The Chinese University of Hong Kong
Department of Linguistics and Modern Languages
First Term of 2026-27

Course code and title

LING1000 Invitation to Linguistics 語言學概論

Instructor and Teaching Assistant

Instructor: Dr. Margaret Lei

Teaching Assistants: Yixin Gu, Xitong Li, Chun Man Wong

Lecture time and venue

Thursdays, 2:30pm-4:15pm; Room 101, Leung Kau Kui Building (KKB 101)

Tutorial time and venue

Thursdays, 4:30pm-5:15pm, Room 101, Leung Kau Kui Building (KKB 101)

Course overview

This course invites students to explore the central components of human language, examining its structure and functions, how it is acquired, and how it changes over time. Students will have an overview of the grammatical properties of language, with respect to its sounds and sound system (phonetics and phonology), words and word formation (morphology), sentence patterns (syntax), and meaning (semantics). The course will highlight the psychological and biological foundations of language, and the applications of linguistics to other fields. Students will develop a basic understanding of language as a computational system that interacts with other cognitive systems of the human brain.

The course will also discuss the social aspects of language and the computational processing of human language. Students will become more sensitive to their own use of language, and develop an appreciation of recent advances in linguistic science, with respect to universals and particulars of language, language and society, language variation and change, language acquisition, as well as language, mind and the brain.

Learning outcomes

Students are expected to achieve the following learning outcomes:

(a) An appreciation of the species-specific properties of human language, as well as the universalities and diversities among different languages of the world;

(b) A basic grasp of the grammatical properties of language, with respect to its meaning, structure, and sound patterns;
(c) An understanding of the biological basis of language, in terms of how language is acquired and processed;
(d) An awareness of the role of language on human thought and society;
(e) An ability to apply linguistic concepts to describe daily language phenomena.

List of topics

Topic	Contents/fundamental concepts
Module 1: What is language?	
▪ Human language versus other animal communication systems ▪ Languages of the world	▪ Conceptions of language; design features of language ▪ Living, endangered, and extinct languages; preservation of endangered languages; the classification of languages; language families
Module 2: The structure of language	
▪ The study of words ▪ The study of sentence structure ▪ The study of meaning ▪ The study of sound	▪ Types of morphemes; word classes (parts of speech); word formation rules ▪ Phrase structure; syntactic constituency ▪ The nature of meaning; semantic features; types of meaning relationships ▪ The representation of speech sounds; articulatory properties of different types of speech sounds; phonological rules
Module 3: The biological and cognitive aspects of language	
▪ The study of child language development ▪ The study of second language learning	▪ Stages/milestones in child language development; methodologies used in studying child language development; the critical period hypothesis ▪ Cross-language influence; code-mixing; similarities and differences between first and second language acquisition
Module 4: The social and technological aspects of language	
▪ Language and society ▪ Human language technology	▪ Dialects versus languages; language in use; language variation and change ▪ Speech recognition; speech synthesis; natural language processing (NLP)

Learning activities

Lecture		Interactive tutorial		Assigned readings		Writing assignments		Web discussions		Quizzes		Project / Essay	
(hr) in | out class		(hr) in | out class		(hr) in | out class		(hr) in | out class		(hr) in | out class		(hr) in | out class		(hr) in | out class	
26	0	12	0	0	2	0	0	0	2	3	0	6	6
M	NA	M	NA	NA	O	NA	NA	NA	O	O	NA	M	M/O

M: Mandatory activity in the course; O: Optional activity; NA: Not applicable

Assessment scheme

Task nature	Weight
Check-in quiz	20%
Expository quiz	35%
Term project (Presentation materials: 5% + Oral presentation: 15%) ▪ A mini-project based on the observation and analysis of everyday language phenomena, illustrated with real-life examples and supported by relevant linguistic concepts covered in the course.	20%
In-class mini-quizzes ▪ 3-4 multiple-choice questions per class (best 6)	10%
Tutorial exercises and in-class activities	15%

Each unexcused absence from classes will result in a 2% deduction from the overall mark.

Policy on late submissions and make-up assessments

Assessment task	Extension allowed (Y/N)	Description of the policy
Check-in quiz	Y	Students requesting an absence from the quiz and a make-up arrangement must submit a written application by email to the course teacher for consideration before the beginning of the scheduled quiz, along with valid supporting documentation.[#] Only one make-up quiz will be scheduled within five working days following the original quiz date, and a mark deduction penalty based on the total assessment mark may apply.

