

Linguistics 001-02: Introduction to Language

Tuesday, Thursday, Friday
12:00-12:50
Maguire 102

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Office hours: Thursday, 1-3 outside Midnight Mug (and by appointment)

Course description

This course is designed to provide students with a general introduction to the scientific study of language. Our main goals include familiarizing you with linguistic terminology, teaching both the methods of linguistic analysis and how to apply them (to English and to other languages, including languages that you might know, and languages that you don't know). We also discuss theories and research on how both first and other languages are learned by children and adults, and encourage you to think about the social implications of language use.

In the first part of the course you will learn about the physical and mental aspects of sounds, or speech production. We then discuss how knowledge about the sound patterns of language can be applied in context, by learning about accents, dialects, and other types of patterned variation in languages. This can involve topics as varied as how English is spoken on the East and West coasts of the U.S., or in Britain vs. America; how ethnicity, gender and other social factors shape and are shaped by language variation; and stylistic variation, for example, what President Obama's different speech styles reveal about the way he wants to be seen by different social groups.

After this discussion of sounds, we move on to an examination of the linguistic structure of words and sentences, building towards the ability to extract regularities from linguistic data in unfamiliar languages. We discuss how this can be applied by learning about how language is acquired and processed by children and adults. This can involve topics like age and individual differences in cognition, for example, in working memory, as well as the study of how sentences might be processed in the brain.

In the last part of the course we focus on understanding the ways people use and interpret language in different contexts. With understanding "meaning" as a foundation, we move on to exploring a variety of issues in language and culture, for example, language and humor and social rules of politeness.

If you are majoring or minoring in linguistics, this course will provide you with the background you need to succeed in other linguistics courses. If you are studying a non-native language, this course will provide you with additional tools to facilitate the learning process. Linguistics, which is the scientific study of language, interfaces with a wide variety of other fields (e.g., anthropology, sociology, psychology, cognitive neuroscience, computer science, philosophy, politics and the law, and public policy), so you should be able to make exciting connections whatever your background and interests. This course also fulfills the social science requirement for undergraduates.

Textbook

Required: Fasold, R., & Connor-Linton, J. (Eds.). (2006). *An Introduction to Language and Linguistics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Note: there are **no valid electronic versions** of this book. Other required readings will be made available electronically and you may choose to print them or to read them on the device of your choosing.

Evaluation

- Participation (active attendance, reading, reading questions, Bb discussions, pop quizzes) 15%
- 3 homework assignments, 3 in-class quizzes, and 1 news item (lowest score dropped = 5% each) 30%
- 2 in-class tests (15% each) 30%
- Group final project:
 - Group presentation 10%*
 - Final paper: Individual Grade 10%*
 - Group Grade 5%*

*the nature of final projects and their grading will be negotiated based on the size of our class

Participation

Attendance: You will receive points for attending each class meeting. Being in class on time will help your grade, and not being in class on time will hurt it. Please complete the required readings and online modules, as well as any written assignments based on readings (e.g. reading questions), *before* class and contribute to the discussions and activities while you are in class. If you absolutely cannot avoid being absent, please inform me *ahead of time*. You are responsible for any material covered and any homework assigned during your absence. If you are absent four times during the semester your final grade will be lowered one letter grade (if you received an "A" in the class, but missed four classes, you will get a "B"). Your grade will continue to drop for each subsequent absence.

Blackboard discussions: Another way to gain participation points is to post comments or questions about reading assignments or class discussions on Blackboard (<https://campus.georgetown.edu>). In addition to asking about things you have not understood in the readings, please feel free to share musings, criticisms, alternative perspectives, and other comments about the readings that you think your classmates might find useful. Please check the discussion forum regularly and respond to your classmates when you can.

Linguistics Department Speaker Series: The faculty members in the Georgetown Department of Linguistics often invite researchers from other universities, as well as our own top scholars, to give talks on their research on Fridays from 3:30– 4:45 in our Conference Room, Poulton Hall, 2nd floor. This is a wonderful way for students to gain exposure to a variety of topics in the field of linguistics, as presented by some of the world's leading experts.

