LIN 401: Introduction to Linguistics

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Class Time: MW 10:20am–12:10pm
Classroom: 111 Ernst Bessey Hall
Class Webpage: `http://d2l.msu.edu`

Final Exam: Wednesday, May 4, 10:00am – 12:00pm, 111 Ernst Bessey Hall

1 Course Outline

What does it mean to know a language? In this course, we will begin to answer this question. You will gain an understanding of the nature and structure of human languages, as well as gain experience in the basic methods in contemporary linguistics. The course is organized around the following questions:

- What kinds of rules and representations do speakers of languages have knowledge of?
- How do children acquire this knowledge?
- How is this knowledge used in speech production and comprehension?
- In what way is this knowledge represented in the brain?

In answering these questions, we will examine various components of language, including phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics. At each of these levels, we will develop rigorous theories of how these components operate. Additional study in historical linguistics, psycholinguistics, neurolinguistics, and sociolinguistics will allow us to expand more on what it means to know a language.

By the end of this course, you will have an overview of the linguistic system and an appreciation for its fascinating complexities. Moreover, you will better understand what it means to study language from a scientific perspective, as you will get practical experience in the basic methods of science in classroom activities.

2 Textbook

There is no required textbook for this course, therefore it is very important that you do not miss classes, since you may miss crucial information from the lecture or practice exercises. On occasion, I may post links to additional course materials (handouts, websites, chapters scanned from books) on the D2L website. If you do decide you want a book, either as a security blanket or to supplement what you learn, there are a lot of options. Here's a few:

- Napoli, Donna Jo. 1996. *Linguistics: An introduction*. Oxford University Press
- Department of Linguistics, Ohio State University. 2007. *Language files: Materials for an introduction to language and linguistics*. Ohio State University Press
- Hayes, Bruce. 2014 (draft). Introductory linguistics. Available at `http://www.linguistics.ucla.edu/people/hayes/20/Text/HayesIntroductoryLinguistics2014.pdf`

Caveat about outside materials: There are lots of linguistics textbooks and online materials available, each with its own advantages and disadvantages. You should be aware that the material we cover in class will likely differ from outside materials in various—and oftentimes critically important—ways. Modes of argumentation or the level of sophistication in discussing a topic may be quite different from other textbooks, websites, or articles. Consulting outside materials will not necessarily be a helpful substitute for missed classes, and sometimes may even make things more confusing for yourself.

3   Grading and Requirements

Your grade will be determined based on the following:

Exams		Total
2 exams	31.5% each	63%
Homework		
8 problem sets	4% each	32%
Quizzes		
5 quizzes	1% each	5%
Total		100%

4   Course Policies

Homework: Homework for this class is in the form of problem sets (PSets). PSets may not be turned in late. Some PSets will be done in groups (assigned by the instructor). The grade for the entire PSet will be the grade for each individual group member.

PSets 1, 2, and 9 will be done individually, while PSets 3-8 will be done as groups. Additionally, groups will be reassigned at least once during the semester. Individual PSets will not be accepted.

Groups may need to meet more than once in order to complete a PSet. Make sure you have the names and email addresses of your group members. All students in this course can be contacted using the D2L website as well. Each group will turn in a single copy of the PSet. The PSet does not need to be retyped—you may print the PSet off from the course website and write your answers directly on the printed out copy. Problems that arise within the group should be sorted out within the group.

Working in a group is a skill that all college students are expected to have. These homeworks is a part of the process of acquiring that skill.

If you work in a group and understand the homework problems by doing them, you should have no trouble on the exams in this course. It is a very bad idea to divide up the problem set among the group members and then combine answers, since you will not get to practice with the other problems in the homework. A better strategy is for each group member to try to complete the entire PSet alone, and then later on collaborate with the rest of the group.

Extra Credit: There may be the possibility for extra credit, in the form of participating in a linguistics experiment. This is not a certainty, so do not count on it. More details will be announced in class and in email if there is extra credit available.

Disabilities: If you have a disability that'll make it hard to meet the course requirements, talk to me about it as soon as possible so that we can make the appropriate arrangements.

Email and Office Hours: I will email you occasionally with updates to due dates, tips on homework, additional discussion on topics covered in lecture, announcements regarding course material posted to D2L, and other things relevant to the course. Make sure you check your email periodically.

You are also highly encouraged to visit office hours during the course of the semester. If you cannot make it to scheduled office hours, please try to make an appointment after class or via email.

Also, if you do not understand something, please ask for help! Linguistics can be quite difficult at times, but we have no way of helping you if we don't know what you are having trouble with.

Linguistics is hard: This course may be more difficult than you expect. You probably have not had experience with linguistics before, and the style of the course and the subject matter may be unfamiliar to you. I highly suggest that you budget more time for this course than you might otherwise expect to need.

We will also be doing lots of problem solving in this course, both on the homework and in class. Much of what you learn in this course you will learn by doing, rather than absorbing through lecture. It's crucial that you do not miss class, since missing class even once can cause you to fall behind quite dramatically.

5   Schedule

This is a plan for the class with topics we'll cover and tentative due dates. Like all great class plans, it will likely not survive contact with the semester, but we'll try to stick to it as much as possible.

MONDAY	WEDNESDAY
Jan 11th **1** Introduction Prescriptive and Descriptive Rules Competence and Performance ⚠ **PSet 1 Assigned**	13th **2** Morphology Types of Morphemes Morpheme Spotting
18th *No Class* *Martin Luther King Day*	20th **3** Morphology (continued)
25th **4** Phonetics Anatomy of the Vocal Tract Consonants ⚠ **PSet 1 Due** ⚠ **PSet 2 Assigned**	27th **5** Phonetics Vowels Transcription
Feb 1st **6** Syllable Structure Allophony ⚠ **PSet 2 Due** ⚠ **PSet 3 Assigned**	3rd **7** Phonological Rules
8th **8** Underlying Representations Rule Ordering	10th **9** Morphophonology Nature of Rules ⚠ **PSet3 Due** ⚠ **PSet4 Assigned**

MONDAY		WEDNESDAY	
15th **10**		17th **11**	
Sociolinguistics		Sociolinguistics	
⚠**PSet5 Assigned**		Language Variation	
22nd **12**		24th **13**	
Language Variation		Phonology: Acquisition and Psycholinguistics	
Historical Linguistics		⚠**PSet 5 Due**	
⚠**PSet4 Due**			
29th **14**		Mar 2nd **15**	
Review		⚠**Midterm Exam**	
7th		9th	
No Class		*No Class*	
Spring Break		*Spring Break*	
14th **16**		16th **17**	
Syntactic Categories		Word Structure	
Lexical Semantics			
Word Structure			
⚠**PSet6 Assigned**			
21st **18**		23rd **19**	
Compounds		Phrase Structure	
Ambiguity		Syntactic Relations	
		⚠**PSet6 Due**	
		⚠**PSet7 Assigned**	
28th **20**		30th **21**	
Complements, Specifiers, and Adjuncts		Interlude: Semantics	
		Compositionality	
Apr 4th **22**		6th **23**	
Embedded clauses		Binding Theory	
Recursion		⚠**PSet8 Assigned**	
⚠**PSet7 Due**			
11th **24**		13th **25**	
Movement and Questions		Syntactic Variation	
		Historical Syntax	
		⚠**PSet9 Assigned**	
18th **26**		20th **27**	
Syntax: Acquisition and Psycholinguistics		Flavors of Meaning	
⚠**PSet8 Due**		Pragmatics	
25th **28**		27th **29**	
Semantics and Pragmatics: Acquisition and		Review	
Psycholinguistics			
⚠**PSet9 Due**			

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