The Hong Kong Polytechnic University

Subject Description Form

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject Code</th>
<th>CBS1A01P</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subject Title</td>
<td>Fun with Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credit Value</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-requisite / Co-requisite / Exclusion</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Students from CBS/ENGL are excluded from taking this subject)</td>
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Objectives

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.

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.

Intended Learning Outcomes

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

a) make intelligent and informed judgments concerning aspects of language;
b) communicate effectively in speech and writing about linguistic issues;
c) develop the ability to discuss varieties of language without prejudice and appreciate the scientific aim of describing and understanding language;
d) identify and propose preliminary solutions to language problems in Chinese (Cantonese and Putonghua) and English, as and where appropriate, in a scientific manner;
e) have a sufficiently deep understanding of linguistics to apply it, where desirable, to other areas of study or to employment.

Subject Synopsis / Indicative Syllabus

Chatterbox: an Introduction

The Tower of Babel: Language in Society

ABCs of Language
Spelling and Speech. Regularities and Irregularities of Sound Change. Cantopop Lyrics and Cantonese pronunciations.

Wild World of Words
Word Building. Colloquial and “trendy” Words in Hong Kong Cantonese. Loan Words in Chinese.

Building Blocks: patterns of Sentences

How to Do Things with Words

The Linguistic Mind at Work: Language Processing

Teaching/Learning Methodology
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.

Assessment Methods in Alignment with Intended Learning Outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Specific assessment methods/tasks</th>
<th>% weighting</th>
<th>Intended subject learning outcomes to be assessed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a</td>
<td>b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. exercises &amp; small assignments</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. project/essay</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100 %</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
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</table>

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.

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.
### Student Study Effort Expected

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class contact:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>▪ Lectures: 2 x 13</td>
<td>26 Hrs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Tutorials: 1 x 13</td>
<td>13 Hrs.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Other student study effort:

| assignments                                         | 40 Hrs.  |
| reading                                             | 30 Hrs.  |

Total student study effort                               109 Hrs.

### Reading List and References

**Essential Reading:**


**Selected Reference List:**


The sci.lang FAQ ([http://www.zompist.com/langfaq.html](http://www.zompist.com/langfaq.html))

胡裕樹主編。1992。《現代漢語》。香港:三聯書店。

袁家樺等譯。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。