

**City University of Hong Kong**

**Information on a Course**  
**offered by Department of Linguistics and Translation**  
**with effect from Semester A in 2014 / 2015**

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**Part I**

**Course Title:** Language Universals and Linguistic Typology

**Course Code:** LT5417

**Course Duration:** One Semester

**No. of Credit Units:** 3

**Level:** P5

**Medium of Instruction:** English

**Prerequisites:** NIL

**Precursors:** NIL

**Equivalent Courses:** CTL5417 Language Universals and Linguistic Typology

**Exclusive Courses:** NIL

**Part II**

**1. Course Aims:**

This course aims at introducing to typology and language universals, the domain of linguistics which investigates language properties that cannot be discovered by observing a single language alone but rather by conducting a general survey of languages in the world. Students will be enabled to classify the different formal categories and structures found in the world's languages, to discover markedness and taxonomic relationships between these categories and structures and to apply the concept of prototypes as an explanatory model.

## 2. Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs)

*Upon successful completion of this course, students should be able to:*

No.	CILOs	Weighting (if applicable)
1.	Identify the concepts that have found expression in the grammars of world's languages and classify the formal means of world's languages to express a given concept by <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● discovering various phonological and morphological language types and universals,</li> <li>● classifying nominal categories,</li> <li>● evaluating case and agreement systems,</li> <li>● cataloging tense, aspect and modality types;</li> </ul>	
2.	Analyze the markedness and hierarchical relationships between the various forms of expression (of a given concept) by <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● analyzing implicational word order universals,</li> <li>● understanding grammatical hierarchies,</li> <li>● scrutinizing criteria for markedness;</li> </ul>	
3.	Explain typological patterns with prototype theory by <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● defining language types as prototypes,</li> <li>● investigating markedness reversals and complementary prototypes;</li> </ul>	
4.	Apply the understanding of typology and universals to the description of particular languages by <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● planning creative steps of grammatical description using typological knowledge.</li> </ul>	

## 3. Teaching and learning Activities (TLAs)

*(Indicative of likely activities and tasks designed to facilitate students' achievement of the CILOs. Final details will be provided to students in their first week of attendance in this course)*

CILO No	TLAs	Hours/week (if applicable)
1, 2, 3, 4	<b>Lecture:</b> Theoretical foundations of all learning outcomes are laid in the lecture. Basic ideas are taught during two hours per week	2 hrs/week

1, 2, 3, 4	<b>Tutorial:</b> Practical illustrations and exercises presented in tutorials will familiarize the students with the theoretical concepts of the lecture (though there will not always be a clear division line between lecture and tutorials)	1 hrs/week
1, 2, 3, 4	<b>Individual Reading:</b> Students will read lecture (and tutorial notes) and additional literature proposed by the lecturer	
1, 2, 3, 4	<b>Assignment:</b> During three assignments, students will analyze and synthesize linguistic data helping them apply the notions of the lecture	

#### 4. Assessment Tasks/Activities

*(Indicative of likely activities and tasks designed to assess how well the students achieve the CILOs. Final details will be provided to students in their first week of attendance in this course)*

CILO No	Type of assessment tasks/activities	Weighting (if applicable)	Remarks
1	<b>Assignment 1</b> (typological classification): students have two weeks time to write a report on a linguistic problem	33%	
2	<b>Assignment 2</b> (markedness & hierarchies): guidelines as for assignment 1	33%	
3 or 4	<b>Assignment 3</b> (prototype theory / grammatical description): guidelines as for assignment 1	34%	

#### 5. Grading of Student Achievement:

Refer to Grading of Courses in the Academic Regulations for Taught Postgraduate Degrees.

Grading pattern: Standard (A+, A, A...F). Grading is based on student performance in assignment tasks exam (100% Coursework).

Excellent (A-, A, A+)	Good (B-, B, B+)	Adequate (C-, C, C+)	Marginal (D)
(i) great sensibility for the stock of languages in the world; (ii) deep understanding of the structural devices one is expected to find in languages of the world; (iii) very good ability of using <i>markedness</i> in linguistic reasoning;	(i) good sensibility for the stock of languages in the world; (ii) good understanding of the structural devices one is expected to find in languages of the world; (iii) good ability of using <i>markedness</i> in linguistic reasoning;	(i) some sensibility for the stock of languages in the world; (ii) adequate understanding of the structural devices one is expected to find in languages of the world; (iii) some ability of using <i>markedness</i> in linguistic reasoning;	(i) little sensibility for the stock of languages in the world; (ii) little understanding of the structural devices one is expected to find in languages of the world; (iii) poor ability of using <i>markedness</i> in linguistic reasoning;

(v) very good ability of using <i>hierarchies</i> for language universals; (vi) excellent writing style and format for academic paper.	(v) good ability of using <i>hierarchies</i> for language universals; (vi) good writing style and format for academic paper.	(v) some ability of using <i>hierarchies</i> for language universals; (vi) appropriate writing style and format for academic paper.	(v) poor ability of using <i>hierarchies</i> for language universals; (vi) inappropriate writing style and format for academic paper.
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### Part III

Keyword Syllabus:

Approaches to Linguistic Typology and Universals: Linguistic classification, linguistic types, implicational universals, the sampling problem;

Markedness: criteria for markedness; amount of structural marking; conceptual complexity; frequency;

Hierarchical Relationships: Grammatical hierarchies, animacy hierarchy, phonological hierarchies;

Prototype Theory: Clusters, complementary prototypes, markedness reversals;

Grammatical Description: Typology-informed grammar of individual languages

Recommended Reading:

#### Essential Reading

Croft, William (1990). *Typology and universals*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Whaley, Lindsay J. (1997). *Introduction to typology: The unity and diversity of language*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

#### Supplementary Readings

Aikhenvald, Alexandra Y. (2000). *Classifiers: A typology of noun categorization devices*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bybee, Joan, Revere Perkins and William Pagliuca (1994). *The evolution of grammar: Tense, Aspect, and Modality in the Languages of the World*. Chicago: The University of Chicago.

Comrie, Bernard. (1989). *Language Universals and Linguistic Typology* (Second Edition). Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Matthew Dryer, David Gil and Bernard Comrie (2005). *World atlas of linguistic structures*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.