Expository quiz	Y	Students requesting an absence from the quiz and a make-up arrangement must submit a written application by email to the course teacher for consideration before the beginning of the scheduled quiz, along with valid supporting documentation.[#] Only one make-up quiz will be scheduled within five working days following the original quiz date, and a mark deduction penalty based on the total assessment mark may apply.
Term project	Y	[Presentation materials] Students requesting an extension for the submission of presentation materials must submit a written application by email to the course teacher for consideration at least five working days before the original deadline, along with valid supporting documentation.[#] Unless an official extension is approved and properly documented, late submission of presentation materials will result in a deduction of 5% based on the total assessment mark. No marks will be awarded if materials are not submitted before the scheduled presentation date and time. [Oral presentation] Students requesting an absence from the presentation and a make-up arrangement must submit a written application by email to the course teacher for consideration before the beginning of the scheduled presentation, along with valid supporting documentation.[#] Only one make-up presentation will be scheduled within five working days following the original presentation date, and a mark deduction penalty based on the total assessment mark may apply.
In-class mini-quizzes	N	Students requesting an absence must submit a written application by email to the course teacher for consideration before the beginning of the scheduled quiz, along with valid supporting documentation.[#]
Tutorial exercises and in-class activities	N	Students requesting an absence must submit a written application by email to the course teacher for consideration before the beginning of the scheduled quiz, along with valid supporting documentation.[#]

For medical or health reasons, students must provide a medical certificate issued and signed by a registered practitioner explicitly recommending sick leave for the assessment date; other documents such as attendance certificates or

appointment slips will not be accepted. For other compelling circumstances, official documentation confirming the event cannot be rescheduled must be submitted.

Grade descriptors for assessment

Grade	Overall course
A	Outstanding performance on all learning outcomes; A solid understanding of the linguistic concepts covered in class; and Outstanding ability to analyze linguistic data with appropriate linguistic concepts.
A-	Generally outstanding performance on most learning outcomes; A good understanding of the linguistic concepts covered in class; and Strong ability to analyze linguistic data with appropriate linguistic concepts.
B	Satisfactory performance on most of the learning outcomes; Satisfactory understanding of most of the linguistic concepts covered in class; Sufficient ability to analyze linguistic data with appropriate linguistic concepts, with occasional errors.
C	Satisfactory performance on some of the learning outcomes, possibly with a few weaknesses; Satisfactory understanding of some of the linguistic concepts covered in class; and Still developing the ability to analyze linguistic data with appropriate linguistic concepts.
D	Barely satisfactory performance on some of the learning outcomes. A basic understanding of some of the linguistic concepts in class only; and Still developing the ability to analyze linguistic data with appropriate linguistic concepts.
F	Unsatisfactory performance on a number of learning outcomes, or failure to meet specified assessment requirements. Very little understanding of the linguistic concepts in class; and Little ability to analyze linguistic data with appropriate linguistic concepts.

Recommended learning resources

A. Textbook

Fromkin, Victoria, Robert Rodman, and Nina Hyams. 2019. *An Introduction to Language*. Eleventh edition. Boston: Cengage Learning.

[Hardcopy on UL reserve: P107 .F76 2017]

B. Other introductory texts

Crystal, David. 2010. *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Language*. Third edition. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press.

[Hardcopy on UL reserve: P29 .C72 2010]

Fasold, Ralph, and Jeff Connor-Linton. eds. 2014. *An Introduction to Language and Linguistics*. Second edition. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

[Hardcopy on UL reserve: P121 .I58 2006 (first edition)]

O'Grady, William and John Archibald. 2017. *Contemporary Linguistics: An Introduction, 7th edition*. Boston: Macmillan Learning.

[Hardcopy on UL reserve: P121 .C667 2017 (seventh edition)]

Yule, George. 2017. *The Study of Language*. Sixth edition. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

[Hardcopy on UL reserve: P107 .Y85 2014 (fifth edition)]

Feedback for evaluation

A mid-term course evaluation and an end-of-term course evaluation will be conducted. Students are welcome to give feedback to the course teacher at any time in person or through emails.

