Assignments are closely related to the use of language in the local context and thus students are strongly encouraged to apply the concepts and methodologies they learn to solve practical real-world linguistic problems.</p>																																							
<p>Assessment Methods in Alignment with Intended Learning Outcomes</p>	<table border="1" data-bbox="517 712 1455 1126"> <thead> <tr> <th rowspan="2">Specific assessment methods/tasks</th> <th rowspan="2">% weighting</th> <th colspan="6">Intended subject learning outcomes to be assessed</th> </tr> <tr> <th>a</th> <th>b</th> <th>c</th> <th>d</th> <th>e</th> <th></th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1. exercises & small assignments</td> <td>40%</td> <td>✓</td> <td></td> <td>✓</td> <td></td> <td>✓</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>2. project/essay</td> <td>60%</td> <td>✓</td> <td>✓</td> <td>✓</td> <td>✓</td> <td>✓</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total</td> <td>100 %</td> <td colspan="6"></td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>This subject intends to provide an overview of human languages and their interesting aspects. Topics covered vary from origin of language, language types, forms and varieties, language evolution and changes, functions of language, relationship between language and society, language processing and language acquisition etc. It would be difficult to evaluate student's learning outcome with one or two single assignment(s) in term of term papers. Therefore, a number of exercises and small assignments, each with different focus and covering specific topics, will be given to students to help them grasp the basic concepts and to develop their abilities in handling language issues.</p> <p>Towards the end of the study period, students will be required to conduct a project on resolving a problem in language or to produce an essay containing in-depth discussion of a linguistic phenomenon. This final piece of work would require students to make use of the knowledge learnt in this subject and to demonstrate that they have achieved the intended learning outcomes.</p>		Specific assessment methods/tasks	% weighting	Intended subject learning outcomes to be assessed						a	b	c	d	e		1. exercises & small assignments	40%	✓		✓		✓		2. project/essay	60%	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		Total	100 %						
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**Reading List and
References**

Essential Reading:

Fromkin, Victoria, Robert Rodman, and Nina Hyams. 2010. *An Introduction to Language (9th edition)*. Boston, Heinle.

Selected Reference List:

Hu Zhuanglin, LI Yanfu. 1992. *Linguistics: A Course Book*. Peking University press.

Jackendoff, Ray. 1994. *Patterns in the Mind: Language and Human Nature*. New York: Basic Books.

Pinker, Steven. 1995. *The Language Instinct: How the Mind Creates Language*. New York: HarperPerennial.

The sci.lang FAQ (<http://www.zompist.com/langfaq.html>)

胡裕樹主編。1992。《現代漢語》。香港：三聯書店。

袁家樞等譯。1980。《語言論》。北京：商務印書館。

李新魁。1988。《香港方言與普通話》。香港：中華書局。