

HUMA3030 SPRING 2026 Tentative Course Outline

Language, Communication and Culture

Instructor: Dr. Cathy Ping PAN (hmpanping@ust.hk)

Time: Monday 16:30-17:50; Friday 12:00-13:20

Venue: CYTG002

Office hours: Monday & Tuesday: 12:00-13:30; Or by appointment

Course TA: Taylor LAU (hmtaylorlau@ust.hk)

Course description

This course explores human language in relation to the communicative functions which it serves and the cultural context in which it is used. Issues such as how human language is distinct from other communication systems, how language is used to convey different meanings and how culture affects the use of language will be examined in order to highlight the uniqueness of human language.

This course is designed as a required course in the interdisciplinary area of “Literature, Communication and Media” for SHSS’s major program. Students majoring in Global China Studies can take it in their first or second year of study. This course is also open to non-major students who can take it to fulfill their elective requirement.

Course Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs):

1. Identify the differences between language and other forms of communication systems.
2. Analyze the correspondence between form and meaning/function.
3. Be aware of the social factors that play a role in shaping the way we use language.
Improve the competence in interpersonal and group communication.

Assessments:

- **Class participation:** 15%
- **In-class Quizzes:** 30% (Approx. Week 6 & Week 11)
- **Group Project, including:** 55%
 - a. Project consultation (5%)
 - b. Project presentation (15%)
 - c. Project paper (35%)

Mapping of Course ILOs to Assessment Tasks

Assessed Task	Mapped ILOs	Explanation
Class participation	ILO-1, 2, 3	Class participation is essential for the course. There will be graded in-class activities, exercises, or assignments during the lectures. In total they constitute 15% of the final grade. Students are advised to

		bring their laptop or tablets for these activities.
Quizzes	ILO-1, 2, 3	There will be 2 in-class quizzes to consolidate and test understanding of the key notions and discussions of the lectures and readings. Students are expected to follow the lectures carefully, support your learning by reading the materials provided, and participate actively in class discussions and activities.
Group Project	ILO-1, 2, 3	Students will form groups of four and conduct a research project centered on 'language in use'. They will explore a topic grounded in real-life language use and examine it within specific communication contexts. Through group collaborations, they will report the project both orally (via in-class presentations) and in writing (in a final project report).

Course Schedule (subject to changes):

Week	Lecture Topic
1	Course Introduction: Overview of the course and topics to be covered, the approaches, and expectations.
2	Language as a complex system of communication: Sound, grammar, lexicon, and meaning
3	The meaning of 'meaning': Utterances, sentences and propositions (I)
4	The meaning of 'meaning': Utterances, sentences and propositions (II)
5	Presupposition, Cooperative Principle and conversational implicature (I)
6	Presupposition, Cooperative Principle and conversational implicature (II) In-class Quiz 1
7	Speech acts: Doing things with words
8	Politeness principles, facework and (im)politeness
9	Cross-cultural and intercultural pragmatics
10	Language variation: On uses and users
11	Language contact: Multilingual societies and multilingual discourse
12	Student presentations
13	In- class Quiz 2 & Student presentations

Assessment and Grading:

This course will be assessed using criterion-referencing, and grades will not be assigned using a curve. The marking rubric for the project is as follows:

A (Excellent Performance)	The work of your group is excellent and demonstrates exceptional control of the project process, with a comprehensive grasp of the concepts and research skills involved in successfully implementing the project. You present an original, complete, and informative piece of research that contributes to an enhanced understanding of the phenomenon of 'language in use' under investigation. Thus, it considerably exceeds the criteria for a "B." Both the organization of your work and your writing style are outstanding, covering the core research elements clearly and logically. This grade honors an excellent piece of work that goes well beyond expectations. It recognizes that you have made a special effort and that this effort has succeeded.
B (Good Performance)	The work of your group is good and demonstrates a good control of the project process, with competent grasp of the concepts and research skills necessary for successful implementation. Overall, you present a well-structured and detailed piece of research that contributes to the understanding of the phenomenon of 'language in use'. While the project meets the core research elements, it may lack some depth or originality compared to an "A" grade. The organization of your work is clear, and your writing style is generally effective, with minor errors that do not detract from the overall quality. This grade recognizes your effort and competence in meeting the expectations of the project.
C (Satisfactory Performance)	The work of your group is satisfactory and reveals an adequate understanding of the project process, with a basic grasp of the concepts and research skills involved. You present a piece of research that summarizes the phenomenon of 'language in use' but may rely on existing literature or materials without significant original contribution. The organization of your work is acceptable, though it may lack clarity in some areas, and your writing contains frequent errors that affect readability. This grade reflects a reasonable effort to meet the minimum requirements of the project, though further development and critical engagement with the materials are needed.
D (Marginal Pass)	The work of your group demonstrates marginal control of the project process, with limited grasp of the essential concepts and research skills. The research presented is minimal and may not adequately address the phenomenon of 'language in use.' The organization of your work is weak, with improper writing style and/or numerous errors that hinder comprehension. This grade indicates that the project falls short in several key areas and shows significant room for improvement.
F (Fail)	Your work does not meet the most minimal standards. The research is incomplete or irrelevant to the phenomenon of 'language in use'. The organization of your work is poor, making it difficult to follow; and the writing contains numerous errors that render the piece virtually incomprehensible. This grade reflects a lack of effort and engagement with the project requirements, indicating that the work does not meet the threshold necessary for academic performance in this discipline.

Communication and Feedback:

Assessment marks for individual assessed tasks will be communicated via Canvas within two weeks of submission. Feedback on assignments will include details appropriate to the assignment type. Students who have further questions about the feedback including marks should consult the instructor within five working days after the feedback is received.

Recommended books and resources (selected):

(*Note:* Weekly readings and supplementary materials will be made available on Canvas.)

1. Akmajian, A., Farmer, A. K., Bickmore, L., DeMers, R. A., & Harnish, R. M. (2017). What is linguistics? In *Linguistics: An introduction to language and communication* (7th ed.). Chapter 1.
2. Birner, J. B. (2013). *Introduction to pragmatics*. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell.
3. Culpeper, J., Haugh, M. & Kadar, D. (2017) (eds.). *The Palgrave Handbook of Linguistic (Im)Politeness*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan Ltd.
4. Holmes, J. & Wilson, N. (2022). *An introduction to sociolinguistics* (6th ed.). Harlow: Longman.
5. Huang, Y. (2015). *Pragmatics* (2nd ed.). Hong Kong: Oxford University Press.
6. House, J., & Kádár, D. Z. (2024). *Cross-cultural pragmatics and foreign language learning*. Edinburgh University Press.

Policy on Use of GenAI:

Generative AI may be used to find and evaluate sources of information, but must not be used to compose the final writing or cited in the text or as an author of the text.

Academic Integrity

Students are expected to adhere to the university's academic integrity policy. Students are expected to uphold HKUST's Academic Honor Code and to maintain the highest standards of academic integrity. The University has zero tolerance of academic misconduct. Please refer to [Academic Integrity | HKUST – Academic Registry](#) for the University's definition of plagiarism and ways to avoid cheating and plagiarism.