

The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology
UG Course Syllabus

Supercommunication Offline and On: The Art of Connecting
LANG2069
3 credits

Pre-requisites: Either LANG 1406/1407/1408/1409 OR LANG 1403/1404

Co-requisites: N/A.

Name of Course Coordinator: Melissa Megan

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Office Hours of Course Coordinator: Available by appointment.

Course Description

This course is designed to equip students with the language and communication strategies and social-emotional competencies necessary to build meaningful connections in academic, social, and professional contexts. Students will explore how identity, emotional intelligence, and conversational alignment shape interactions and learn to adapt their strategies to different conversational settings, both offline and online. Through active learning, students will develop essential skills such as asking thoughtful questions, active listening, storytelling, and analyzing conversations. They will practice applying these skills in real-world scenarios, from professional settings such as interviews to personal moments such as first dates. The course emphasizes reflection, as students map their identities, assess their growth as communicators, and diagnose conversational challenges, including those unique to digital spaces. By the end of the course, students will have the tools to navigate conversations with empathy, identify and resolve communication barriers, and emerge as confident, adaptive, and effective “supercommunicators.”

Key topics:

1. Social-emotional competence (SEC) and communication
2. Identity, belonging and communication
3. Conversation and connection
4. Supercommunicators around you (conversation analysis)
5. Developing behaviours for meaningful conversation (four rules)
6. Active Listening
7. Having emotional conversations; perspective getting versus perspective taking
8. Unconscious bias and effective intercultural communication
9. Telling ‘connect’ stories
10. Conversation amid conflict
11. Conversation and connection online (the potential pitfalls)

Methods of instruction:

To get to know yourself and to develop the skills of a supercommunicator, this course will require students to take an *active* and *reflective* approach to their learning.

In lectures, approximately 50% of learning will be active – involving discussion with others and analysis of conversations.

Learning in tutorials will be almost 100% active. Students will practise communication strategies and language use in role plays and simulations. Students will also share learning from provided readings in a reading group. Students will have opportunities to share reflections on their learning.

Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs)

On successful completion of the course, students will be able to:

1	Apply effective communication strategies and appropriate language to connect with others in academic, social, and professional contexts, both offline and online
2	Apply knowledge of communication studies and psychology to analyse and evaluate conversations to identify successes, challenges, and areas for improvement
3	Use storytelling techniques to strengthen emotional connections and communicate effectively in conversations in diverse contexts
4	Use precise and appropriate language to articulate emotions, validate and respond to others' emotions to create meaningful connections
5	Reflect on social identity and social-emotional competence and how they impact communication
6	Critically reflect on development as a communicator in adapting language and communication strategies in connecting with others in diverse contexts

Assessment and Grading

This course will be assessed using criterion-referencing and grades will not be assigned using a curve.

Assessments

Assessment Task	Contribution to Overall Course grade (%)	Due date
Assignment #1 Fast Friends Procedure and analysis (video + written analysis)	20% (pairwork)	Week 5*
Assignment #2 Conversation analysis and protocol for effective conversation (‘appendices’ + presentation)	35% (groupwork 20% and individual 15%)	Weeks 11 and 13*
Portfolio of reflections	5% + 30% (individual)	Check point task at Week 6 + final submission, Week 14*
Reading Group Sharing	10% (peer evaluation)	Various* (Weeks 6 – 9)

* Specific due dates are posted on Canvas.

Mapping of Course ILOs to Assessment Tasks

Assessed Task	Mapped ILOs	Explanation
A1: Fast Friends Procedure and analysis (video + written analysis)	ILO1, ILO2, ILO3, ILO4	This task assesses students' ability to critically analyse a conversation (ILO2). To complete this analysis, students will pair up for the 'Fast Friends Procedure'. Instructions for this procedure are given. The procedure involves asking a series of 36 increasingly personal questions designed to promote self-disclosure and vulnerability (ILO1, ILO3, ILO4). Students video the procedure, watch the video and choose 3 'annotation points'. Students write an overall analysis of the conversation (400 words) + analysis of the 3 annotation points (200 words for each point) = ~1,000 words.
A2: Conversation analysis and protocol for effective conversation (presentation + 'appendices')	ILO1, ILO2, ILO3, ILO4	Students work in small groups (ILO1), choose a conversation context and source examples of 'important conversations' in that context. Examples might be a first date, meeting a new colleague for the first time etc., and can be from films or TV programs, or 'real life' conversations. Students analyse conversations to identify successes, issues, and areas for improvement (ILO2). Each student writes a ~500- word analysis that will be submitted as 'Appendices' to the presentation. Based on the analyses, the groups present a protocol for effective conversations in their chosen context (10 – 15 minutes, depending on size of group) (ILO1, ILO2, ILO4).
Portfolio of reflections	ILO5, ILO6	This task requires students to reflect on their social identity and social-emotional competence and how they impact communication (ILO5) and assesses their ability to critically reflect on their development as a communicator (ILO6).

