

Global Expedition in Languages and Cultures

Department: Fudan International Summer Session 2026

Course Code	GEIS10035						
Course Title	Global Expedition in Languages and cultures						
Credit	2	Experiment (including Computer) Credit		Practice Credit		Aesthetic Education Credit	
Credit Hours Per Week	9 credit hours per week. 36+3 tutorial hours in total (one credit hour is 45 minutes)	Education on The Hard- Working Spirit Credit Hours		Language of Instruction	Engli sh	Honors Course	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Course Type	<input type="checkbox"/> Core General Education Course <input type="checkbox"/> Specific General Education Course <input type="checkbox"/> Basic Course in General Discipline <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Others			2+X Major :			
				<input type="checkbox"/> Professional Core Course <input type="checkbox"/> Professional Advanced Course Non 2+X Major : <input type="checkbox"/> Professional Compulsory Course <input type="checkbox"/> Professional Elective Course			
Course Objectives	Step into a Global Expedition in Languages and Cultures, where you will trek through the "linguistic wilderness" to discover how the world's languages uniquely capture the human experience. This journey balances scientific discovery with creative storytelling, challenging you to not only decode the grammatical blueprints of diverse cultures but to use them as inspiration for your own imagination. Using professional "detective" tools and digital maps, you will master the art of linguistic analysis before transitioning into an architect of new worlds. The expedition concludes with the engineering of an original constructed language (a "Conlang") and the creation of a professional Field Guide—a portfolio that blends logical consistency with narrative flair to showcase the story and culture behind your unique linguistic creation..						

Course Description	Embark on a global expedition to discover how the world's 7,000+ languages uniquely organize human thought, moving far beyond familiar Western structures to explore how different cultures track truth, time, and social relationships. Instead of traditional lectures, you will act as a linguistic detective in a hands-on laboratory, using professional digital tools and decoding techniques to crack the grammatical puzzles of diverse languages from every continent. The semester concludes not with an exam, but with a creative project where you will design your own original constructed language (a "Conlang") and compile a professional "Field Guide" to justify its architecture. By building your own linguistic system, you will gain a deep, practical understanding of the universal patterns and fascinating diversities that define human speech.
Course Requirements: Prerequisites: None.	
Teaching Methods: How We'll Learn: Your Expedition Handbook This course replaces traditional lectures with active exploration. We don't just talk about languages; we decode them, map them, and build them. 1. The Code-Breaker's Lab Forget memorizing rules. In every class, I'll give you a "mystery sentence" from a language you've never heard of. Your job? Use a few simple clues to crack the code and figure out how it works. It's like a daily escape room for your brain. 2. Language Show & Tell You are already an expert in at least one language! We'll have relaxed "campfire" chats where you share cool or weird things about your own native language. There's no pressure—just a chance to see how your classmates think differently than you. 3. Building Your Own Language This is the big one. Instead of an exam, you'll spend the second half of the semester inventing your own "DIY" language. You get to decide the rules, the sounds, and the words. It's like being the architect of your own secret world.	
Course Director's Academic Background: YE Jingting is currently a junior professor at Fudan University and she was a guest researcher (2020-2023) in the Department of Linguistic and Cultural Evolution at the Max Planck Institute for	

Evolutionary Anthropology. She got her PhD from both Leipzig University (2021) and Fudan University (2017). Her research interests lie primarily in linguistic typology, the semantic map theory and comparative corpus studies.

Instructor's Academic Background:

YE Jingting is currently a junior professor at Fudan University and she was a guest researcher (2020-2023) in the Department of Linguistic and Cultural Evolution at the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology. She got her PhD from both Leipzig University (2021) and Fudan University (2017). Her research interests lie primarily in linguistic typology, the semantic map theory and comparative corpus studies.

Members of Teaching Team

Name	Gender	Professional Title	Department	Responsibility
YE Jingting	female	Dr.	Department of Chinese Language and Literature	Instructor

Course Schedule:

Course Journey: Your 4-Week Expedition

Phase 1: The First Steps into the Wild

Session 1: The Explorer’s Compass & The Secret Code Every explorer needs a map and a way to decode what they find. We’ll introduce our "Secret Code"—a simple way to break down any sentence into its core parts. In our first lab, you'll crack your first linguistic puzzles and begin the sketches of your own original language (your Conlang).

Session 2: The Edge of Reality – What Makes a Language Possible? Are there rules that all humans follow when they speak? We’ll look at the "impossible" languages and decide where in the world your own language lives. Is it spoken on a tropical island? In a frozen tundra? Your environment will start to shape your speech.

Session 3: The Skeleton – Building Your First Sentences How do words line up? We’ll explore the "skeletons" of sentences—who is doing what to whom. You’ll decide if your language puts the action first, last, or in the middle, and see how that one choice changes everything else in your world.

Session 4: Campfire Check-in I – The Blueprint Reveal Our first collaborative session! We'll gather to share our "blueprints." You'll show off your language's basic structure and get feedback on how your sentence skeleton holds up in the wild.

Phase 2: The Deep Jungle – Meaning and Truth

Session 5: The Truth-Tracker – How Do You Know? In some languages, you can't just say "It's raining." You have to say "It's raining because I see it" or "It's raining because I heard it." We'll learn how different cultures track the "truth" and build a truth-tracking system for your speakers.

Session 6: Connection & Ownership – Is This Mine or Yours? How do we show that things belong together? We'll look at how languages handle "ownership"—from owning a tool to "owning" a body part or a family member. You'll decide how your speakers connect the world around them.

Session 7: Campfire Check-in II – The Soul of Your Language Time to share the "soul" of your creation. We'll discuss how your speakers handle knowledge and possession, comparing the unique ways your different languages view the world.

