LING 211 – Introduction to Linguistic Analysis

Section 01:  TTh 10:30–11:50 AM, Eliot 103
Section 02:  TTh 01:10–02:30 PM, Eliot 103

Course Syllabus
Fall 2014

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officE hrs: Mon, 1:30–2:30PM  Wed, 3:30–5:30 PM
Wed, 11:00–1:00PM  Thurs, 4:00–5:00 PM
(or by appointment)  (or by appointment)

PREREQUISITES

There are no prerequisites for this course, other than an interest in language. Some familiarity with traditional grammar terms such as noun, verb, preposition, syllable, consonant, vowel, phrase, clause, sentence, etc., would be useful, but is by no means required.

CONTENT AND FOCUS OF THE COURSE

This course is an introduction to the scientific study of human language. Starting from basic questions such as “What is language?” and “What do we know when we know a language?”, we investigate the human language faculty through the hands-on analysis of naturalistic data from a variety of languages spoken around the world. We adopt a broadly cognitive viewpoint throughout, investigating language as a system of knowledge within the mind of the language user (a mental grammar), which can be studied empirically and represented using formal models.

In order to make this task simpler, we will generally treat languages as though they were static systems. For example, we will assume that it is possible to describe language structures synchronically, ignoring the fact that languages constantly change over time. In addition, we will generally abstract away from variation within speech communities based on factors such as gender, ethnicity, social class, dialect region, and level of formality. Variation and change are very important aspects of the study of language, but they are covered in depth in a separate course, Linguistics 212 Introduction to Language, Culture, and Society.

This course is roughly divided into six units. We begin with a brief overview of the field and discuss some of the goals and methods of linguistic analysis. The main part of the course surveys the core sub-fields of linguistic analysis, listed below, each of which focuses on a different domain of organization (or module) within mental grammar. We also touch on Chomsky’s Universal Grammar hypothesis, and consider which aspects of mental grammar (if any) are innate and universal, and which aspects are learned and specific to particular languages.

1. **Morphology:** The abstract rules/constraints governing the internal structure of words, how they are formed, their categories, and how they are related to other words in the speaker’s ‘mental lexicon’.
2. **Syntax:** Principles governing how words are combined to form phrases and sentences.
3. **Semantics, pragmatics:** The relationship between linguistic form and linguistic meaning/use. How words are interpreted, how the meanings of phrases and sentences are computed on the basis of the
meanings of their parts, and how speakers employ linguistic expressions to perform commu-
nicative tasks (making assertions, asking questions, issuing commands, etc.).

(4) *Phonetics:* The sounds—or more broadly, gestures—of human languages, their acoustic and physio-
logical properties, and how they are classified, produced, and perceived.

(5) *Phonology:* How speech sounds are organized into systems of contrast, and the abstract rules or con-
straints governing how sounds are combined, as well as larger units of speech such as syllables,
words, and phrases.

Naturally we won’t have time to explore any of these topics in depth. Our goal is to give you a broad
overview of the field, and to acquaint you with some of the research questions and debates with which
linguists are currently engaged. Throughout the course, we focus on *doing analysis* — developing sound
argumentation and problem-solving skills, learning to identify and analyze data in order to construct
productive, testable hypotheses about what the principles of grammar are. We hope to make you aware
of the complexity and sophistication of your own (largely unconscious) linguistic knowledge, and in so
doing, inspire you to question some of your own preconceptions about how language works.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS, GRADING, AND POLICIES**

**Participation (20% of course grade).** Students are expected to attend every class meeting and participate
on a regular basis, and may also be asked to participate in Moodle forums or other online activities.

