

LT5417: LANGUAGE UNIVERSALS AND LINGUISTIC TYPOLOGY

Effective Term

Semester B 2024/25

Part I Course Overview

Course Title

Language Universals and Linguistic Typology

Subject Code

LT - Linguistics and Translation

Course Number

5417

Academic Unit

Linguistics and Translation (LT)

College/School

College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences (CH)

Course Duration

One Semester

Credit Units

3

Level

P5, P6 - Postgraduate Degree

Medium of Instruction

English

Medium of Assessment

English

Prerequisites

Nil

Precursors

Nil

Equivalent Courses

CTL5417 Language Universals and Linguistic Typology

Exclusive Courses

Nil

Part II Course Details

Abstract

This course aims at introducing to typology and language universals, the domain of linguistics which investigates language properties that cannot be discovered by observing a single language alone but rather by conducting a general survey of languages in the world. Students will be enabled to classify the different formal categories and structures found in the world's languages, to discover markedness and taxonomic relationships between these categories and structures.

Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs)

CILOs		Weighting (if DEC-A1 app.)		DEC-A2	DEC-A3
1	Identify the concepts that have found expression in the grammars of world's languages and classify the formal means of world's languages to express a given concept by · discovering various phonological and morphological language types and universals, · classifying nominal categories, · evaluating case and agreement systems, · cataloging tense, aspect and modality types;		x	x	x
2	Analyze the markedness and hierarchical relationships between the various forms of expression (of a given concept) by · analyzing implicational word order universals, · understanding grammatical hierarchies, · scrutinizing criteria for markedness;		x	x	x
3	Apply the understanding of typology and universals to the description of particular languages by · planning creative steps of grammatical description using typological knowledge.		x	x	x

A1: Attitude

Develop an attitude of discovery/innovation/creativity, as demonstrated by students possessing a strong sense of curiosity, asking questions actively, challenging assumptions or engaging in inquiry together with teachers.

A2: Ability

Develop the ability/skill needed to discover/innovate/create, as demonstrated by students possessing critical thinking skills to assess ideas, acquiring research skills, synthesizing knowledge across disciplines or applying academic knowledge to real-life problems.

A3: Accomplishments

Demonstrate accomplishment of discovery/innovation/creativity through producing /constructing creative works/new artefacts, effective solutions to real-life problems or new processes.

Learning and Teaching Activities (LTAs)

LTAs		Brief Description	CILO No.	Hours/week (if applicable)
1	Lecture and Class Activity	Student will engage in lectures elaborating on the theoretical foundations of all learning outcomes, together with basic ideas about languages. Students will participate in class activities to familiarise themselves with the theoretical concepts.	1, 2, 3	3 hours
2	Individual Reading	Students will read lecture (and tutorial notes) and additional literature proposed by the lecturer.	1, 2, 3	

Assessment Tasks / Activities (ATs)

ATs		CILO No.	Weighting (%)	Remarks (e.g. Parameter for GenAI use)
1	Assignment: students have two weeks time to write a report on a linguistic problem	1	30	
2	Research paper: students will work on linguistic patterns in more than 2 languages of their choice	2	40	
3	Final test: student will take part in a final exam to consolidate the concepts discussed in lectures	3	30	

Continuous Assessment (%)

100

Assessment Rubrics (AR)**Assessment Task**

1. Final test (for students admitted before Semester A 2022/23 and in Semester A 2024/25 & thereafter)

Criterion

Understanding of the cognitive approach to language, and the ability to analyse new empirical data

Excellent

(A+, A, A-) Demonstrates accurate understanding of key concepts discussed across lectures

Good

(B+, B, B-) Demonstrates accurate understanding of key concepts discussed in most lectures

Fair

(C+, C, C-) Demonstrates accurate understanding of key concepts discussed in more than half of the lectures

Marginal

(D) Demonstrates accurate understanding of key concepts discussed only in some lectures

Failure

(F) Failure to demonstrate accurate understanding of key concepts discussed in most lectures

Assessment Task

2. Assignments (for students admitted before Semester A 2022/23 and in Semester A 2024/25 & thereafter)

Criterion

The ability to understand the theoretical debate and evaluate relevant evidence in the literature to support arguments, reflected in the essays

