# Subject Description Form

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject Code</th>
<th>ENGL2B03</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subject Title</td>
<td>Exploring Language in Social Life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credit Value</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-requisite / Co-requisite / Exclusion</td>
<td>None, except a willingness to engage in interdisciplinary learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cluster Area</td>
<td>Please check the box(es) below to indicate the cluster area(s) the subject contributes in a major way:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>☒ Human Nature, Relations and Development</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>☒ Community, Organization and Globalisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>☐ History, Cultures and World Views</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>☐ Science, Technology and Environment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Requirements intended to fulfil</td>
<td>☒ China-Study Requirement (CSR) - More than 60% CSR-related content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>☒ Eligible for “English Writing” (EW) designation - include an extensive piece of writing (2,500 words) AND “English Reading” (ER) designation - include a reading of an extensive text (100,000 words or 200 pages)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>☒ Eligible for “Chinese Writing” (CW) designation - include an extensive piece of writing (3,000 characters) AND “Chinese Reading” (CR) designation - include a reading of an extensive text (100,000 characters or 200 pages)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>☐ Others __________________________________</td>
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<tr>
<td>Medium of Instruction</td>
<td>Please check the appropriate box:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>☒ English ☐ Cantonese ☐ Putonghua ☐ Others (Please specify: _____)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Objectives</td>
<td>This course examines the way we use language in public and private life, with the aim of enhancing students’ awareness of the power of language to influence public opinion and shape group and individual responses. Students are encouraged to reflect upon the use of language in political settings, mass media environments, healthcare encounters, language policy ‘think-tank’ groups, and other types of public and workplace discourses. Students are further encouraged to analyze how language is used in a variety of settings involving social obligations, including awkward and difficult speech acts such as saying ‘no’ in a face-saving way, making sincere, appropriate and effective public apologies when things have gone wrong, and offering words of hope and encouragement to those in distress and those who grieve. This course also provides students with a cognitive and neurobiological basis to understand how and why language pulls at the heartstrings to evoke strong emotions, including laughter, tears, prejudices and fears. In sum, this course guides students to explore how</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
language is used in ways that identifies our species as social creatures.

Through lectures, text and video data analyses, group discussions, and a substantial written assignment, this course will help students to enhance their critical thinking skills, as well as sharpen their sensitivity toward the nuances of language use in relation to socio-cultural complexities.

### Intended Learning Outcomes

(Note 1)

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

(a) analyse speakers’ goals in complex social relations;
(b) express their own needs and views in public and institutional settings;
(c) appreciate the benefits of diversity and nurture attitudes of inclusivity within their increasingly multilingual and multicultural society;
(d) explain how ‘clever, playful words’ are formed to give rise to humor that can help bond social relations;
(e) analyse the social functions of language from a multi-disciplinary perspective that includes the integration of research findings from the social and cognitive sciences.
(f) explain how language shapes public and private discourse within our community;
(g) analyse social relations and communication strategies;
(h) develop and use strategies of learning autonomously and collaboratively.

Please explain how the stated learning outcomes relate to the following three essential features of GUR subjects: Literacy, Higher order thinking, and Skills for life-long learning.

The above learning outcomes (a) to (g) are closely related to the three essential GUR skills (literacy, higher order thinking, and skills for life-long learning) because they require students to: (1) read a wide range of academic materials from multiple disciplines and demonstrate their understanding of the subject matter in the form of an integrated and innovative final project paper; (2) analyze written texts and conversational data to identify, as well as account for, general patterns of how discourse is organized for effective communication; and (3) cultivate strategies for both autonomous and collaborative learning. The multiple skills acquired in the process of achieving the above learning outcomes will better prepare the students for their future career and continued personal growth.

### Subject Synopsis/
Indicative Syllabus

(Note 2)

1. **Language in the Political Arena**
   (a) How do Premiers and Presidents talk?
   (b) Analyzing charismatic language—When and why we respond to ‘the call of the trumpet’
   (c) Oppositional talk—turn-taking patterns in political debates

2. **Language in Media Discourse**
   (a) How media professionals maintain ‘neutrality’
   (b) The rise of adversarial stances in public discourse and media coverage

3. **Language in Legal Settings**
   (a) Analyzing ‘winning moves’ in courtroom (cross-)examinations
   (b) Maintaining neutrality in mediation talks

4. **Language in Healthcare Settings**
   (a) Taking a closer look at the way doctors and patients talk
   (b) What healthcare professionals (can) do when breaking bad news
   (c) Balancing hope and caution in doctor-patient talks

5. **Language Policies for Hong Kong Today**
   (a) Why multilingualism matters
   (b) Is code-mixing here to stay?

6. **Language and Stereotyping**
   (a) ‘You talk different’: How to deal with prejudice
7. **Handling Difficult Speech Acts in Daily Life**
   (a) Saying ‘NO’ is costly—What it takes to formulate dispreferred responses
   (b) Apologies in public life—Why some apologies succeed where others fail
   (c) Condolences and eulogies—What we say in praise of the dead and to comfort the grieving

8. **Clever, Playful Words and Light, Happy Moments**
   (a) Metaphor-making and conceptual blending in cartoons and comic strips
   (b) Language and laughter—A close look at ‘the ingredients of humor’

   (a) Understanding the emotional basis for our social behavior
   (b) Understanding the neurobiological basis for our emotions
   (c) Tying neurobiology, psychology and sociolinguistic behavior together

### Teaching/ Learning Methodology

(Note 3)

1. Lectures
2. Video analyses of public speeches, debates, workplace discourse
3. Text analyses of conversational transcripts
4. Group discussions (with and without worksheets)
5. In-class presentations
6. Capstone (i.e. final) group project

Learning is primarily through interactive lectures and seminars. Group discussions and in-class reports encourage students to present their analyses and viewpoints logically and coherently. All assignments are designed to provide students with tasks that require evaluation, synthesis and application of research findings on issues related to the use of language in public and private discourse. The course draws heavily on examples and case studies from around the world, with relevance and application to the Chinese context in Hong Kong and Mainland China, as well the region as a whole, which now increasingly embraces a widening part of Asia and the Pacific regions.

### Assessment Methods in Alignment with Intended Learning Outcomes

(Note 4)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Specific assessment methods/tasks</th>
<th>% weightings</th>
<th>Intended subject learning outcomes to be assessed (Please tick as appropriate)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Group discussions with written assignments (e.g. worksheets) and in-class reports (ER)</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>a b c d e f g h</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Written assignment involving the analysis of public speeches, debates, workplace discourse, or conversations among family and friends</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>x x x x x x x</td>
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<tr>
<td>(EW/ER)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Midterm quiz (ER)</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Group project (15-min. powerpoint presentation and research/position paper) (ER/EW) (30% content + 10% English writing activities)</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
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### Student Study Effort Expected

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class contact:</th>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lectures</td>
<td>26 Hrs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seminars</td>
<td>13 Hrs.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Other student study effort:

| Individual/Group study | 28 Hrs. |
| Individual/Group research for projects | 56 Hrs. |

Total student study effort: 123 Hrs.

### Reading List and References

#### Required reading

Students will be expected to read relevant sections of the following books. This reading will constitute at least 200 pages and is integrated into all the assignments.


#### Further reading


Cambridge University Press.