

City University of Hong Kong
Course Syllabus

offered by Department of Linguistics and Translation
with effect from Semester A 2019/20

Part I Course Overview

Course Title: Mind, Brain and Language: How Are Human Beings Special?

Course Code: GE1132

Course Duration: One Semester

Credit Units: 3

Level: B1

1 Arts and Humanities

Proposed Area:
(for GE courses only)

2 Study of Societies, Social and Business Organisations

Science and Technology

Medium of Instruction: English

Medium of Assessment: Nil

Prerequisites:
(Course Code and Title) Nil

Precursors:
(Course Code and Title) Nil

Equivalent Courses:
(Course Code and Title) generally none

Exclusive Courses:
(Course Code and Title) Nil

Part II Course Details

1. Abstract

(A 150-word description about the course)

Abstract

The course looks at the relation between language and the human mind/brain. In particular, it studies properties of natural language as parts of a self-contained abstract system and how it is related to the physical human brain as well as to certain aspects of human cognition such as rationality, perceptual and computation capacity. It considers the extent to which individual cognition bears on cultural values of a community and how language expresses those values. Upon completion of the course, the students would understand themselves and the community they are a part of better and be able to interact with each other in a meaningful way.

Apart from selected readings from textbooks and articles, the students would have a chance to work together in small groups on questionnaires polling opinions of human subjects about specific problems. To ensure individual merits, quizzes and written assignments will be given.

Course Aims

This course aims to expose the students to different areas of human cognition connected with rationality, perception, information processing, computation and language. Issues of particular interest of the course are (i) how language is related to the way we approach problems and make choices, (ii) how language is affected by our perception of the world and the consequences for the way we respond to it and (iii) what properties of natural language, as parts of a self-contained abstract system, are related to the physical brain, and (iv) how different cultural values are reflected in language.

The course is interdisciplinary in that it bears on the biological, psychological, linguistic and social aspects of the human life. Understanding these various issues helps us see who we are as human beings and how we interact with each other as a community.

2. Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs)

(CILOs state what the student is expected to be able to do at the end of the course according to a given standard of performance.)

No.	CILOs [#]	Weighting* (if applicable)	Discovery-enriched curriculum related learning outcomes (please tick ✓ where appropriate)		
			A1	A2	A3
1.	Evaluate the role language plays in our daily life in approaching problems, possible solutions and the decision-making process.		✓	✓	
2.	Discuss how cognitive constraints limit our perception of the world and shape our cultural values as well as how to get around the limitations.		✓	✓	
3.	Make use of the methodology for conducting polling opinions of human subjects.			✓	✓
4.	Describe the cross-cultural similarities and differences, and interact with people in a meaningful way.			✓	✓
		100%			

* If weighting is assigned to CILOs, they should add up to 100%.

[#] Please specify the alignment of CILOs to the Gateway Education Programme Intended Learning outcomes (PILOs) in Section A of Annex.

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 self-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.

3. Teaching and Learning Activities (TLAs)

(TLAs designed to facilitate students' achievement of the CILOs.)

TLA	Brief Description	CILO No.						Hours/week (if applicable)
		1	2	3	4			
1	Readings: selected readings from textbooks and articles.	✓	✓		✓			
2	Lectures: introducing problems and issues, analysis of possible solutions with particular examples, drawing general conclusions.	✓	✓		✓			2 hours
3	Tutorials: further elaborations of issues raised in the lectures, practicing the analysis in lectures to new data and problems.	✓	✓		✓			1 hour
4	Written assignments: analysis and discussion of problems and issues in additional readings.	✓	✓		✓			
5	Exercises: Practice and apply concepts discussed in the lectures.	✓	✓	✓	✓			
6								

4. Assessment Tasks/Activities (ATs)

(ATs are designed to assess how well the students achieve the CILOs.)

Assessment Tasks/Activities	CILO No.						Weighting*	Remarks
	1	2	3	4				
Continuous Assessment: 70%								
10 in-class exercises in the tutorials , 1.5% each.	✓	✓	✓	✓			15%	The exercises are to encourage class participation and verifying students' understanding and attention to classes.
1 written assignment (students summarize and express their individual opinions about additional readings)	✓	✓		✓			25%	
1 in-class midterm comprehensive quizz (90 minutes) 30%	✓	✓		✓			30%	
Examination: 30% (duration: 90 minutes, if applicable)								
* The weightings should add up to 100%.							100%	

5. Assessment Rubrics

(Grading of student achievements is based on student performance in assessment tasks/activities with the following rubrics.)

