

LIN 200

Introduction to Language

Fall 2009

Instructor: J. Daniel Hasty
Office hours: T R 8:30-9:30
Class Time: T R 10:20-11:40

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Class Web Page: <http://angel.msu.edu>

1 Course Outline

The objectives of the course are to provide you with an introduction to the nature and structure of human language, as well as to introduce you to some basic methods of its scientific study. The course will be framed in terms of 4 guiding questions:

- What is the nature of the cognitive system which we identify with knowing a language?
- How do we acquire such a system?
- How is this system used in the production and comprehension of speech?
- How is this system represented in the brain?

To begin answering these questions we will look at the various components which form the structure of any language. The fields which linguists investigate in this regard are phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax and semantics. In addition, certain related areas of linguistics such as sociolinguistics, historical linguistics, psycholinguistics and neurolinguistics serve to expand our insight into the complexities that comprise "language."

Towards the end of the course you should have a solid overview of the linguistic system and how fantastically complicated and interesting it is. You should also be able to have a good idea of what is to do linguistics, since, in this course, you will learn linguistics by doing it, and not just hearing about it.

2 Required Text

There is no textbook to purchase. The text is a draft of a book in preparation, plus additional readings that will be posted online.

Munn, A. and C. Schmitt *Language: An Introduction*. (draft version, Michigan State University) NOTE: Chapters of the book will be posted on the Angel site.

3 Grading

Exams		Total
2 exams	31.5% each	63%
Homework		
8 Problem Sets	4% each	32%
Quizzes		
5 quizzes	1% each	5%
TOTAL		100%

The course will be graded out of 100 based on the percentages given to the left. Grades will not be curved. The following scale will be used for assigning grades.

90-100	4.0	70-74	2.0
85-89	3.5	65-69	1.5
80-84	3.0	60-64	1.0
75-79	2.5	00-59	0.0

4 Course Policies

- Problem sets may not be turned in late. **No exceptions.**
- No makeup quizzes. **No exceptions.**
- Assignments will be given in class as preparation for the problem sets.
- Make-up exams will be allowed only for university-approved reasons. Requests for make-ups must be made within two days of the exam.
- Extra credit may be available for participation in a psycholinguistics experiment. This is not for certain, so don't count on it. More details will be announced in class.
- Cheating will not be tolerated. For the consequences of cheating, go to <http://www.msu.edu/unit/ombud/honestylinks.html>

Homework Homework is in the form of Problem Sets (PSets). Problem sets may not be turned in late. There will be no exceptions to these rules. Some problem sets will be done in groups (assigned by the instructor). The grade for the group is the grade that all members of the group receive.

Pset 1, 2 and 9 will be done individually. Psets 3–8 will be done in small groups of 3 people. Group membership will be randomly assigned. Over the course of the semester, you will be in 2 different groups. If you miss class when groups are assigned, you are responsible to contact the instructor immediately.

Groups might need to meet more than once to complete the PSets. Make sure you have the email addresses of the group members so that you can correspond to each other at any time.

Each group turns in a single copy. No individual homework will be accepted (other than Psets 1, 2 and 9). The grade for the group is the grade that all members of the group receive. Therefore, each member must be responsible and take the group work seriously. Any problems that may arise in the group must be dealt with within the group.

Working in small groups is a very important skill that every college graduate is expected to have acquired. This homework serves as part of the learning process.

If you work with your group and understand the problem by actually doing it, you should have no problem getting a good grade on the exam. It is NOT a good idea to divide up the work of the homework and then combine answers, because this way you are likely not to understand the parts that you didn't work on yourself.

Quizzes Quizzes will be short and usually announced one class before they occur.

Angel Site All homework, class readings and handouts will be posted on the Angel site. There will also be useful links to other online resources. If you have problems with any material on the site please e-mail as soon as possible.

Office hours: Email correspondence and office visits are very strongly encouraged. If you do not understand something, please ask. If you cannot make it to a scheduled office hour, please make an appointment.

Comments:

- Although this is an introductory course, it may seem more difficult than you might expect. Linguistics is a field with which you have likely had no experience. Until now you may have taken language for granted, but in this course you will be looking at language in new ways, and learning numerous new concepts and terms. Plan your time accordingly.
- This course is mainly a problem-solving oriented course. Most assignments will develop your analytical abilities by letting you actually do what linguists do. Homework is extremely important—you learn by doing, not just by listening or reading. Homework will force you to use the information you learned in class and/or read in your book in actual

problems. Be prepared to work ahead, since the problems are designed to make you use what you have learned creatively.

Readings Some portions of the course may not be covered completely by the textbook, therefore class attendance is very important. Once in a while, portions may be covered by the textbook more thoroughly than they will be in class. You will be responsible for material presented in class and any assigned readings.

It is strongly recommended that you read the text material before and after class. You need to read it throughout the semester and not just for the exam in order for it to be useful.

Readings will be announced in class.

E-mail: Make sure that you read your MSU email, because many important pieces of information will be sent to you via email including tips about homework.

5 Schedule

TUESDAY		THURSDAY	
Sep 1st		3rd Introduction PSet1 assigned	1
8th Words and Morphemes	2	10th Allomorphs/Psycholinguistics of Words	3
15th Phonetics: Consonants PSet2 assigned PSet1 DUE	4	17th Phonetics: Vowels	5
22nd Transcription, Syllables and Stress PSet2 DUE Groups assigned	6	24th Phonology I PSet3 assigned	7
29th Phonology II	8	Oct 1st Morphophonology PSet4 assigned	9
6th Sociolinguistics I PSet3 DUE	10	8th Sociolinguistics II	11
13th Acquisition of Phonology PSet4 DUE	12	15th Review	13
20th Midterm Exam	14	22nd Lexical Semantics/Syntactic Categories PSet5 assigned	15
27th Word structure I Groups assigned	16	29th Word structure II PSet6 assigned	17

TUESDAY		THURSDAY	
Nov 3rd Sociolinguistics/Acquisition PSet5 DUE	18	5th Syntax: Structure I PSet7 assigned PSet6 DUE	19
10th Syntax: Structure II	20	12th Psycholinguistics of Syntax	21
17th Syntax: Empty Categories PSet7 DUE PSet8 assigned	22	19th Syntax: Movement	23
24th Syntax: continued PSet8 DUE PSet9 assigned	24	26th Thanksgiving NO CLASS	
Dec 1st Syntactic variation and change	25	3rd PSet9 DUE	26
8th Acquisition of Syntax	27	10th Review	28

Final Exam (in finals week)

Thursday, May 7, 10:00AM–12:00PM