



UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

COURSE SYLLABUS

Philosophy of Language

1920-1-E2004P002

Learning area

1: Study of the means by which communication takes place

Learning objectives

Knowledge and understanding

- Origin and evolution of language
- Relation between language and society
- Theoretical and experimental approaches to the relation between language and thought
- Theoretical and experimental approaches to the study of literal meaning (semantics) and non-literal meaning (pragmatics)

Applying knowledge and understanding

- Identifying lexical and structural ambiguities
- Critical reading of scientific articles
- Recognizing explicit and implicit messages

Contents

The course is divided into two modules.

One module focuses on the study of language: its structure, its evolution, its relationship with thought; the other module part is devoted to the analysis of meaning: literal and explicit meaning, and implicit and figurative meaning.

Detailed program

- To what extent language evolved in our species to favor communication?
- Is language designed to optimize the transmission of information and knowledge?
- To what extent a language reflects the complexity of the society in which it is spoken?
- To what extent language (or a specific language) can shape the way the world is categorized by humans?
- Word meaning
- Sentence meaning
- Speaker meaning
- Implicit in communication: Implicatures and presuppositions
- Speech acts

Prerequisites

Students are expected to have completed the exam of Linguistics, and thus the basic notions of language structure (phonology, morphology and syntax) are taken for granted. Students lacking such basic knowledge should contact the teacher.

Teaching methods

In addition to classroom lectures, part of the teaching will take place through the discussion of scientific articles, and audio-visual material.

The material (slides and, when possible, scientific articles and videos) is made available on the e-learning site of the course, so that it can also be used by non-attending students.

Assessment methods

The exam is written, with open questions. The questions aim at ascertaining the effective acquisition of both theoretical knowledge and the ability to apply them to the reality. The evaluation criteria are: the correctness of the answers, the ability to argue, synthesize, create links, and critically read the reality.

There will be *in itinere* examinations reserved to students who regularly attend the course (two written tests, one at the end of each module of the course). Participating to optional activities contributes to final evaluation.

Upon student's request, the exam can be completed with an oral examination, on all the course topics.

Textbooks and Reading Materials

Reading materials will be made available on Bicocca e-learning website.