Assessment Task	Criterion	Excellent (A+, A, A-)	Good (B+, B, B-)	Fair (C+, C, C-)	Marginal (D)	Failure (F)
1. In-class exercises	Demonstrate the ability to critically discuss and analyse fundamental issues in language, language use, inter-cultural communication as well as the formal and cultural differences between languages.	Demonstrate excellent coherent group work in collecting data, critically discussing and analysing fundamental issues in language, language use, intercultural communication as well as the formal and cultural differences between languages.	Demonstrate good coherent group work in collecting data, critically discussing and analysing fundamental issues in language, language use, intercultural communication as well as the formal and cultural differences between languages.	Demonstrate adequate group work in collecting data, critically discussing and analysing some fundamental issues in language, language use, intercultural communication as well as the formal and cultural differences between languages.	Show little coherent group work in collecting data, inadequate discussion and analysis of fundamental issues in language, language use, intercultural communication as well as the formal and cultural differences between languages.	Show virtually no coherent group work in collecting data, inadequate discussion and analysis of fundamental issues in language, language use, intercultural communication as well as the formal and cultural differences between languages.
2. Written assignments	Demonstrate the ability to critically discuss and analyse fundamental issues in language, language use, inter-cultural communication as well as the formal and cultural differences between languages.	Demonstrate excellent ability to critically discuss and analyse fundamental issues in language, language use, intercultural communication as well as the formal and cultural differences between languages.	Demonstrate good ability to critically discuss and analyse fundamental issues in language, language use, intercultural communication as well as the formal and cultural differences between languages.	Demonstrate adequate ability to discuss and analyse fundamental issues in language, language use, intercultural communication as well as the formal and cultural differences between languages.	Show little ability to discuss and analyse fundamental issues in language, language use, intercultural communication as well as the formal and cultural differences between languages.	Show virtually no ability to discuss and analyse fundamental issues in language, language use, intercultural communication as well as the formal and cultural differences between languages.

3. In-class midterm quiz	Demonstrate understanding of basic concepts in the study of language discussed in class, discussing briefly some fundamental issues in language use and its relation to some other aspects of cognition such as perception as well as to culture.	Demonstrate excellent understanding of basic concepts in the study of language discussed in class, discussing briefly some fundamental issues in language use and its relation to some other aspects of cognition such as perception as well as to culture.	Demonstrate good understanding of basic concepts in the study of language discussed in class, discussing briefly some fundamental issues in language use and its relation to some other aspects of cognition such as perception as well as to culture.	Demonstrate adequate understanding of basic concepts in the study of language discussed in class, discussing briefly some fundamental issues in language use and its relation to some other aspects of cognition such as perception as well as to culture.	Show little understanding of basic concepts in the study of language discussed in class, discussing briefly some fundamental issues in language use and its relation to some other aspects of cognition such as perception as well as to culture.	Show virtually no understanding of basic concepts in the study of language discussed in class, discussing briefly some fundamental issues in language use and its relation to some other aspects of cognition such as perception as well as to culture.
4. Examination	Demonstrate understanding of the fundamental issues in intercultural communication, the formal and cultural differences between languages, and basic concepts involved in analysing our language.	Demonstrate excellent understanding of the fundamental issues in intercultural communication, the formal and cultural differences between languages.	Demonstrate good understanding of the fundamental issues in intercultural communication, the formal and cultural differences between languages.	Demonstrate adequate understanding of the fundamental issues in intercultural communication, the formal and cultural differences between languages.	Show little understanding of the fundamental issues in intercultural communication, the formal and cultural differences between languages.	Show virtually no understanding of the fundamental issues in intercultural communication, the formal and cultural differences between languages.

Part III Other Information (more details can be provided separately in the teaching plan)

1. Keyword Syllabus

(An indication of the key topics of the course.)

brain, cognition, computation, cultural values, decision-making, natural language, perception, problem-solving, rationality.

