

City University of Hong Kong
Course Syllabus

offered by Department of Linguistics and Translation
with effect from Semester A 2024 / 25

Part I Course Overview

Course Title: Language Universals and Linguistic Typology

Course Code: LT5417

Course Duration: One Semester

Credit Units: 3

Level: P5

Medium of Instruction: English

Medium of Assessment: English

Prerequisites:
(Course Code and Title) Nil

Precursors:
(Course Code and Title) Nil

Equivalent Courses:
(Course Code and Title) CTL5417 Language Universals and Linguistic Typology

Exclusive Courses:
(Course Code and Title) Nil

Part II Course Details

1. Abstract

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)

(CILOs state what the student is expected to be able to do at the end of the course according to a given standard of performance.)

No.	CILOs	Weighting (if applicable)	Discovery-enriched curriculum related learning outcomes (please tick ✓ where appropriate)		
			A1	A2	A3
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"> • discovering various phonological and morphological language types and universals, • classifying nominal categories, • evaluating case and agreement systems, • cataloging tense, aspect and modality types; 		✓	✓	✓
2.	Analyze the markedness and hierarchical relationships between the various forms of expression (of a given concept) by <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • analyzing implicational word order universals, • understanding grammatical hierarchies, • scrutinizing criteria for markedness; 		✓	✓	✓
3.	Explain typological patterns with prototype theory by <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • defining language types as prototypes, • investigating markedness reversals and complementary prototypes; 		✓	✓	✓
4.	Apply the understanding of typology and universals to the description of particular languages by <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • planning creative steps of grammatical description using typological knowledge. 		✓	✓	✓
		100%			

A1: Attitude

Develop an attitude of discovery/innovation/creativity, as demonstrated by students possessing a strong sense of curiosity, asking questions actively, challenging assumptions or engaging in inquiry together with teachers.

A2: Ability

Develop the ability/skill needed to discover/innovate/create, as demonstrated by students possessing critical thinking skills to assess ideas, acquiring research skills, synthesizing knowledge across disciplines or applying academic knowledge to self-life problems.

A3: Accomplishments

Demonstrate accomplishment of discovery/innovation/creativity through producing /constructing creative works/new artefacts, effective solutions to real-life problems or new processes.

3. Learning and Teaching Activities (LTAs)

(LTAs designed to facilitate students' achievement of the CILOs.)

LTA	Brief Description	CILO No.						Hours/week (if applicable)
		1	2	3	4			
1	Lecture: Theoretical foundations of all learning outcomes are laid in the lecture. Basic ideas are taught during two hours per week	✓	✓	✓	✓			2 hours
2	Tutorial: 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 hour
3	Individual Reading: Students will read lecture (and tutorial notes) and additional literature proposed by the lecturer	✓	✓	✓	✓			
4	Assignment: During three assignments, students will analyze and synthesize linguistic data helping them apply the notions of the lecture	✓	✓	✓	✓			

4. Assessment Tasks/Activities (ATs)

(ATs are designed to assess how well the students achieve the CILOs.)

Assessment Tasks/Activities	CILO No.						Weighting	Remarks
	1	2	3	4				
Continuous Assessment: 100%								
Assignment 1 (typological classification): students have two weeks time to write a report on a linguistic problem	✓						33%	
Assignment 2 (markedness & hierarchies): guidelines as for assignment 1		✓					33%	
Assignment 3 (prototype theory / grammatical description): guidelines as for assignment 1			✓	✓			34%	
Examination: % (duration: , if applicable)							100%	

5. Assessment Rubrics

(Grading of student achievements is based on student performance in assessment tasks/activities with the following rubrics.)

Applicable to students admitted before Semester A 2022/23 and in Semester A 2024/25 & thereafter

