

The Hong Kong Polytechnic University

Subject Description Form

Subject Code	ENGL2BN03
Subject Title	Exploring Language in Social Life
Credit Value	3
Level	2
Pre-requisite / Co-requisite/ Exclusion	None, except a willingness to engage in interdisciplinary learning.
Cluster Area	<p>Please check the box(es) below to indicate the cluster area(s) the subject contributes in a major way:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Human Nature, Relations and Development</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Community, Organization and Globalisation</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> History, Cultures and World Views</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Science, Technology and Environment</p>
Requirements intended to fulfil	<p><input type="checkbox"/> China-Study Requirement (CSR) - More than 60% CSR-related content</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Eligible for “English Writing” (EW) designation - include an extensive piece of writing (1,500 – 2,500 words) AND “English Reading” (ER) designation - include a reading of an extensive text (100,000 words or 200 pages)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Eligible for “Chinese Writing” (CW) designation - include an extensive piece of writing (2,000 – 3,000 characters) AND “Chinese Reading” (CR) designation - include a reading of an extensive text (100,000 characters or 200 pages)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Others _____</p>
Medium of Instruction	<p>Please check the appropriate box:</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> English <input type="checkbox"/> Cantonese <input type="checkbox"/> Putonghua <input type="checkbox"/> Others (Please specify: _____)</p>
Objectives	<p>This course examines the way we use language in public and private life, with the aim of enhancing students’ awareness of the social meanings associated with language, of its interactional use and functions in general, as well as in a range of specific contexts. Students are encouraged to reflect upon the use of language in political settings, mass media environments, healthcare encounters, and other types of public and workplace discourses. Students are further encouraged to analyze how language is used in a variety of practical communicative situations involving, for example, business negotiations having to say ‘no’ in a face-saving way, making sincere and effective public apologies when things have gone wrong. In sum, this course guides students to explore how language is used in ways that identifies our species as social creatures.</p> <p>Through lectures, text and video data analyses, group discussions, and a substantial written assignment, this course will help students to enhance their</p>

	critical thinking skills, as well as sharpen their sensitivity toward the nuances of language use in relation to socio-cultural complexities.
Intended Learning Outcomes	<p>Upon completion of the subject, students will be able to:</p> <p>(a) explain how language shapes, and is shaped by public and private discourse within our community;</p> <p>(b) analyse speakers' goals in complex social relations;</p> <p>(c) effectively express their own needs and views in public and institutional settings;</p> <p>(d) develop and use strategies of learning autonomously and collaboratively</p> <p>The above learning outcomes 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.</p>
Subject Synopsis/ Indicative Syllabus	<p>This subject discusses the use of language throughout social life. The first three lectures will examine theoretical frameworks relating to the social use of language. Subsequent lectures will permit an application of these frameworks through a series of case studies.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Language as a reflection of society <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (a) How does language ideology influence the way we talk? (b) How does the way we talk reveal where we come from? 2. Language in conversation <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (a) How do conversations start and how do they end? (b) How are turns taken in conversations? 3. Pragmatics <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (a) What are the most widespread speech acts? (b) How do misunderstandings occur? (c) How is disagreement minimized? 4. Language in Business Settings <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (a) What are the linguistic processes associated with negotiation? (b) What does language use give away in interview situations? 5. Language in the Political Arena <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (a) How do Premiers and Presidents talk? (b) Oppositional talk—turn-taking patterns in political debates 6. Language in Media Discourse <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (a) How media professionals maintain 'neutrality'? (b) The rise of adversarial stances in public discourse and media coverage 7. Language in Legal Settings <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Analyzing 'winning moves' in courtroom (cross-)examinations (b) Maintaining neutrality in mediation talks

	<p>8. Language in Healthcare Settings</p> <p>(a) Taking a closer look at the way doctors and patients talk</p> <p>(b) What healthcare professionals (can) do when breaking bad news</p> <p>9. Handling Difficult Speech Acts in Daily Life</p> <p>(a) Saying ‘NO’ is costly—What it takes to formulate dispreferred responses</p> <p>(b) Apologies in public life—Why some apologies succeed where others fail</p>
<p>Teaching/ Learning Methodology</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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 <p>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.</p>

