

ARTS1011

Linguistics: The Understanding of Language
6 credits – total learning hours: 150

Session C: July 16 – August 3, 2018
Mon to Fri, 10:00 am – 1:00 pm

Course Description

In this three-week course students will be able to gain a solid understanding of language and its many facets. The focus will be on language as a human tool of communication as well as how we use it in its many forms. We are all experts in our own language, and being based in Asia we are also very likely to speak more than one language. But how do we know our own language so well? Why is a second language so difficult to master? How is language used in our everyday lives? These questions and many more will be answered in this challenging yet stimulating course.

During the course we will begin from the fundamentals in our understanding of language: its structure, sound, meaning and usage. After appreciating these important details we will explore further into language learning, language and society, and how writing is a human invention to permanently record our spoken utterances.

The course is useful to anyone who wants to improve their knowledge about their first language, want to improve their ability in their second language, or just learn more about this very human quality we possess.

The course will address the following questions:

- 1) Why is it so easy to learn a native/1st language, and difficult to learn a 2nd one?
- 2) How did language suddenly emerge in human groups?
- 3) Is our brain “language ready” when we are born?
- 4) Can we think without language?
- 5) Why are there so many different languages in the world?

Aims and Objectives

- Better understand the complexities and nature of human language and how we try to analyze its different areas.
- Explore various aspects of your own and other languages, as well as writing systems from around the world.
- Gain an insight into the problems, challenges and breakthroughs in the understanding of language.

List of Topics

- 1) Phonetics - the sounds of language
- 2) Phonology - the sound patterns of language
- 3) Semantics - words and meaning
- 4) Morphology - word structure
- 5) Syntax - sentence structure
- 6) Pragmatics - speaker intended meaning

- 7) Language Learning – how do we acquire/learn a language?
- 8) Writing Systems - the written word
- 9) Sociolinguistics - language and society
- 10) The Life Cycle of Language – How new languages are created or old ones die.

Learning Activities

Lectures – This will be the main vehicle for introducing the different topics and theories used in the investigation of natural language.

Tutorials – To ensure new material has been understood, activity-based and discussion-based problems will be set for the class

Presentations – Small groups will be given a specific linguistic topic to investigate and present their findings to the class.

Teaching Resources

Linguistics for Everyone: An Introduction (2nd Edition) By Kristin Denham, Anne Lobeck
Cengage Learning

Assessment Method

100% coursework

The assessment method will consist of 4 parts:

- a) tutorial participation – 10%
- b) mid-course essay – 25%
- c) group presentation in class – 25%
- d) final quiz – 40%