



Study guide

Name course: 'Language, Communication and Culture'
Credits: 10
Programme: MA Communication Studies
Level: MA
Teaching staff: Dr. Esther Pascual Olivé

Entrance Requirements

Students have met admission requirements to MA CIW, English or similar study.

Course description

In this course students will be acquainted with the analysis of culturally-based differences in conceptual metaphors (e.g. TIME IS A PERSON vs. TIME IS A FLOWING RIVER). The goal is to make students aware of different ways of 'thinking' in different cultures and to provide empirically tested tools to discover these different ways. This course introduces students to the theory of Cognitive Linguistics and then explores its applications to communication and culture. Cognitive Linguistics, which takes language as part of general cognition and deals with categorization, metaphor, and cultural models as a conceptual organizing system, can also be described as social, cultural, and contextual linguistics. Therefore, by taking a Cognitive Linguistics approach to language at different levels (words, common expressions, conceptual metaphors), we can discover the way people 'think'. Different cultures may use different conceptual metaphors reflecting varying degrees of preoccupation with certain 'source domains', motivated by their different historical or cultural factors. For example, by analyzing underlying conceptual metaphors, we can discover differences in cultural models. The commonly used expression "Don't waste time", and many others like it, shows that in Anglo culture "time" is viewed as a valuable commodity. Finally, by comparing and contrasting metaphors obtained from financial reports, interviews with teachers and students, and business negotiations, we can discover differences in cultures.

Literature to be studied

Several texts on conceptual metaphors, cross-cultural metaphors, and intercultural communication are available on Nestor, as are complementary PowerPoint presentations.

Competencies to be developed

After successful completion of this course students will be able to do the following:

- Explain the link between words and expressions and conceptual metaphors.
- Understand the link between metaphors and culture.
- Recognize similarities and differences between conceptual metaphors in different languages.
- Analyze and compare cultural metaphors in different languages.
- Take an individual written test on the identification and analysis of cultural metaphors in different languages.
- Write a research report that analyses cultural metaphors in a given language/culture, or preferably contrasts cultural metaphors in two different languages/cultures.

Course objectives

The course has several sub-aims: (1) to make students aware of cultural differences in conceptual metaphors; (2) to deepen students' understanding of the relationship between words and expressions and conceptual metaphors; (3) to acquaint students with Cognitive Linguistic insights, constructs and methods to access cultural metaphors; (4) to give students first-hand experience in 'translating' theoretical insights in Cognitive Linguistics to analyze actual metaphors in different languages/cultures; (5) to take a test and write a research paper exemplifying that the first four objectives have been accomplished by analysing own and other people's data.

Assessment

A grade will be awarded on: (i) a midterm test (40%); (ii) a joint paper with a fellow student (40%) and (iii) an oral presentation with a fellow student on joint paper (20%). All three must have received at least a 5 (max. 10) for the average grade to be a pass. The quality of the data analyses in class and the weekly summaries will play a role in the final grade (e.g. when deciding whether an average '5.5' should be a '5' or a '6' in the final grade). A student who has not fulfilled all the requirements will not receive a final grade.

Research Paper

In pairs

10 pages (5,000 words approx.)

At least 8 references