Phase 3: The Final Trek – Power and Mapping

Session 8: The Power Play – Making Things Happen How do we express power? We'll look at how languages handle "causing" things—how we make, let, or help someone do something. You'll build these power dynamics into your language's grammar.

Session 9: The Global Treasure Hunt – Digital Scavenging Using the World Atlas of Language Structures (WALS), we'll go on a digital treasure hunt. Your mission: find a rare, "weird" feature from a real endangered language and successfully steal it for your own creation.

Session 10: Mapping the Mind – Colors, Emotions, and Nature Do we all see "blue" or "sadness" the same way? We'll explore how different cultures divide up the "map of the mind" and design a unique mental map for your language's speakers.

Session 11: Final Briefing – The Polish and the Peer Review The expedition is almost over. We'll workshop our languages as a group, ensuring every rule you've built works together seamlessly before you put the finishing touches on your final portfolio.

Session 12: The Grand Gala – The Explorer's Reveal A formal celebration of our journey. You will present your finished "Explorer's Field Guide"—a complete manual of your language, featuring translated stories and maps. We'll celebrate the new worlds you've built!

The design of class discussion or exercise, practice, experience and so on:

1. The Code-Breaker's Lab (Practice)

Crack "mystery sentences" from rare languages using simple clues. You'll learn to take words apart and see how other cultures assemble their thoughts.

2. The Global Campfire (Discussion)

A low-pressure space to share "linguistic specimens" from your own life. Compare how your classmates describe the world and realize that your "normal" is just one of 7,000 possibilities.

3. Digital Treasure Hunts (Exercise)

Use interactive world maps to hunt for rare grammar features across the globe. Find a "weird" rule you love? Claim it as inspiration for your own creation.

4. The World-Builder's Outpost (Experience)

This is where you stop exploring and start creating. Use the patterns you've gathered to engineer the rules, logic, and "soul" of your original constructed language.

If you need a TA, please indicate the assignment of assistant:

Assignment of Assistant: Roles and Responsibilities

1. Exercise Support

The TA provides real-time help during the "Code-Breaker" sessions. They guide you through the process of breaking down mystery sentences, ensuring you can identify patterns and apply the decoding rules correctly without getting stuck.

2. Dataset Guidance

They act as the primary support for the digital portion of the course. If you have trouble navigating the online maps or extracting data from the World Atlas of Language Structures (WALS), the TA will provide step-by-step technical assistance.

3. Project Consultation

The TA holds dedicated office hours to review your Constructed Language (Conlang). They check your work for logical consistency, answer questions about how to apply linguistic rules to your own creation, and help you prepare your final "Field Guide" portfolio.

4. Group Facilitation

During discussion sessions, the TA helps manage the flow of conversation. They ensure that everyone has the opportunity to share examples from their own languages and help bridge the gap between different cultural perspectives in the classroom.

Grading & Evaluation:

In alignment with the course's "Expedition" theme, the grading scheme rewards consistent engagement with primary data and the successful synthesis of theoretical concepts into the final constructed language project.

Assessment Breakdown

The Explorer's Logbook (25%)

This is your personal record of our weekly "Code-Breaker" labs. You will be graded on your participation in hands-on exercises, such as cracking mystery sentences, hunting for rare language features on digital maps, and solving "impossible language" puzzles. We are not looking for perfect "correctness" here; instead, your grade reflects your ability to use the tools we provide to analyze new data and document what you discover.

Campfire Sessions (25%)

During our three "Campfire Sessions," you will give a very short, informal update on your progress. These are low-pressure moments to share how your invented language is growing. You'll explain the choices you've made—like how your sentences are built or how your speakers track the truth—using the patterns we've discussed in class. These sessions ensure you receive regular feedback from your peers and the professor before you reach the end of the trek.

The Final Field Guide (40%)

The centerpiece of the course is your "Field Guide," a professional-style manual that documents your original language. This portfolio includes an overview of your grammar rules, a "Mental Map" showing how your speakers categorize the world, and a 10-sentence story—your own "Rosetta Stone"—translated into your new language. Your guide will be evaluated on how logically your rules work together and how well you've followed the universal patterns found in real human speech.

Team Spirit & The Grand Gala (10%)

As a member of this global expedition, your contribution to the team matters. This portion of your grade covers your participation in peer-review sessions and your role in our final celebration, "The Grand Gala." We look for your ability to give helpful, friendly feedback to your classmates and how clearly you can present your linguistic discoveries to the group during our final session.

Usage of Textbook: Yes (complete textbook information form below) No

Textbook Information (No more than two textbooks) :

Title	Author	ISBN N	Publishing Time	Publisher	Type I	Type II
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					<input type="checkbox"/> Self-compiled Textbook (Published) <input type="checkbox"/> Non-mainland Textbook <input type="checkbox"/> Other Textbook (Published)	<input type="checkbox"/> National Planning Textbook <input type="checkbox"/> Provincial and Ministerial Planning Textbook <input type="checkbox"/> School Level Planning Textbook <input type="checkbox"/> Others
					<input type="checkbox"/> Self-compiled Textbook (Published) <input type="checkbox"/> Non-mainland Textbook <input type="checkbox"/> Other Textbook (Published)	<input type="checkbox"/> National Planning Textbook <input type="checkbox"/> Provincial and Ministerial Planning Textbook <input type="checkbox"/> School Level Planning Textbook <input type="checkbox"/> Others

Teaching Materials & References:

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Greenberg, Joseph H. 1963/1990. Some universals of grammar with particular reference to the order of meaningful elements. On language: Selected writings of Joseph H. Greenberg, ed. Keith Denning and Suzanne Kemmer, 40–70. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

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