Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur

Revised Course Proposal

(Upgradation of ENG453 from 5 Credit Course to 9 Credit Course)

1. Course No: ENG453

2. Course Title: Linguistic Universals

3. Per Week Lectures: (3+0+0+0): 9

4. Duration of Course: Full Semester

5. Proposing Department/IDP: Humanities and Social Sciences

Other Departments/IDPs which may be interested in the proposed course: NA

Other faculty members interested in teaching the proposed course:

Chaithra Puttaswamy, Usha Udaar, and Chinmay Dharurkar

6. Revised Course Proposing Instructor(s): Sh. Francis Monsang

7. Course Description:

This course aims to provide an understanding of the linguistic universals—properties that all languages have in common despite innumerable variations across languages. The course will introduce students to the theoretical and empirical issues that underlie the concept of linguistic universals. It will address universals of language structures such as grammatical categories, phonological, morphological, syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic universals, with some examples from South Asian languages. It will also deal with universals in language change and acquisition. With this awareness of the shared properties and structures that all languages have, students will be able to understand the ways in which languages are similar (linguistic universals) in linguistic theory and use their innate linguistic abilities to grasp key aspects of language concepts more quickly.

A) Objectives:

The objectives of the course are:

i)To examine how languages are similar (linguistic universals) in their structural properties despite numerous variations across languages, and

ii) To understand the theoretical and empiricalmethods used in the study of linguistic universals.

B) Contents (preferably in the form of 5 to 10 broad titles):

SN	Broad Title	Topics	Number of Lectures
1	In search of linguistic universals	What are linguistic universals?How to we find universals? Inductive vs. deductive approaches to the study of linguistic universals.	2
2	Types oflinguistic universals	Formal and substantive universals,absolute universals andtendencies, implicational and non-implicational universals.	2
3	Explanations for linguistic universals	Monogenesis hypothesis, language contact hypothesis, innateness hypothesis.	2
4	Theoretical and empirical approaches to linguistic universals	Empirical approach: Greenberg's concept of language universals; Theoreticalapproach: Chomsky's concept of universal grammar, language universals, parametric variation,and minimalist programme.	4
5	Linguistic universals and typology	Linguistic universals in typology; some generalization about language.	2
6	Grammatical categoryuniversals	Word class universals; person,number, gender,tense, aspect; Greenberg's grammatical related universals.	3
7	Phonological universals	Universals of speech sounds: vowels, consonants; phonotacticuniversals; syllables; non-arbitrariness of phonological form: interjections, onomatopoeia, parental terms, sound symbolism.	4
8	Morphological universals	Morphemes, root and affixes,inflection, derivation, compounding;Greenberg's morphological universals.	4
9	Syntactic universals	Universals of basic word order; major principles of universal grammar: structural dependency, headedness principle, embedded principle, projection principle, locality principle; anaphora, imperative, interrogative, negative construction; negative polarity items, relative clause;Greenberg's syntactic universals.	6
10	Semantic and pragmatic universals	Universals of sound and meaning relationship; effability hypothesis;basic color terms, kinship terminology; entailment,universal presuppositions, deixis,conversational implicature.	4
11	Language change and universals	Language change, reason for language change,types of language change.	2
12	Universal grammar and language acquisition	Chomsky's Innateness hypothesis, Chomsky's theory of language acquisition; ability of human beings to acquire, know, and use language.	3

C) Pre-requisites: NONE

D) Short summary for including in the Courses of Study Booklet:

This course provides an overview of the linguistic universals, properties that all languages have in common despite innumerable variations across languages, as understood in the linguistic research.The course will introduce students to the theoretical and empirical issues that underlie the concept of linguistic universals. It will cover universals of language structures such as grammatical categories, phonological, morphological, syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic universals,with some examples from South Asian languages. It will also deal with universals in language change and acquisition. The study will provide an understanding of the ways in which languages are similar in some of their structural properties.