Assessment Methods in Alignment with Intended Learning Outcomes	The Intended Learning Outcomes are assessed by means of discussion-based group tasks, one group assignment, one writing plan and one written individual essay,. The written individual assignment and the writing plan are designed to assess the students’ general understanding of the social dimension of language and their analytical skills. The group tasks additionally assess the students’ capacity to devise communicative strategies adapted to specific contexts, as well as their capacity to develop ideas collaboratively.					
	Specific assessment methods/tasks	% weighting	Intended subject learning outcomes to be assessed (Please tick as appropriate)			
			a	b	c	d
	1. Participation (EW/ER)	20%	x	x	x	x
	2. Final Essay (EW/ER)	30%	x	x		x
	3. Writing Plan (EW/ER)	20%	x	x		x
	4. Group Project (EW/ER)	30%	x	x	x	x
Total	100 %					
Student Study Effort Expected	Class contact:					
	▪ Lectures					26 Hrs.
	▪ Seminars					13 Hrs.
	Other student study effort:					
	▪ Individual/Group study					28 Hrs.
▪ Individual/Group research for projects					56 Hrs.	
Total student study effort					123Hrs.	
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. Holmes, J., & Wilson, N. (2017). <i>An introduction to sociolinguistics</i> . Routledge. Meyerhoff, M. (2018). <i>Introducing sociolinguistics</i> . Routledge. Romaine, S. (2000). <i>Language and society: An introduction to sociolinguistics</i> . Oxford University Press.					
Further Reading						
Bargiela-Chiappini, F., Nickerson, C., & Planken, B. (2013). <i>Business discourse</i> . (2 nd ed.) Palgrave Macmillan.						

	<p>Chan, B.H.S. (1998). How does Cantonese-English code-mixing work? In M.C. Pennington (Ed.), <i>Language in Hong Kong at century's end</i> (pp. 191-216). Hong Kong University Press.</p> <p>Clayman, S.E. (1992). Footing in the achievement of neutrality: The case of news-interview discourse. In P. Drew & J. Heritage (Eds.), <i>Talk at work: Interaction in institutional settings</i> (pp. 163-198). Cambridge University Press.</p> <p>Clayman, S. & Heritage, J. (2002). <i>The news interview: Journalists and public figures on the air</i>. Cambridge University Press.</p> <p>Drew, P. & Heritage, J. (1992). Analyzing talk at work: An introduction. In P. Drew & J. Heritage (Eds.), <i>Talk at work: Interaction in institutional settings</i> (pp. 3-65). Cambridge University Press.</p> <p>Fauconnier, G. (1997). <i>Mapping in thoughts and language</i>. Cambridge University Press.</p> <p>Huang, S. (2004). Subjectification in discourse: The case of Mandarin <i>renjia</i> 'other(s)'. <i>Proceedings of the 9th International Conference on Chinese Language and Linguistics (ISCLL-9)</i>. Taipei: Academia Sinica and the Graduate Institute of Linguistics, National Taiwan University, November 19-21.</p> <p>Kandel, E.R. (2006). <i>In search of memory: The emergence of a new science of mind</i>. W.W. Norton & Company.</p> <p>LeDoux, J. (1998). <i>The emotional brain: The mysterious underpinnings of emotional life</i>. Simon & Schuster.</p> <p>LeDoux, J. (2002). <i>Synaptic self: How our brains become who we are</i>. Penguin Books.</p> <p>Schiffrin, D. (1987). <i>Discourse markers</i>. Cambridge University Press.</p> <p>Scollon, R. & Scollon, S.W. (2001). <i>Intercultural communication: A discourse approach</i>. (2nd ed). Blackwell Publishers.</p> <p>Wills, G. (1994). <i>Certain trumpets: The call of leaders</i>. Simon & Schuster.</p>
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Revised by Rickey Lu, August 2023