Course schedule

Week	Date	Topic	Readings
1	Sept 10	**Module 1: What is language?** 1A – Human language versus other animal communication systems	[Textbook] Chapter 1 "What is language?"
2	Sept 17	**Module 1: What is language?** 1B – Languages of the world **[Tutorial #1]**	Crystal (2010) Chapters 47, 48 & 50 "How many languages? How many speakers? Families of languages"
3	Sept 24	**Module 2: The structure of language** 2A – The study of words **[Tutorial #2]**	[Textbook] Chapter 2 "Morphology: The words of language"
4	Oct 1	**No lecture and tutorial – National Day**	
5	Oct 8	**Module 2: The structure of language** 2B – The study of sentence structure **[Tutorial #3]**	[Textbook] Chapter 3 "Syntax: The sentence patterns of language"
6	Oct 15	**Module 2: The structure of language** 2C – The study of meaning **[Tutorial #4]**	[Textbook] Chapter 4 "The meaning of language"
7	Oct 22	**Module 2: The structure of language** 2D – The study of sound **[Tutorial #5]**	[Textbook] Chapter 5 "Phonetics: The sounds of language"
8	Oct 29	**Module 3: The biological and cognitive aspects of language** 3A – The study of child language development **[Tutorial #6]**	[Textbook] Chapter 9 "Language acquisition"

Week	Date	Topic	Readings
9	Nov 5	**Module 3: The biological and cognitive aspects of language** 3A – The study of child language development (II) **Check-in Quiz**	[Textbook] Chapter 9 "Language acquisition"
10	Nov 12	**No lecture and tutorial – The 97th Congregation**	
11	Nov 19	**Module 3: The biological and cognitive aspects of language** 3B – The study of second language learning **[Tutorial #7]**	[Textbook] Chapter 9 "Language acquisition"
12	Nov 26	**Module 4: The social and technological aspects of language** 4A – Language and society **[Tutorial #8]**	[Textbook] Chapter 7 "Language in society"
13	Dec 3	**Module 4: The social and technological aspects of language** 4B – Human language technology **[Tutorial #9]**	Fromkin, Rodman & Hyams (2014) Chapter 11 "Computer processing of human language"
14	Dec 7 (Mon,2:30-6:30pm)	**Term Project Presentation [Venue: YIA LT4]**	
15	Dec 8 (Tue,2:30-5:00pm)	**Expository Quiz [Venue: YIA LT4]**	

Contact details for instructor and TA

Instructor	
Name:	Dr. Margaret Lei
Office location:	LG02, Leung Kau Kui Building, The Chinese University of Hong Kong
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Office hours:	By appointment

Teaching Assistants	
Name:	Yixin Gu, Xitong Li, Chun Man Wong
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Office hours:	By appointment

Details of course website

LING1000 on Blackboard
https://blackboard.cuhk.edu.hk/

Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) Tools by Students in Learning Activities and Assessments

Approach 1 - All use of AI tools is prohibited in assignments and assessment tasks

Students are not allowed to use any AI tools in any kind of learning activity or assessment that will be counted towards students' final grade of the course, or used for evaluating students' attainment of the desired learning outcomes. Students are expected to produce their own work independently without any collaboration or use of AI tools.

Academic honesty and plagiarism

Attention is drawn to University policy and regulations on honesty in academic work, and to the disciplinary guidelines and procedures applicable to breaches of such policy and regulations. Details may be found at http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/.

With each assignment, students will be required to submit a signed declaration that they are aware of these policies, regulations, guidelines and procedures.

- In the case of group projects, all members of the group should be asked to sign the declaration, each of whom is responsible and liable to disciplinary actions, irrespective of whether he/she has signed the declaration and whether he/she has contributed, directly or indirectly, to the problematic contents.
- For assignments in the form of a computer-generated document that is principally text-based and submitted via VeriGuide, the statement, in the form of a receipt, will be issued by the system upon students' uploading of the soft copy of the assignment.
- Students are fully aware that their work may be investigated by AI content detection software to determine originality.
- Students are fully aware of the AI approach(es) adopted in the course. In the case where some AI tools are allowed, students have made proper acknowledgment and citations as suggested by the course teacher.

Assignments without a properly signed declaration will not be graded by teachers.

Only the final version of the assignment should be submitted via VeriGuide.

The submission of a piece of work, or a part of a piece of work, for more than one purpose (e.g. to satisfy the requirements in two different courses) without declaration to this effect shall be regarded as having committed undeclared multiple submissions. It is common and acceptable to reuse a turn of phrase or a sentence or two from one's own work; but wholesale reuse is problematic. In any case, agreement from the course teacher(s) concerned should be obtained prior to the submission of the piece of work.

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