8. Recommended books:

Core Readings:

Alexiadou, A. (2002). *Theoretical Approaches to Universals*. John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Chomsky, Noam (1968). *Language and Mind*. Harper and Row.

Chomsky, Noam (1965). *Aspects of the theory of syntax*. MIT Press.

Comrie, Bernard (1981).*Language Universals and Linguistic Typology*. University of Chicago

Press.

Croft, William (2003). *Typology and Universals* (2nd ed).Cambridge University Press.

Greenberg, Joseph H. (1966). Some Universals of Grammar with Particular Reference to the Order of Meaningful Elements. In Greenberg, Joseph H. (Ed.), *Universals of Language*(2nd ed).(73-113). MIT Press.

Hess, Clark (2021). *Language Universals and Linguistic Typology*. States Academic Press.

Hockett, Charles E. (1966). The Problem of Universals in Language. In Greenberg, Joseph H. (Ed.), *Universals of Language*(2nd ed).(pp. 1-29). MIT Press.

Levinson, S. C. (2011). Universals in pragmatics. In P. C. Hogan (Ed.), *The Cambridge encyclopedia of the language sciences* (pp. 654-657). Cambridge University Press.

Scalise, Sergio (2009). *Universals of Language Today*. Spinger.

Subbarao, K. V. (2012). *South Asian Languages: A Syntactic Typology*. Cambridge University Press.

Subbarao, K. V. &Saxena, A. (1987) Language Universals: Inductive or deductive? In E. Bashir, M.Deshpande & P. E. Hook (Eds.), *Select Papers from SALA 7* (pp. 337-342). Indiana University LinguisticClub.

von Fintel, K., & Matthewson, L. (2008). Universals in semantics. *Linguistic Review*, *25*, 139–201. doi:10.1515/TLIR.2008.004|10.1515/TLR.2008.004

Suggested Readings:

Abbi, Anvita (1994). *Semantic Universals in Indian languages*. Indian Institute of Advanced Study.

Bickel, Balthasar (2014). Linguistic diversity and universals. In N. J. Enfield, Paul Kockelman,
& Jack Sidnell (Eds.),*Cambridge Handbook of Linguistic Anthropology* (pp. 102-127). Cambridge University Press.

Christiansen,M. H., Collins, C. &Edelman, S. (2009). *Language Universals*. Oxford University Press.

Chomsky, Noam (1973). *Reflections on Language*. Pantheon

Evans, N. & Levinson, S. C. (2009). The myth of language universals: Languagediversity and its importance for cognitive science. *Behavioral and Brain Sciences32*(5):429–92.

Good, Jeff(2008). *Linguistic Universals and Language Change*. Oxford University Press.

Greenberg, Joseph H. (2005). *Language Universals: With Special Reference to Feature Hierarchies*. De Gruyter Mouton.

Greenberg, Joseph H. (Ed.) (1978).*Universals of Human Language*(Vol. 4) Syntax. Stanford University Press.

Haspelmath, Martin (2001).*Language Typology and Language Universals: An International Handbook*.Walter de Gruyter.

Hawkins, J.A. (1983). *Word order universals*. Academic Press.

Mairal, Ricardo & Gil, Juana (Eds.).(2006). *Linguistic Universals*. Cambridge University Press.

Subbarao, K.V. (1996).Word order universals in Indian Languages. In Lakshmi Bai B. & A. Mukherjee (Eds.),*Word order in languages*. Osmania University and BooklinksCorporation.

Wiltschko, Martina (2014). *The Universal Structure of Categories: Towards a Formal Typology*.Cambridge University Press.
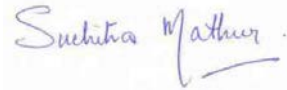
9. Any other remarks:

The course is for undergraduates, and the course pedagogy involves lectures and discussion of research papers in the domains of linguistic universals.

Dated: 20-01-2025   Revised Course Proposer: (Sh. Francis Monsang)

Dated: 24-01-2025   DUGC Convener: (Suchitra Mathur)

The course is approved / not approved

Chairman, SUGC/SPGC

Dated:_____

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