**Problem sets (60% of course grade).** There will be six problem sets, handed out and due every two or
three weeks. Each problem set is worth approximately 10% of the total course grade. Problem sets will be
handed out and due in class (dates listed below). On the day a problem set is handed out in class, an
electronic version will also be posted on the course Moodle page.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>problem set</th>
<th>handed out</th>
<th>due in class</th>
<th>graded by</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) Morphology/syntax</td>
<td>September 9</td>
<td>September 23</td>
<td>Matt</td>
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<tr>
<td>(2) Syntax</td>
<td>September 23</td>
<td>October 9</td>
<td>Matt</td>
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<tr>
<td>(3) Syntax/semantics</td>
<td>October 9</td>
<td>October 28</td>
<td>Matt</td>
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<tr>
<td>(4) Phonetics</td>
<td>October 28</td>
<td>November 6</td>
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<td>(5) Phonology</td>
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<td>November 20</td>
<td>Sameer</td>
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<tr>
<td>(6) Phonology/morphology</td>
<td>November 20</td>
<td>December 4</td>
<td>Sameer</td>
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Given the size of this class, we strongly prefer that you submit your assignments in hard copy form.
However, in cases of last-minute printer failure or other emergencies, we will also accept assignments as
email attachments (in PDF format, emailed to the professor grading the problem set). Your answers must
be *typed*, except where otherwise indicated. *Handwritten assignments will not be accepted.*

Assignments must be turned in on time if you wish to receive full credit and comments. Extensions
will be granted only in cases of illness, family emergency, etc., at the discretion of the instructor gradi-
ing the assignment. Unexcused late assignments will be penalized 10% of total possible points for each
full day they are late. Late assignments will not be accepted for credit if turned in after the problem set
has been returned to students, or discussed in class, whichever comes first. Moreover, late assignments
may not be returned in a timely fashion.

Because it is impossible to do good science in a vacuum, you are encouraged (indeed, expected)
to work on problem sets together. So introduce yourself to your fellow students and form a study group
today! That said, you must write up your answers *separately* and *in your own words:* copying or collabora-
tion on write-ups will be treated as academic dishonesty and a violation of the Honor Principle. You
should feel free to come see Sameer or Matt, or consult with one of the course tutors, if you’re having
difficulty with the homework. It is perfectly legitimate to seek help on an assignment *before* it is due—in
fact, we encourage it! We are always willing to discuss any aspect of the course, so please take advantage
of our services.
Final exam (20% of course grade). The course concludes with an untimed comprehensive take-home exam. The exam will be closed book and closed notes, and will consist of data analysis questions like the ones on the problem sets. Additional details will be provided later in the course. Most likely the exam will be handed out on the Thursday after the last day of classes and due one week later.

RESOURCES

Moodle. We have set up a Moodle page for this course. You can use this page to post your questions and responses to others’ questions; coordinate study sessions; and download e-reserve readings, problem sets, extra copies of the syllabus, etc. You are encouraged to check the Moodle page regularly for updates to the syllabus, additional readings, and forum discussions. We may occasionally require that you use Moodle to post questions (or answers to questions) based on the readings and class discussions. Also, if you miss a class, you can go to the Moodle page to download copies of any handouts given out that day (these should be posted to Moodle by the end of the day).

Websites. The resources page listed below includes links to sites with downloadable fonts, tools, and formatting packages, language-related blogs, animation and sound files, directories, FAQs, and other useful information.

- Reed Linguistics Department homepage: http://academic.reed.edu/linguistics/
- Resources for linguistics students: http://academic.reed.edu/linguistics/resources.html

Tutoring services. You should always feel free to consult Sameer or Matt for extra help on the problem sets. In addition, a number of students are available for peer-to-peer tutoring. For a list of tutors, go to http://info.reed.edu/tutor/tutors.taf and scroll down to LING 211.

COURSE OUTLINE AND READINGS

This schedule lists the topics for class discussion, assigned readings, and the deadlines for written work and other assignments. M (= Matt) and S (= Sameer) designate the discussion leader(s) for the week.

There is no single textbook for this course. Instead we will read selections from different textbooks, along with articles and book chapters from various sources. All readings are available through the library on print reserve, on e-reserve (accessible through Moodle), or directly from us. Call numbers for books on print reserve are given in square brackets. Reading assignments are listed under the week for which they should be completed, in the approximate order in which you should tackle them. Unless we notify you otherwise, readings are to be completed by the beginning of class on Thursday of the week for which they are assigned. Readings may be added, dropped, or shifted around as we go along.

