

- Faculté des lettres et sciences humaines
- www.unine.ch/lettres

Seminar 1: Linguistics : (Im)politeness in Discourse (2AN2150)

Filières concernées	Nombre d'heures	Validation	Crédits ECTS
Pilier B A - langue et littérature anglaises	Séminaire: 2 ph	Voir ci-dessous	6
Pilier principal M A - sciences du langage et de la communication	Séminaire: 2 ph	Voir ci-dessous	5
Pilier secondaire M A - sciences du langage et de la communication	Séminaire: 2 ph	Voir ci-dessous	5

ph=période hebdomadaire, pg=période globale, j=jour, dj=demi-jour, h=heure, min=minute

Période d'enseignement:

- Semestre Automne

Equipe enseignante

Dr. Samuel Bourgeois

Contenu

(Im)politeness research is a relatively new discipline that has come to the forefront of pragmatics research in large part due to the seminal work by Brown & Levinson entitled "Politeness: Some universals in language usage" in [1978] 1987. This course provides students with an in-depth survey of (im)politeness research from the late 20th century to today. Moreover, at the end of this seminar, you will be able to answer the following questions:

- Is it always offensive to use taboo language? Why or why not?
- Are formal politeness strategies appropriate and appreciated in all contexts?
- Does one's identity play a role in how they interact with others?
- Where is the dividing line between friendly teasing and vicious mockery?
- Why are impolite behaviors often used to generate humor in novels, television, and film?

This seminar includes regular reading assignments and in-class discussion of some of the most influential studies in the field. Other related notions that will be explored in the course include facework, norms and expectations, the moral order, power, identity (gender, race, social class, etc.), humor, and (strategic) ambiguity, just to name a few. The first part of this seminar introduces students to the basic principles of pragmatics research and the roots of early politeness and impoliteness research. The second half of this seminar expands to specialized topics of (im)politeness research that are the focus of contemporary enquiry. The regular sessions will combine discussion of important theoretical notions with practical analysis of a variety of data types – including real-life, semi-scripted, and fictional discourses – that illustrate how (im)politeness is used and evaluated by people coming from multiple Anglophone societies. At the end of this seminar, students get hands-on experience by applying some of the tools and methods described in class to their own small-scale research projects using self-selected data.

Forme de l'évaluation

The grade for this course is awarded based on in-class participation and two assignments. Regular attendance and participation accounts for 10% of the course grade. Details on how this is calculated will be provided during the first session of the seminar. The first assignment is a 20-minute oral presentation on a theme that is related to one of the in-class topics. It accounts for 30% of the final grade. Students will be expected to pick their presentation date by the second session of this seminar on a sign-up sheet provided on Moodle. Further details on this assignment will be given on the first day of class. The second assignment is a paper based on an empirical research project that will represent 60% of the final grade. Students must develop their research project around a topic related to (im)politeness of their own choosing, which may but need not be related to the theme covered in their oral presentation. All students must communicate their research topic and preliminary research question to the instructor by the tenth session of the seminar for approval.

The research papers must be submitted on 8 January 2027 by 23:59. The required length of these research papers is 3,000 words ($\pm 20\%$) for BA students and 5,000 words ($\pm 20\%$) for MA students. More details concerning the requirements for each assignment will be communicated during the first session of the seminar.

In the event of a sanitary crisis, the modalities for assessment remain the same. However, the oral presentations will be given via Microsoft Teams instead of in person.

Modalités de rattrapage

In the event that an average of 4.0 is not reached at the end of this course, students will be required to conduct a rewrite of their term paper following the instructions provided by the instructor. The grade of this second attempt will constitute 100% of the second attempt. The due date

URLs	1) https://moodle.unine.ch/course/view.php?id=13803
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for the retake assignment will be 12 February 2027.

Documentation

All required readings are provided on Moodle. Students are expected to familiarize themselves with the assigned readings prior to attending each session. Important updates will be communicated regularly by the instructor (Dr. Samuel Bourgeois) via the Moodle Messenger application. In case of questions, students are asked to e-mail the instructor directly.

All course slides, exercises, and other materials will be added to Moodle in the days following each session. Supplementary documents will be added to Moodle as the course progresses.

Pré-requis

Students must have taken an introductory linguistics class. As this course is given in English, a minimum of a B2 level is required.

Forme de l'enseignement

This seminar will require active student participation during in-class discussions and student presentations.

Objectifs d'apprentissage

Au terme de la formation l'étudiant-e doit être capable de :

- Discuss different linguistic theories related to (im)politeness research
- Differentiate opposing theoretical frameworks within this field of study
- Summarize and engage critically with the extant (im)politeness literature
- Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of applying competing approaches to (im)politeness to data
- Test hypotheses
- Present an overview of research on a topic relating to (im)politeness research
- Carry out independent research
- Observe real-life circumstances from a scientific viewpoint
- Interpret empirical data
- Categorise empirical data

Compétences transférables

- Work in professional English
- Apply knowledge to new situations
- Manage independent and group assignments
- Observe real-life circumstances from a scientific viewpoint
- Communicate effectively and clearly
- Generate new ideas
- Organise oneself to be able to set priorities and meet deadlines

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