



UNIWERSYTET
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W POZNANIU

Introduction to evolutionary linguistics

Educational subject description sheet

Basic information

Study programme English Linguistics: Theories, Interfaces, Technologies		Didactic cycle 2026/27	
Speciality -		Subject code 15ELIS.12.16345.26	
Organizational unit Faculty of English		Lecture languages English	
Study level First-cycle programme		Course type Obligatory	
Study form Full-time		Block Major subjects	
Education profile General academic			
Subject coordinator	Piotr Gąsiorowski		
Lecturer	Piotr Gąsiorowski		
Period Semester 2	Activities and hours • Lecture: 30, Graded credit		Number of ECTS points 2

Goals

Code	Goal
C1	Making the students familiar with evolutionary models of language change and linguistic divergence.
C2	Emphasising the role of interdisciplinary approaches to questions of language origins and the history of languages.
C3	Expanding the students' knowledge about varieties of English, their emergence and history.
C4	Making the students aware of the importance of preserving the world's linguistic heritage, maintaining linguistic diversity, and protecting endangered languages.
C5	Developing the ability to evaluate critically both scientific information and one's own knowledge in a dynamically expanding area of research.

Entry requirements

English language competency level of B2/C1; basic knowledge of descriptive linguistics; basic knowledge of the major varieties of English

Subject learning outcomes

Code	Outcomes in terms of	Learning outcomes	Examination methods
Knowledge - Student:			
W1	understands the concepts of language internal diversity, language change and linguistic innovation	ELI_K1_W01, ELI_K1_W03, ELI_K1_W06	Test
W2	understands the notion of "evolutionary process" and the basic mechanisms of evolution	ELI_K1_W01, ELI_K1_W06	Test
W3	understands the significance of language contact, multilingualism, and their consequences	ELI_K1_W03	Test
W4	is familiar with language classification and the typological variability of the world's languages; knows the basics of historical linguistics and an overview of language families	ELI_K1_W04, ELI_K1_W06	Test
W5	understands the role of biological and evolutionary factors in explaining the origins of language	ELI_K1_W04, ELI_K1_W07	Test
Skills - Student:			
U1	understands the significance of language contact, multilingualism, and their consequences	ELI_K1_U07	Practical credit (performance analysis)
Social competences - Student:			
K1	appreciates the need to save linguistic diversity and to protect endangered languages	ELI_K1_K07, ELI_K1_K09, ELI_K1_K10	Practical credit (performance analysis)

Study content

No.	Course content	Subject learning outcomes	Activities
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No.	Course content	Subject learning outcomes	Activities
1.	An evolutionary approach to language variation, development and origins; common features of evolutionary processes	W2, K1	Lecture
2.	Mechanisms of language change (language replication, sources of linguistic novelty, the propagation and fixation of innovations)	W1, W5	Lecture
3.	The internal diversity of English (dialects, sociolects, linguistic variants and competition between them, the emergence of national norms)	W1, W2, W3, W4, W5, U1, K1	Lecture
4.	Language differentiation and the origin of groups of related languages (e.g. Latin as the ancestor of the Romance group)	W1, W2, W3, W4, W5, U1, K1	Lecture
5.	Language contact, multilingualism, and their consequences (borrowing, hybridisation, pidgin and creole languages)	W1, W2, W3, W4, W5, U1, K1	Lecture
6.	English as a global language and its impact on other languages	W3, U1, K1	Lecture
7.	The ecology of language: language extinction, the protection of endangered languages	W1, W2, W3, W4, W5, U1, K1	Lecture
8.	Language families and methods of linguistic reconstruction	W1, W2, W3, W4, W5, U1, K1	Lecture
9.	Questions of common descent and the chronological horizon of reconstruction; the concept of a "Proto-World" language	W1, W2, W3, W4, W5, U1, K1	Lecture
10.	Hypotheses concerning the origin of the human language faculty; language as a system of social communication	W1, W2, W3, W4, W5, U1, K1	Lecture
11.	Human and non-human animal communication: similarities and differences	W1, W2, W3, W4, W5, U1, K1	Lecture
12.	The biological and evolutionary underpinnings of the language faculty	W1, W2, W3, W4, W5, U1, K1	Lecture

Additional information

Activities	Teaching and learning methods and activities
Lecture	Lecture with a multimedia presentation of selected issues, Discussion, Case study, Research method (scientific inquiry), Audio and/or video demonstrations

Activities	Credit conditions
Lecture	Course credit is awarded throughout the semester based on assignments, in-class participation, reading the indicated literature, and attendance. Receiving 60% of course credit is necessary for a passing grade. excellent (bdb; 5.0): a very good knowledge of issues concerning the origin and evolution of language, family relationships among languages and mechanisms of language change; a highly developed awareness of linguistic diversity, of the existence of endangered languages and the need to protect them; knowledge of the relevant terminology and the ability to use it in speech and writing; very good skills in presenting and discussing academic/research contents. very good (+db; 4.5): 1-2 competencies acquired at a level slightly below the excellent. good (db; 4.0): good level of acquiring all or almost all of the competencies. satisfactory (+dst; 3.5): 1-2 competencies acquired at a sufficient level. sufficient (dst; 3.0): (merely) sufficient level of acquiring all or almost all the competencies. failing (ndst; 2.0): insufficient acquisition of all or nearly all the competencies.

Literature

Obligatory

1. Fitch, W. Tecumseh. 2010. The evolution of language. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
2. Hurford, James R. 2007. Language in the light of evolution 1: The origins of meaning. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
3. Millar, Robert McColl. 2012. English historical sociolinguistic. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
4. Trask, R. Larry, Robert McColl Millar. 2015. Trask's historical linguistics (3rd edition, revised by Robert McColl Millar). London, New York: Routledge.

Calculation of ECTS points

Activities	Activity hours*
Lecture	30
Preparation for classes	3
Preparation for the assessment	4
Reading the indicated literature	13
performing tasks on the e-learning platform	7
Other	3
Student workload	Hours 60
Number of ECTS points	ECTS 2

* academic hour = 45 minutes

Efekty uczenia się dla kierunku

Kod	Treść
ELI_K1_K07	The graduate is ready to participating in cultural and scientific life and drawing from its various forms
ELI_K1_K09	The graduate is ready to active action to protect endangered languages
ELI_K1_K10	The graduate is ready to supporting linguistic and cultural diversity
ELI_K1_U07	The graduate can reflect on one's own written pieces and oral language statements, as well as modify them under the supervision of the lecturer/supervisor, in particular using the IT tools learned
ELI_K1_W01	The graduate knows and understands at an advanced level the subject-related and methodological specificity of linguistics
ELI_K1_W03	The graduate knows and understands selected topics, concepts and issues related to linguistic research, all at advanced levels
ELI_K1_W04	The graduate knows and understands at an advanced level, theoretical issues of English and general linguistics
ELI_K1_W06	The graduate knows and understands the complex nature of language at an advanced level
ELI_K1_W07	The graduate knows and understands concepts, methods and information and communication tools