		Students submit at least 5 reflections, including 4 of 250-300 words written at various learning points throughout the semester. They also write up a 450-500-word reflection on their participation in a required conversation simulation in Week 12.
Reading group sharing	ILO1	This task is peer-assessed. Group members take turns sharing their reading on a specific topic. Before the lesson, students share a ~200-word response to their reading and post it, along with possible discussion questions, on their group's Canvas page. During the lesson, students elaborate on the response in a 3–4 minute talk, then facilitate a 10-minute group discussion on the topic. Groupmates will evaluate their peers' preparation for sharing (the written response and discussion questions), their short talk and facilitation of discussion (ILO1).

Grading Rubrics

Detailed rubrics for each assignment are provided on Canvas. These rubrics clearly outline the criteria used for evaluation. Students can refer to these rubrics to understand how their work will be assessed.

Final Grade Descriptors

Grades	Short Description	Elaboration on subject grading description
A	Excellent Performance	Content: Demonstrates sophisticated synthesis of well-developed ideas from quality sources with skilful coherence. Communication: Uses nuanced language with sustained awareness of target audience/reader, context, purpose.
B	Good Performance	Content: Demonstrates synthesis of well-developed ideas from quality sources with effective coherence. Communication: Uses effective language with very high awareness of target audience/reader, context, purpose.
C	Satisfactory Performance	Content: Demonstrates synthesis of relevant ideas from quality sources with mostly clear coherence. Communication: Uses appropriate language with some awareness of target audience/reader, context, purpose.

D	Marginal Pass	Content: Synthesizes relevant ideas with some analysis, somewhat coherently. Ideas may be superficial, repetitive, missing or inadequate. Communication: Use some appropriate language with little awareness of target audience/reader, context, purpose. Communication is often inadequate or awkward.
F	Fail	Content: Does not synthesize, develop or organize ideas sufficiently. Ideas are very superficial, repetitive, irrelevant, inadequate, and/or lacking. Communication: limited awareness of audience, context, purpose; limited control of language.

Course AI Policy

We encourage students to make use of all the tools available that can help them to communicate more effectively in English. We also expect students to uphold the highest standards of academic integrity. There is no penalty for using or not using GenAI. However, GenAI and other tools cannot be used as a substitute for a student's own work. Students are expected to write their own essays and to prepare for assessed speaking tasks themselves.

GenAI tools can be very useful for:

- Brainstorming ideas and suggesting sources BUT the information provided may not be accurate or relevant to your assignment.
- Giving suggestions about improving the organization of your writing BUT GenAI tends to suggest very formulaic patterns of writing which may not fit your requirements.
- Giving suggestions about improving your language BUT GenAI may make suggestions for language changes which are not appropriate for the intended context and audience.
- Suggesting simple ways of expressing complex discipline-specific concepts BUT these explanations may be unfamiliar to your audience.
- Providing summaries of long texts BUT important information may be omitted, particularly if the original text is not well-written.

In short, GenAI provides opportunities to enhance your use of English and contains pitfalls which you need to be aware of.

Communication and Feedback

Marks for assessed tasks will be communicated via Canvas within ten working days of submission. Feedback on assignments will include strengths and areas for improvement, where relevant. Students who have further questions about the feedback including marks should consult the instructor within five working days after the feedback is received.

Resubmission Policy

Resubmissions are not accepted, except in exceptional circumstances.

Required Texts and Materials

Course materials and additional resources are provided via Canvas.

Academic Integrity

Students are expected to adhere to the university's academic integrity policy. Students are expected to uphold HKUST's Academic Honor Code and to maintain the highest standards of academic integrity. The University has zero tolerance of academic misconduct. Please refer to [Academic Integrity | HKUST – Academic Registry](#) for the University's definition of plagiarism and ways to avoid cheating and plagiarism.

Plagiarism

Students should not copy from others nor submit the same work for multiple courses. Source materials must be explicitly acknowledged.

Assignments with evidence of plagiarism may score a zero and be followed up with your department's Dean. To demonstrate academic integrity and avoid plagiarism, you are expected to:

- paraphrase, summarize, reference and synthesize ideas from sources.
- refrain from copying expressions and ideas directly from any source (e.g. from another student, or from a video, or from an article, etc.) without proper acknowledgement.

Attendance Policy

As a responsible and proactive university student, it is assumed that you will attend all lessons. Each lesson helps develop and apply the skills needed for assessments.

If you miss a lesson, you are expected to:

- be professional and message your groupmates if they will be affected.
- be proactive to catch up on any work you miss.