



# ENG423A: Current Issues in Linguistics

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Humanities and Social Sciences  
2021-22-II

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## 1. INTRODUCING THE COURSE

# ENG423A: Current Issues in Linguistics

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## Course Objective:

The course introduces students to some of the recent developments in the study of language within the field of Linguistics.

- to familiarize students with the kind of questions that have been addressed within this intellectual inquiry, and
- to sensitize the students to the place of language in human cognitive and cultural spaces.

## Course Prerequisites:

Interest in issues of language and cognition

# Topics (Part I)

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1. Introductory: Language and Cognition and what the relationship means to the study of language
2. Different perspectives on the study of language: language structure (Phonology, Morphology, Lexicon, Syntax, Semantics, Logic), Context of use (Pragmatics, Sociolinguistics), Cognitive underpinnings of language (Cognitive linguistics, Psycholinguistics)



# Topics (Part I)

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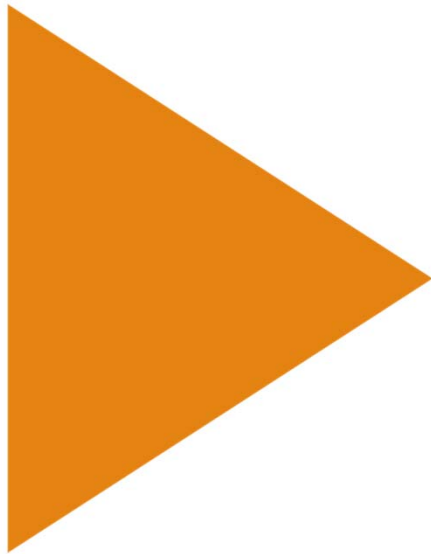
1. Prescriptive, descriptive and generative traditions in the study of language
2. Internalism and externalism
3. Cognitive linguistics: Assumptions and practice



# Topics (Part II)

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1. Explaining language change
2. Contextualising language: Language as a carrier of culture
3. Language and social control
4. Feminist critique of language
5. Language documentation and archiving



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### **Online Platforms:**

Platform for course management: HelloIITK

Platform for synchronous lecture delivery: Zoom

### **Evaluation Components:**

Mid Semester Report: 50 Marks

End Semester Report: 50 Marks

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## How to reach me:

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# What is Linguistics?

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Linguistics – a study of  
**Language**

Many perspectives

Two major perspectives  
that are of concern to us in  
the present course:

Linguistics as a **Cognitive  
Science** (Language is in the  
mind.)

Linguistics as a **Social  
Science** (Language is a  
social construct.)

Language as the common  
object of inquiry though  
how language is to be  
defined will differ across  
these approaches.



# The potential for language

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Humans have a potential to use language.

The *linguistic* potential

What is the linguistic potential of humans?

What does it mean to say that humans have knowledge of language?

# To know a language is...

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Informally speaking:

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To exchange information...

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To interact in a social context...

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To express oneself in different situations...

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To make a statement of one's identity...

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To forge a link with others...

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And so on...

# Language taken for granted...

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If you did not have language, how would you do any of the following:

- buying an item in a shop,
- providing or requesting information
- expressing an opinion
- declaring undying love
- agreeing or disagreeing
- signalling displeasure or pleasure
- arguing with someone
- insulting someone
- intimidating someone
- teaching a class, and so on



# Language taken for granted...

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**Imagine how even other kinds of activities would be accomplished in the absence of language:**

Rituals such as a birthday or a marriage

Business meetings

Attending lectures

Using the Internet, the phone, and so forth.



**Perhaps, we could accomplish some of these things without language.**



**A birthday or a marriage ceremony, depending on the nature of the rituals involved, could depend on language to a lesser or greater extent.**



**It is less clear how making a telephone call or sending an e-mail could be achieved without language.**

# Encoding and transmission

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In almost all the situations we find ourselves in, language allows a spontaneous, and more often than not, effective expression.

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A well developed means of **encoding and transmitting complex ideas**.

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Encoding: *translating* ideas into words.

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Transmitting: *Sending out* the linguistic signal.

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The two functions of language

# Two Key functions

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