Excellent

(A+, A, A-) The essays reflect the student's outstanding ability in forming arguments supported by reliable and relevant evidence in the literature

Good

(B+, B, B-) The essays reflect the student's good ability in this area in general, except for a few minor weaknesses

Fair

(C+, C, C-) The essays have major weaknesses but are satisfactory in general

Marginal

(D) The student's ability in this area is unsatisfactory or poor with many obvious weaknesses and gaps

Failure

(F) The essays reflect little learning progress in this course and poor ability in this area

Assessment Task

3. Research Paper (for students admitted before Semester A 2022/23 and in Semester A 2024/25 & thereafter)

Criterion

Literature coverage, data analysis skills, and academic writing qualities

Excellent

(A+, A, A-) The content coverage, research skills, and academic writing qualities are all excellent

Good

(B+, B, B-) The content coverage, research skills, and academic writing qualities are generally satisfactory except for a few minor weaknesses

Fair

(C+, C, C-) The content coverage, research skills, and academic writing qualities have major weaknesses

Marginal

(D) The content coverage, research skills, and academic writing qualities are unsatisfactory with many weaknesses and gaps

Failure

(F) The paper shows little evidence of learning in this course, or does not reflect necessary skills in research and academic writing

Assessment Task

1. Final test (for students admitted from Semester A 2022/23 to Summer Term 2024)

Criterion

Understanding of the cognitive approach to language, and the ability to analyse new empirical data

Excellent

(A+, A, A-) Demonstrates accurate understanding of key concepts discussed across lectures

Good

(B+, B) Demonstrates accurate understanding of key concepts discussed in most lectures

Marginal

(B-, C+, C) Demonstrates accurate understanding of key concepts discussed only in some lectures

Failure

(F) Failure to demonstrate accurate understanding of key concepts discussed in lectures

Assessment Task

2. Assignments (for students admitted from Semester A 2022/23 to Summer Term 2024)

Criterion

The ability to understand the theoretical debate and evaluate relevant evidence in the literature to support arguments, reflected in the essays

Excellent

(A+, A, A-) The essays reflect the student's outstanding ability in forming arguments supported by reliable and relevant evidence in the literature

Good

(B+, B) The essays reflect the student's good ability in this area in general, except for a few weaknesses

Marginal

(B-, C+, C) The student's ability in this area is unsatisfactory or poor with many obvious weaknesses and gaps

Failure

(F) The essays reflect little learning progress in this course and poor ability in this area

Assessment Task

3. Research Paper (for students admitted from Semester A 2022/23 to Summer Term 2024)

Criterion

Literature coverage, data analysis skills, and academic writing qualities

Excellent

(A+, A, A-) The content coverage, research skills, and academic writing qualities are all excellent

Good

(B+, B) The content coverage, research skills, and academic writing qualities are generally satisfactory except for a few weaknesses

Marginal

(B-, C+, C) The content coverage, research skills, and academic writing qualities are unsatisfactory with many weaknesses and gaps

Failure

(F) The paper shows little evidence of learning in this course, or does not reflect necessary skills in research and academic writing

Part III Other Information

Keyword Syllabus

Approaches to Linguistic Typology and Universals: Linguistic classification, linguistic types, implicational universals, the sampling problem;

Grammatical Description: Typology-informed grammar of individual languages

Universal Grammar: contrasts with Linguistic Typology

Reading List**Compulsory Readings**

Title	
1	Croft, William (2004). Typology and universals. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2nd edition.
2	Whaley, Lindsay J. (1997). Introduction to typology: The unity and diversity of language. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
3	Roberts, Ian. (2016) The Oxford Handbook of Universal Grammar. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
4	Additional readings may be announced during the first class.

Additional Readings

Title	
1	Aikhenvald, Alexandra Y. (2000). Classifiers: A typology of noun categorization devices. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
2	Bybee, Joan, Revere Perkins and William Pagliuca (1994). The evolution of grammar: Tense, Aspect, and Modality in the Languages of the World. Chicago: The University of Chicago.
3	Comrie, Bernard. (1989). Language Universals and Linguistic Typology (Second Edition). Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
4	Matthew Dryer, David Gil and Bernard Comrie (2005). World atlas of linguistic structures. Oxford: Oxford University Press.