(1) Tuesday, September 2 – Thursday, September 4


Reading:
• Lyons, Language and Linguistics: An Introduction / chapter 1, “Language” (pp. 1-31); chapter 2, “Linguistics” (pp. 34-64). [P121.L96 1981 / e-reserve]
  o N.B.: Concentrate on sections 1-3 of the Hockett article (pp. 163-179); section 4 contains a number of technical terms which will be introduced later.
• Jackendoff, Patterns in the Mind: Language and Human Nature / chapters 1-7 (pp. 3-98). [P37.J33 1994]

Reading:
- Shopen (ed.), Languages and Their Speakers / chapter 1, Craig, “Jicatlec: Field Work in Guatemala” (pp. 3-57). [P106.L318 1987]
- Haspelmath and Sims, Understanding Morphology (2nd ed.) / chapter 1, “Introduction”, sections 1.1-1.3 (pp. 1-9); chapter 2, “Basic concepts” (pp. 14-29). [P241.H37 2010 / e-reserve]

Homework:
- Problem set 1 handed out in class on Tuesday.

Morphology (M): Problems for the concept ‘morpheme’: non-concatenative word formation and suppletion.
Syntax (M): Syntactic data and generalizations: acceptability and grammaticality judgements.

Reading:


Reading:

Homework:
- Problem set 1 due in class on Tuesday.
- Problem set 2 handed out in class on Tuesday.

Reading:
  o N.B.: Concentrate on the first half of the chapter (roughly pp. 61-76).

(6) Tuesday, October 7 — Thursday, October 9


Reading:

Homework:
• Problem set 2 due in class on Thursday.
• Problem set 3 handed out in class on Thursday.

(7) Tuesday, October 14 — Thursday, October 16


Reading:

FALL BREAK

(8) Tuesday, October 28 — Thursday, October 30

Phonetics (S): Sounds vs. letters: the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA). The articulation of English sounds: exploring the vocal tract. Transcribing and producing real and nonce words of English using IPA.

Reading:
• Ladefoged /ˈlædəfəɡd/, *A Course in Phonetics* (5th or 6th ed.) / chapter 1 “Articulation and acoustics” (pp. 1-24); chapter 2 “Phonology and phonetic transcription” (pp. 33-47); chapter 3 “The consonants of English” (pp. 55-76). [P221.L2 2006 / e-reserve]

Homework:
• Problem set 3 due in class on Tuesday.
• Problem set 4 handed out in class on Tuesday.
• Links to the following websites are provided on the course Moodle page:
  o Visit the online UCLA Phonetics Lab to listen to sound files of the world’s languages, and practice phonetic symbols using the self-pronouncing IPA chart.
Visit the University of Iowa’s Sounds of Speech to see flash animations of the human vocal tract articulating various sounds in English, Spanish, and German.

(9) Tuesday, November 4 — Thursday, November 6

Phonology (S): Phonological knowledge: what do we know about speech sounds? Contrast vs. allophony: what counts as “same” or “different” in speech sounds. The local environment analysis.

Reading:
• Hayes, Introductory Phonology / chapter 2 “Phonemic analysis” (pp. 19-46), chapter 3 “More on phonemes” (pp. 47-69). [P217.H346 2009 / e-reserve]

Homework:
• Problem set 4 due in class on Thursday.
• Problem set 5 handed out in class on Thursday

(10) Tuesday, November 11 — Thursday, November 13

Phonology (S): Introduction to features and natural classes.

Reading:
• Hayes, Introductory Phonology, chapter 4 “Features” (pp. 70-102); chapter 6 “Phonological alternation I” (pp. 121-141). [P217.H346 2009 / e-reserve]
• Gussenhoven /ˈɡasənɦoʊvən/ and Jacobs /ˈjakəps/, Understanding Phonology (2nd ed.) / chapter 5 “Distinctive features” (pp. 57-76). [P217.G867 2005 / e-reserve]

(11) Tuesday, November 18 — Thursday, November 20

Phonology (S): Rule interaction. Underlying forms, abstract representations.

Reading:

Homework:
• Problem set 5 due in class on Thursday.
• Problem set 6 handed out in class on Thursday

(12) Tuesday, November 25

Morphophonology (S): Phonologically-conditioned morphological alternations.

Reading:

(13) Tuesday, December 2 — Thursday, December 4
Morphophonology (S): Phonology of non-concatenative morphology: ablaut, truncation, infixation, reduplication. Questioning the local environment analysis and the morphology-phonology cycle.

Reading:
• TBA

Homework:
• Problem set 6 due in class on Thursday.

(14) Tuesday, December 9


Reading:
• Kisseberth /ˈkɪsəbəθ/ (1970), On the functional unity of phonological rules [e-reserve]