

Course syllabus

Linguistic Field Methods

LING 336, Fall 2018, Reed College

Instructor: Sameer ud Dowla Khan
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Phone: ext. 4018 (off-campus: 503-517-4018)
Time & place: Wed 6:10–9:00PM, in Vollum 302
Office hours: Mon 11:30AM–1:30PM, Tue 5:00–6:00PM, and by appointment, in Eliot 101C

Consultant: Abhimanyu “Abhi” Rajshekar, native speaker of Malayalam
Email: rajsheka@reed.edu

Introduction

This course is an extensive exercise in learning how to document a language primarily by interacting with a native speaker of that language. By eliciting data from our consultant (Abhi), systematically analyzing the data, engaging with theories to describe his language (Malayalam), and testing predictions, we will all have a chance to practice our skills as linguists, while also getting an intimate glimpse into a language previously unfamiliar to us. Moreover, this exercise will help highlight the value in language documentation for both scientific and cultural purposes.

Requirements and grading breakdown

Prerequisite: Introduction to Linguistic Analysis (LING 211, **required**)

Textbook: Bower, Claire (2008). *Linguistic Fieldwork: A Practical Guide*. (**required, on reserve**)

Discussion (15%): Your participation in-class discussion is an integral part of this course. This includes in-class elicitation at the board, short (5 min) summaries of your major findings since the last meeting, and our collaborative discussions of linguistic analysis. Thus, attendance is mandatory.

Contributions (15%): Every week, based on the data you collect with the speaker in class and in independent sessions arranged with Abhi, you will contribute to the course’s shared documents on GoogleDrive, organizing the data into an elicitation database, a corpus of recordings, and a discussion board. Occasional readings will be assigned in conjunction with this work.

Squibs (30%): Three mini-papers will be due through the course of the semester: one on the language’s phonological system, one on its morphological system, and one on its syntactic system. This work will be largely descriptive, although each student will be asked to focus on a particular area of curiosity for each squib, open to initial theoretical discussion.

Mini-grammar (20%): On the last day of regular class meetings, you will submit a mini-grammar of Malayalam. This will be composed by compiling the updated findings of the three squibs.

Research (20%): You will conduct more substantial research on a topic of your choice in the later part of the semester, once you are given permission to access outside research on Malayalam. You will submit a short final paper and present your findings a conference-style talk during exam week. This may be a substantial extension of one of your areas of curiosity from a squib.

Policies

I generally do not accept late work. I have zero tolerance for plagiarism. You must abide by the Honor Principle.

If you have a documented disability and will need accommodations for this class, it is your responsibility to contact Disability Support Services at (503) 517-7921 or disability-services@reed.edu as soon as possible.

Until (about) the tenth week of the semester, we will work with Abhi only, and we will refrain from referring to books, articles, or other outside research on Malayalam. Sameer will provide carefully-chosen material on the language at selected points in the semester for us to read together. You may, however, refer to material on other languages, to get better insight into general linguistic theories and phenomena.

Most importantly, you must always exercise utmost respect towards our speaker Abhi, his language, his culture, his experiences, and his expertise in these areas.

Class schedule

R: reading assignment due, **Sq:** squib or mini-grammar due

Week	Day	Date	Discussion topic(s)	Due before class
1	Wed	29 Aug	Introduction, contextualizing Malayalam Ethical field research, elicitation sessions, data input	R: Bownern §1, 3, 10.4–10.5, 11.1–11.6.3
2	Wed	5 Sep	Recording Documenting phonetics and phonology Segments: consonants and vowels	R: Bownern §2, 4–5
3	Wed	12 Sep	Suprasegmentals: length, tone, stress, etc. Finalize practical transcription	
4	Wed	19 Sep	Documenting morphology Noun inflection: gender, number, definiteness, possession...	R: Bownern §6–7 Sq: Phonology (Fri at noon)
5	Wed	26 Sep	Basic predication: adjectives, copulas... Adpositions, case marking	
6	Wed	3 Oct	Verb inflection: tense, aspect, mood, agreement, negation...	
7	Wed	10 Oct	Finalizing morphology Connected speech: Frog story	Sq: Morphology (Fri at noon)
Break	Wed	17 Oct	NO CLASS: Fall Break	
8	Wed	24 Oct	Documenting syntax Heads and dependents	R: Bownern §9
9	Wed	31 Oct	Yes/no questions Wh-questions	
10	Wed	7 Nov	Subordination Relative clauses	Sq: Syntax (Fri at noon)
11	Wed	14 Nov	Group activity Areas of interest Full exposure to outside material	R: Bownern §13
12	Wed	21 Nov	NO CLASS: Thanksgiving Break	
13	Wed	28 Nov	Areas of interest	
14	Wed	5 Dec	Areas of interest	Sq: Mini-grammar
Exam	Wed	12 Dec	Research presentations (1–4pm)	
Exam	Thu	13 Dec	Research papers due (4pm)	