Homework and readings

Homework comprises almost a third of your grade. All assigned readings must be completed before class on the date listed, and homework assignments will be due at the beginning of class. Except under extraordinary and unavoidable circumstances, late work will not be accepted; however, your lowest grade will be dropped, so everyone gets one “free pass.”

You are welcome (in fact, encouraged) to collaborate with each other on the homework. If you meet outside of class to work together (in a study group), please make note of this on your assignment. If you post homework-related questions and assistance on Blackboard, please do so in a way that scaffolds your classmates’ learning process with hints as opposed to circumventing it with short-cuts. In other words, do not simply ask for or provide correct answers; instead, try to explain underlying concepts or methodological issues in ways that that will help people to solve the problems independently. (After all, everyone will have to do this independently on the tests.) If you have questions about how the homeworks are graded, please bring these questions to the attention of your instructor within two weeks of receiving your graded homework. Since one homework grade is dropped and any additional homeworks not turned in receive a grade of zero, please check on Blackboard before the final paper is due to make sure nothing is missing. It is your responsibility to make sure your work has been received.

Online Modules: In three topics of the course, Phonology, Morphology, and Syntax, you will be assigned online modules to complete in addition to the reading; you will access these resources through Blackboard. The modules are designed to cover some of the course content that is traditionally addressed through in-class lecture, and so to free up class time for more advanced interactive activities. In each topic, two modules are assigned over the weekend to be completed by **9:00 Monday morning**, the third module should be completed by **noon on Wednesday**, and the fourth is a review activity that does not need to be submitted.

Each online module includes some quiz questions to check your understanding of the content. These online quiz questions will not be graded, but completing them will count toward your participation grade. Your answers will help your instructor to decide how to focus the following class session based on your understanding, so for this reason it is important that you try your best. To make up for the out-of-class time that you spend working on the online modules, no homework problem set will be assigned on these topics; instead, you will take an in-class quiz on the third day of the topic, which will count as a homework assignment.

News Items: In order to get a sense of how the media covers issues related to language and linguistics, and how the study of linguistics can provide insight into other fields, you must find one news article relating to a subfield of linguistics and prepare a five-minute presentation for the class. Early in the semester, you will sign up to present an article relating to one of the topics listed below, on the designated date. The article should be relatively recent (i.e. from the past year or so) and from a popular news source such as The Washington Post, CNN.com, etc., not an academic journal or a blog. The night before your article is due, please email it to me by midnight so that I can post it to Blackboard.

Sept 19	Topic: Sound
Oct 1	Topic: Dialects
Oct 17	Topic: Form or Meaning
Oct 24	Topic: Acquisition
Nov 12	Topic: Discourse

Nov 22

Topic: Policy

In addition, on the dates indicated on the schedule, you will comment on Bb on one (or more) of the News Items recently posted. Your responses will be figured into your grade for your News Item (which counts as one homework assignment).

Extra credit: You can receive an extra 5% homework extra credit up to three times in the course of the semester. Extra credit may be earned in one of two ways: (1) participate in a linguistics-related experiment being conducted by a student or professor in any department at Georgetown. Confirm first with your instructors that the experiment in which you are participating is appropriate for our class; after you have participated, please email your instructors with confirmation of your participation, as well as one or two sentences relating the experiment to topics covered in class. (2) Turn in a 2-page write-up of an additional news article. If interested, please clear the details with your TAs or instructors first.

Tests

There will be two timed, in-class tests each covering three broad topics on the syllabus. Each test will last one class session. The questions will be similar to those on the homework assignments and problems you have discussed and worked through in class, but you will not be allowed to collaborate during the tests. If at any point you feel concerned that you are struggling with one of the topics we are covering in class, **please come see us early on so that we can be sure you understand it before the test.** You must be in class to take the tests on the dates given.