2. Reading List

2.1 Compulsory Readings

(Compulsory readings can include books, book chapters, or journal/magazine articles. There are also collections of e-books, e-journals available from the CityU Library.)

1.	Bloom, Paul and Frank Keil. 2001. Thinking through language. <i>Mind & Language</i> 16, 351-367.
2.	Jackendoff, Ray. 1996. How language helps us think. <i>Pragmatics & Cognition</i> , Vol. 4(1), pp. 1-34.
3.	Lund, Nick. 2003. <i>Language and thought</i> . Routledge.

2.2 Additional Readings

(Additional references for students to learn to expand their knowledge about the subject.)

1.	Boroditsky, L. 2001. Does language shape thought? Mandarin and English speakers' conception of time. <i>Cognitive psychology</i> 43, 1-22.
2.	Myers, David. 2011. <i>Psychology</i> , 10th edition, Worth Publishers.
3.	Pinker, Stephen. 1995. <i>The language instinct</i> . HarperCollins.
4.	Online Resources: Video clips from academic institutions.

Possible Instructors of the Proposed Course:

(Please identify one or more staff members who can teach the course.)

Department	Name of Staff	Telephone	Email
LT	Paul LAW	3442 6426	paul.law
LT	HUANG Hsuwen	3442 2579	hwhuang

A. Please specify the Gateway Education Programme Intended Learning Outcomes (PILOs) that the course is aligned to and relate them to the CILOs stated in Part II, Section 2 of this form:

GE PILO	Please indicate which CILO(s) is/are related to this PILO, if any (can be more than one CILOs in each PILO)
PILO 1: Demonstrate the capacity for self-directed learning	CILO 1, 2, 4 This can be achieved in the written assignments, in which the students do additional readings and express their opinions about them. Self-directed learning is also effected by the polling of subjects by means of questionnaires.
PILO 2: Explain the basic methodologies and techniques of inquiry of the arts and humanities, social sciences, business, and science and technology	CILO 1, 3, 4 The basic methodologies and techniques learned in the lectures and tutorials are applied to the written assignments and the surveys in the forms of questionnaires.
PILO 3: Demonstrate critical thinking skills	CILO 1, 2, 4 This is effected through the students' expressing their opinions about the additional readings and the interpretation of the results from the questionnaires.
PILO 4: Interpret information and numerical data	CILO 1, 3, 4 This is effected in the reports of the results of the polls.
PILO 5: Produce structured, well-organised and fluent text	CILO 1,2, 3, 4 This is achieved in the written assignments and the reports of the polls with the interpretations of the data.
PILO 6: Demonstrate effective oral communication skills	CILO 3 The students will make oral presentations of the the results of the polls and their interpretations.
PILO 7: Demonstrate an ability to work effectively in a team	CILO 3 The students learn ot work in teams in the design of the questionnaires and polling of the subjects.
PILO 8: Recognise important characteristics of their own culture(s) and at least one other culture, and their impact on global issues	CILO 4 The students will be asked to relate what they learn in the additional readings to their personal experience and their living locality.
PILO 9: Value ethical and socially responsible actions	CILO 1, 2, 4 This is achieved by the students having an understanding of themselves as individuals and the values that they share with other fellow human beings.
PILO 10: Demonstrate the attitude and/or ability to accomplish discovery and/or innovation	CILO 1, 2, 3, 4 This can be achieved through the written assignments and the reports of the polls.

GE course leaders should cover the mandatory PILOs for the GE area (Area 1: Arts and Humanities; Area 2: Study of Societies, Social and Business Organisations; Area 3: Science and Technology) for which they have classified their course; for quality assurance purposes, they are advised to carefully consider if it is beneficial to claim any coverage of additional PILOs. General advice would be to restrict PILOs to only the essential ones. (Please refer to the curricular mapping of GE programme: http://www.cityu.edu.hk/edge/ge/faculty/curricular_mapping.htm.)

B. Please select an assessment task for collecting evidence of student achievement for quality assurance purposes. Please retain at least one sample of student achievement across a period of three years.

Selected Assessment Task
Individual written assignments: students will be asked to read additional literature and express their own opinions on particular problems and issues. CILO: 1, 2 and 4 PILO: 1-5, 8-10