

**Division of Humanities  
Tentative Course Syllabus**

**Course Code:** HUMA 1010  
**Course Title:** Introduction to Language  
**Course Offered in:** Fall 2023  
**Course Instructor:** Dr Decaho Li

**Course Description:** An examination of fundamental concepts and principles in the scientific analysis of human language, especially concerning speech sounds, syntax, meaning, language acquisition, language processing, sociolinguistics and history of languages. Students who have taken an introductory course in linguistics in other universities should not enroll in this course.

**Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs):**

	<b>Course ILOs</b>
<b>1</b>	Grasp fundamental concepts in the structural analysis of language as a rule-governed and productive system of communication.
<b>2</b>	Describe the systems of speech sounds in English and Cantonese with the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA).
<b>3</b>	Question the origins of the brain's linguistic capability in relation to aphasias, child language acquisition, and universal properties of languages around the world.
<b>4</b>	Discuss the social aspects of language within the framework of contemporary linguistics.
<b>5</b>	Aim at sound testing of hypotheses, argumentation and causal reasoning, especially with regard to linguistic phenomena.

**Course Outline:**

<b>Week</b>	<b>Topic</b>
1	Overview: Linguistics as a field. Prescriptive usage vs. objective description. The International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA).
2	Phonetic symbols: consonants, voicing and aspiration. Animal communication vs. human language: rules and productivity. Aphasia: contralateral function and split-brain patients.
3	Aphasia: Broca's and Wernicke's. Phonetic symbols: monophthongs and diphthongs. Acoustic phonetics: computer analysis of Cantonese tones.

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4	Acoustic phonetics: wave form, frequency and amplitude. Tonal correspondence between Cantonese and Putonghua. Word stress in English.
5	First midterm. Mental lexicon, function & content words, and bound & free morphemes. Word-formation: new words in English and Chinese. Nonsense words: systematic and accidental gaps.
6	Word meaning: marked vs. unmarked (or specific vs. general). Inflectional and derivational morphology, and morphological structure. Morpheme and allomorph.
7	IPA and features of articulation. Board and narrow transcription. Phonetic symbols: diagrams of articulation.
8	Phonetics vs. phonology. Phonology: phonemes & allophones, and contrastive & complementary distribution.
9	Typology: isolating & inflecting languages, and word order. Language universal: SO and VO.
10	Language universal: coordinate wh-word not moved. Writing systems: ideographic, alphabetic and syllabic.
11	Second midterm Syntax: rules of negation in English and Cantonese. Phrase-structure rules and tree diagrams. Sentence meaning: lexical and structural ambiguity
12	Cognitive science: artificial intelligence, and experiments in developmental psychology.
13	Language acquisition: SVO and Big Bird experiment, and wh-word movement. Sociolinguistics: trilingual code-switching and language policy in Hong Kong.
14	Intercultural communication and language attitudes. Gender and language: rituals, report-talk and rapport-talk.

**Planned Assessment Tasks:**

1st midterm:

18%

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2nd midterm: 29%

Final: 39%

Participation in class and worksheets: 14%

**Readings:**

Fromkin, Victoria, et al. 2007. An Introduction to Language. Australia: Thomson Wadsworth.