Final project

The final project represents an opportunity for you to apply the knowledge you have gained to an area of linguistics that you find particularly fascinating and worthy of study. You will form a group with classmates who share your research interests. You will formulate a research question (or set of complementary research questions) that you would like to answer and then you will work together to investigate it (or them). At the end of the semester, you will give a presentation on your findings, and final papers will be due on the date set by the Registrar as the final exam date for this course. Each group will submit a single, coherent paper; however, each group member will have primary responsibility for 5 -7 pp. (double-spaced) of the final paper; more information regarding this project will be made available later in the semester. The length of the final paper will depend partly on group size and partly on the scope of the project.

Honor code

Members of the Georgetown University academic community are bound by the Georgetown University Honor Code:

In the pursuit of the high ideals and rigorous standards of academic life, I commit myself to respect and uphold the Georgetown University Honor System: To be honest in any academic endeavor, and to conduct myself honorably, as a responsible member of the Georgetown community, as we live and work together.

We are obliged by university rules to report any apparent violations of the Honor Code to the Honor Council. According to the University Honor Code (<http://www.georgetown.edu/honor>), "Without regard

to motive, student conduct that is academically dishonest, evidences lack of academic integrity or trustworthiness, or unfairly impinges upon the intellectual rights and privileges of others is prohibited.”

Violations of the honor system include cheating on exams or assignments, committing plagiarism, using false citations, submitting work for multiple purposes without prior permission of relevant instructors, submitting false data, falsifying academic documentation, abusing library privileges, and abusing shared electronic media. If you have any questions at all about the honor system, please contact me immediately.

Absences & Accommodations

Students are expected to attend all classes and to complete all assignments on time. Absences may have an adverse effect on grades in a course, up to and including failure. Professors may refuse to accept or may penalize late assignments. If you are absent four times during the semester your final grade will be lowered one letter grade (if you received an “A” in the class, but missed four classes, you will get a “B”). Your grade will continue to drop for each subsequent absence.

Excused absences: In certain circumstances, absences may be excused. These include:

- **Absence for religious observances:** Students must notify their professors in writing at the beginning of the semester of religious observances that conflict with classes. Students who cannot be accommodated should discuss the matter with a dean.
- **Absence for athletic travel:** Student-athletes must provide their professors with a travel letter at the beginning of the semester which highlights potential absences. Students who cannot be accommodated for some or all absences should discuss the matter with the relevant Academic Coordinator for Student-Athletes.
- **Absence for documented illness:** Students who miss multiple classes due to prolonged illness should seek medical care and provide documentation of such to the Dean’s Office, which will communicate with the student's professors. A prolonged absence may necessitate the student’s withdrawal from the course or from the University for the semester.
- **At the discretion of the professor:** There may be cases where an absence is undocumented but is, nevertheless, excused by the professor (e.g., absence due to a death in the family). Students should initiate a conversation with their professors about the nature and duration of the absence, in advance of the absence whenever possible. Students who anticipate missing multiple classes should inform the Dean’s Office.

When absences are excused, students remain responsible for all assigned work, and shall be provided with the opportunity to make up, without penalty, any work that they have missed.

Accommodations: Students with documented and qualifying learning, physical and psychological disabilities should contact the Academic Resource Center (ARC), which arranges for reasonable accommodations in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and University policies. In order to arrange accommodations in each course, the student must present his/her professors with a letter from the ARC outlining the recommended accommodations at the beginning of the semester.

Technology Policy

You may use whatever technology best aids your learning, be that a tablet, laptop, phone/tablet, recorder, etc. Please be aware that our class is only fifty minutes long. Time spent off-task on your device will invariably hurt your performance, and may result in a drop in your participation grade at my discretion.

Inclement Weather Policy

If the university declares an inclement weather day, class will proceed according to the university's policy (closed, open with liberal leave, open). If the university is open, with or without leave, class will be in session and your attendance, or explanation for lack thereof, is expected as usual.

