The Hong Kong Polytechnic University

<u>Subject Description Form</u>

Please read the notes at the end of the table carefully before completing the form.

Subject Code	ENGL2A14
Subject Title	Managing Interpersonal Relationships through Language
Credit Value	3
Level	2
Pre-requisite / Co-requisite/ Exclusion	Nil
Objectives	This subject primarily aims to equip students with useful linguistic resources to manage – establish, maintain, and enhance – interpersonal relationships while engaged in formal or informal interactions. To achieve this aim, basic but essential concepts and theories of pragmatics will first be introduced to enable students to understand others better and to express themselves more accurately, clearly and tactfully. Students will then be guided to explore how they can manage interpersonal relationships with various pragmatic strategies which serve to, for example, signal solidarity or deference, show respect, soften the potential discomfort that a message can cause, fulfil goals of interaction, and speak/write in an appropriate way as dictated by the context of a situation. The subject also aims to facilitate students' development of critical thinking skills through providing them with ample opportunities to analyze and construe the semantic and pragmatic meanings of messages.
Intended Learning Outcomes *(Note 1)*	Upon completion of the subject, students will be able to: a) analyze, and thus better understand, interactions in different contexts; b) make strategic and proper language choices to achieve various communicative goals (e.g. request, apology, criticism, denial, disagreement, and refusal); c) reflect critically on the suitability and effectiveness of their own use of language in managing interpersonal relationships; and d) manage interpersonal relationships with their peers, family and colleagues effectively and tactfully.
Subject Synopsis/ Indicative Syllabus *(Note 2)*	<u>Subject synopsis</u> This subject enables students to appreciate the importance of two processes to the effective management of interpersonal relationships, namely decoding others' messages accurately, and encoding their own strategically and carefully.

	Through examination of authentic commonplace and professional interactions collected from both local and overseas contexts, students will be facilitated and guided to first make connections between the key pragmatics concepts and theories introduced, and second understand how they can apply these concepts and theories in their attempt to manage interpersonal relationships in daily life interactions. The subject can be divided into three parts. Part 1 lays a solid foundation by introducing the key concepts and theories; Part 2 adds to students' knowledge and builds on the key concepts and theories introduced; Part 3 provides real life examples of language data, guides students through their own investigation, and offers students the chance to consolidate their newly acquired expertise.
	
	Part 1(Foundation): Functions of language
	    a) basic functions of language
	    b) getting things done with words
	    c) from semantic meaning to pragmatic meaning
	
	Part 2 (Development): Face and politeness
	    d) face (positive / negative; involvement / independence) and facework
	    e) face threatening acts
	    f) politeness and impoliteness
	
	Part 3 (Application and consolidation): Strategies and resources for managing interpersonal relationships
	    g) indirectness
	    h) politeness strategies
	    i) relational work
	    j) rapport and rapport management

Teaching/Learning Methodology *(Note 3)*	Adopting a learner-centered approach, the subject will be taught through highly interactive lectures and seminars. The lectures will focus on the introduction and discussion of concepts and theories, and presentation and analysis of authentic spoken and written data taken from various contexts including everyday encounters, professional workplace, and the Internet. The seminars will provide students with ample opportunities to analyze and expound daily linguistic phenomena with concepts and theories, to discuss and debate the applicability of these concepts and theories in various contexts, and to reflect critically the way they use language in interactions. Students will be encouraged to collect and analyze linguistic data to which they have easy access (e.g. their conversations with peers, family and teachers, and WhatsApp messages) and to share during class how people in real situations attempt to manage interpersonal relationships. Authentic data used will include, among others, conversations during family / social gatherings, professional workplace emails, and exchanges (comments and responses) between customers and service providers posted online.

Assessment Methods in Alignment with Intended Learning Outcomes *(Note 4)*	Specific assessment methods/tasks	% weighting	Intended subject learning outcomes to be assessed (Please tick as appropriate)					
			a	b	c	d		
	1. Class participation	20%	√	√	√	√		
	2. Self-reflection	40%	√	√	√	√		
	3. Essay	40%	√	√	√	√		
	Total	100%						

Explanation of the appropriateness of the assessment methods in assessing the intended learning outcomes:

All the three assessment tasks require students to go through the same process: observation → application of concepts and theories in analysis → critical evaluation of the suitability and effectiveness of language use/choice → self-reflection of their own discursive practice → knowledge consolidation

Class participation provides a chance for students to share with others their views on the interesting linguistic phenomena either reported/experienced by themselves or provided by the instructor, and to demonstrate their understanding of and ability to apply what they have learnt. Assessment will be based on both the quantity and quality of their contribution.

Self-reflection encourages students to stay alert to and curious about the use of language by not only others surrounding them, but also themselves as well throughout the whole semester. This will provide a chance for students to reflect critically on their own language use and its changes that they experience during the semester. This task will allow both the students and instructor to evaluate how well the former can apply concepts and theories of pragmatics in their attempts at managing interpersonal relationships. Students will be required to prepare an e-portfolio containing (1) evidence in textual or multimodal form showing three occasions on which they demonstrate application in real life of the pragmatic concepts and theories learnt from class, and (2) a commentary in around 800 words for each of the occasions.

Essay (one essay of around 1,500 - 2,500 words, to be submitted one week after the course ends) allows students to consolidate their learning through making theory grounded comments on an interaction they have witnessed or engaged in.

Student Study Effort Expected	Class contact:	
	▪ Lectures	26 Hrs.
	▪ Seminars	13 Hrs.
	Other student study effort:	
	▪ Reading	40 Hrs.
	▪ Preparation for assignments	30 Hrs.
	Total student study effort	109 Hrs.
Reading List and References	Brown, P. & Levinson, S. (1987). Politeness: Some Universals in Language Use, pp. 101-210. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press. Culpeper, J., and Haugh, M. (2014). Pragmatics and the English Language. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. Cutting, J. (2015). Pragmatics: A Resource Book for Students, 3rd edn. London, New York: Routledge. Ho, V. (2011). Rapport – how the weight it carries affects the way it is managed. *Text & Talk,* 31(2), 153 – 172. Ho, V. (2017). Giving offence and making amends: How hotel management attempts to manage rapport with dissatisfied customers. *Journal of Pragmatics 109*: 1-11. Locher, M., & Watts, R. (2005) 'Politeness Theory and Relational Work', *Journal of Politeness Research,* 1, 9–33. Mey, J. (2001). Pragmatics: An Introduction, 2nd edn., pp. 45-49, 71-79. Malden, Blackwell Publishers. Scollon, R., & Scollon, W. (2001). Intercultural Communication: A Discourse Approach, pp. 33-49. Malden: Blackwell Publishers. Thomas, J. (1995). Meaning in Interaction, pp. 119-148. Oxon, New York: Routledge.	

Note 1: Intended Learning Outcomes
Intended learning outcomes should state what students should be able to do or attain upon completion of the subject. Subject outcomes are expected to contribute to the attainment of the overall programme outcomes.

Note 2: Subject Synopsis/ Indicative Syllabus
The syllabus should adequately address the intended learning outcomes. At the same time over-crowding of the syllabus should be avoided.

Note 3: Teaching/Learning Methodology
This section should include a brief description of the teaching and learning methods to be employed to facilitate learning, and a justification of how the methods are aligned with the intended learning outcomes of the subject.

Note 4: Assessment Method
This section should include the assessment method(s) to be used and its relative weighting, and indicate which of the subject intended learning outcomes that each method purports to assess. It should also provide a brief explanation of the appropriateness of the assessment methods in assessing the intended learning outcomes.