Assessment Task	Criterion	Excellent (A+, A, A-)	Good (B+, B, B-)	Fair (C+, C, C-)	Marginal (D)	Failure (F)
1. Assignment 1 (typological classification)	Demonstrate mastery of typological classification and its application to solving linguistic problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excellent knowledge of major issues in typological classification • Excellent application of the knowledge to linguistic analysis. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good knowledge of major issues in typological classification • Good application of the knowledge to linguistic analysis. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adequate knowledge of major issues in typological classification • Adequate application of the knowledge to linguistic analysis. 	Marginal familiarity with the subject matter and fair analysis of linguistic data.	Poor familiarity with the subject matter and poor analysis of linguistic data.
2. Assignment 2 (markedness & hierarchies)	Demonstrate understanding of markedness and hierarchies, and ability to solve linguistic problems using the notions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excellent understanding of the notions of markedness and hierarchies • Excellent application of the knowledge to linguistic analysis. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good understanding of the notions of markedness and hierarchies • Good application of the knowledge to linguistic analysis. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adequate understanding of the notions of markedness and hierarchies • Adequate application of the knowledge to linguistic analysis. 	Marginal familiarity with the subject matter and fair analysis of linguistic data.	Poor familiarity with the subject matter and poor analysis of linguistic data.
3. Assignment 3 (prototype theory / grammatical description)	Demonstrate competence in using prototype theory and typological knowledge in explaining typological patterns and grammatical description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excellent mastery of prototype theory and typological knowledge • Excellent application of the theory and knowledge to linguistic analysis. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good mastery of prototype theory and typological knowledge • Good application of the theory and knowledge to linguistic analysis. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adequate mastery of prototype theory and typological knowledge • Adequate application of the theory and knowledge to linguistic analysis. 	Marginal familiarity with the subject matter and fair analysis of linguistic data.	Poor familiarity with the subject matter and poor analysis of linguistic data.

Applicable to students admitted from Semester A 2022/23 to Summer Term 2024

Assessment Task	Criterion	Excellent (A+, A, A-)	Good (B+, B)	Marginal (B-, C+, C)	Failure (F)
1. Assignment 1 (typological classification)	Demonstrate mastery of typological classification and its application to solving linguistic problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excellent knowledge of major issues in typological classification • Excellent application of the knowledge to linguistic analysis. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good knowledge of major issues in typological classification • Good application of the knowledge to linguistic analysis. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marginal knowledge of major issues in typological classification • Marginal application of the knowledge to linguistic analysis. 	Poor familiarity with the subject matter and poor analysis of linguistic data.
2. Assignment 2 (markedness & hierarchies)	Demonstrate understanding of markedness and hierarchies, and ability to solve linguistic problems using the notions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excellent understanding of the notions of markedness and hierarchies • Excellent application of the knowledge to linguistic analysis. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good understanding of the notions of markedness and hierarchies • Good application of the knowledge to linguistic analysis. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marginal understanding of the notions of markedness and hierarchies • Marginal application of the knowledge to linguistic analysis. 	Poor familiarity with the subject matter and poor analysis of linguistic data.
3. Assignment 3 (prototype theory / grammatical description)	Demonstrate competence in using prototype theory and typological knowledge in explaining typological patterns and grammatical description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excellent mastery of prototype theory and typological knowledge • Excellent application of the theory and knowledge to linguistic analysis. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good mastery of prototype theory and typological knowledge • Good application of the theory and knowledge to linguistic analysis. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marginal mastery of prototype theory and typological knowledge • Marginal application of the theory and knowledge to linguistic analysis. 	Poor familiarity with the subject matter and poor analysis of linguistic data.

Part III Other Information (more details can be provided separately in the teaching plan)

1. Keyword Syllabus

(An indication of the key topics of the course.)

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

2. Reading List

2.1 Essential Reading

(Compulsory readings can include books, book chapters, or journal/magazine articles. There are also collections of e-books, e-journals available from the CityU Library.)

1.	Croft, William (1990). <i>Typology and universals</i> . Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
2.	Whaley, Lindsay J. (1997). <i>Introduction to typology: The unity and diversity of language</i> . Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

2.2 Supplementary Readings

(Additional references for students to learn to expand their knowledge about the subject.)

1.	Aikhenvald, Alexandra Y. (2000). <i>Classifiers: A typology of noun categorization devices</i> . Oxford: Oxford University Press.
2.	Bybee, Joan, Revere Perkins and William Pagliuca (1994). <i>The evolution of grammar: Tense, Aspect, and Modality in the Languages of the World</i> . Chicago: The University of Chicago.
3.	Comrie, Bernard. (1989). <i>Language Universals and Linguistic Typology</i> (Second Edition). Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
4.	Matthew Dryer, David Gil and Bernard Comrie (2005). <i>World atlas of linguistic structures</i> . Oxford: Oxford University Press.