UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

COURSE SYLLABUS

Philosophy of Language

2425-1-E2004P002

Learning area

1. Study of the means by which communication takes place.

Learning objectives

Knowledge and understanding

- Language and communication
- What is explicitly said and what is implicitly communicated in a conversational exchange
- Theoretical and experimental approaches to the relation between language and thought

Applying knowledge and understanding

- Assessment, synthesis and critical evaluation of theoretical debates
- Awareness of implicit contents in communication
- Critical reading of scientific articles

Contents

The first part of the course is dedicated to the relationship between language and communication, and in particular we will investigate how, during a conversational exchange, speakers can communicate much more than what they literally say. The second part of the course focusses on the relationship between language and thought: We will investigate if, and to what extent, speaking a certain language may impact on conceptualization and on behaviour.

Detailed program

- Language and communication
- Explicit and implicit
- Semantics and pragmatics
- Figurative language
- Language and thought
- Experimental studies that investigate whether particular linguistic expressions impact on thought in the following areas:
  Attributing stereotypically masculine/feminine properties to noun referents in languages that use morphological gender marking
  Focusing on the "form" or on the "substance" of objects depending on the presence of count nouns / mass nouns in one's language
  Perceiving or not perceiving color nuances depending on whether one's language has a more or less rich lexical repertoire for referring to colors
  Strategies for spatial orientation depending on the linguistic expressions available in one's language
  Temporal conception depending on the type of spatial metaphors used to refer to time

Prerequisites

Some of the topics introduced during the course of Linguistics, compulsory exam of the first semester, are taken for granted.

Teaching methods

The course has 56 hours of lectures, which will be delivered mainly as in-person lecture-based classes (transmission of content). During lectures, students are encouraged to participate actively. Some topics of the course will be covered with interactive activities, such as case studies, exercises to apply theoretical notions to practice, with the aim of encouraging students to critically process the proposed topics, and also use them to read reality. Indicatively, there will be 42 hours of in-person lecture-based classes and 14 hours of interactive lessons. The course is taught in Italian.

Assessment methods

The exam is written, with multiple choice questions, open questions and exercises. The oral exam is upon students' request.

The forced choice questions aim at ascertaining the effective acquisition of theoretical notions; open questions require the ability to assess, synthesize and evaluate theoretical debates, and to critically read scientific articles; exercises require to apply the theoretical notions taught during lessons to analyze conversational exchanges.

The evaluation criteria are the correctness of the answers, the ability to argue, synthesize, create links, and critically read what was learned.

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

Textbooks and Reading Materials

Teaching resources will be indicated on the e-learning page.

Although this course is held in Italian, for international students, course material can also be available in English, and students can take the exam in English if they wish to do so.

Sustainable Development Goals

QUALITY EDUCATION | GENDER EQUALITY | REDUCED INEQUALITIES