Important dates

Thursday, August 29	First day of class
Tuesday, September 3	Personal interest statement due (via Blackboard)
Friday, September 6	Sign up for news item
Friday, September 13	HW#1 (phonetics) due
Friday, September 20	Phonology Quiz (in class, in lieu of HW#2)
Tuesday, October 1	Post final project ideas on Bb
Thursday, October 3	TEST (phonetics, phonology, & dialect variation)
Friday, October 11	Morphology Quiz (in class, in lieu of HW#3)
Friday, October 18	Syntax Quiz (in class, in lieu of HW#4)
Friday, November 1	HW#5 (acquisition) due
Tuesday, November 5	Project proposal due (<i>meet with me beforehand</i>)
Thursday, November 7	TEST (morphology, syntax, child language acquisition)
Thursday, November 14	HW#6 (semantics/pragmatics) due
Tuesday, November 19	Project references and outlines due
Tuesday, December 3	In-class group project presentations
Thursday, December 5	In-class group project presentations
Friday, December 6	In-class group project presentations
Wednesday, December 11 (23:59)	Final papers due to blackboard by 23:59

Schedule

Any changes will be announced & posted on Blackboard. Please check regularly.

Key:

Bb = Blackboard **R** = response (due before class on date listed)

HW = homework (due in class).

DATE	TOPIC	READINGS DUE	ASSIGNMENT
Topic 1: Introduction			
Aug 29 (R)	Syllabus, introduction to the course and to each other, ground rules; Q&A about the course		Verify access to Bb Purchase textbook
Aug 30 (F)	Discussion about “proper” language, prescriptive vs. descriptive approaches to language	Intro Ch. (pp. 1-11) Pinker (1994, pp. 382-396)	(Non-textbook readings are available on Bb under Readings.)
Topic 2: Sound - Articulatory phonetics			
Sept 3 (T)	Day 1: Vocal tract anatomy & articulators	Ch. 1 (pp. 13-37)	Personal Interest Statements & Online Learning Equipment Check due via Bb
Sept 5 (R)	Day 2: Vocal tract anatomy & articulators	Review pp. 13-37	
Sept 6 (F)	Palatography Activity		Sign up for news item (in class) HW #1 handed out
Topic 3: Sound - The International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA)			
Sept 10 (T)	IPA Day 1 (consonants)		
Sept 12 (R)	IPA Day 2 (vowels, suprasegmentals, transcription)		
Sept 13 (F)	IPA Transcription Activity – Jeopardy		HW #1 (Phonetics) due
Topic 4: Sound - Phonology			
Sept 17 (T)	Phonology Day 1	Ch. 1 (pp. 38-50) Online Modules 1 & 2	
Sept 19 (R)	Phonology Day 2	Online Module 3	Bb R on News Items (sound)
Sept 20 (F)	Phonology Day 3 – Quiz Intro to dialects	Online Module 4	Phonology Quiz (in lieu of HW2)
Topic 5: Dialect variation			

Sept 24 (T)	Dialects and “standards”, levels and types of variation	Ch. 9	
Sept 26 (R)	African American English, attitudes & stereotypes, British and American English	Wolfram & Schilling-Estes (2006)	
Sept 27 (F)	<i>Do You Speak American</i> clips, discussion		
Oct 1 (T)	Sociophonetics: connections between dialects and phonetics/phonology		Bb R on News Items (dialects) Post final project ideas on Bb
Oct 3 (R)	TEST (phonetics, phonology, & dialect variation)		Study for test
Oct 4 (F)	Final project prep day		
Topic 6: Form - Morphology			
Oct 8 (T)	Morphology Day 1	Ch. 2 Online Modules 1 & 2	
Oct 10 (R)	Morphology Day 2	Online Module 3	
Oct 11 (F)	Morphology Day 3 – quiz Intro to syntax	Online Module 4	Morphology Quiz (in lieu of HW3)
Topic 7: Form - Syntax			
Oct 15 (T)	Syntax Day 1	Ch. 3 (pp. TBD) Online Modules 1 & 2	
Oct 17 (R)	Syntax Day 2	Online Module 3	Bb R on news items (form)
Oct 18 (F)	Syntax Day 3 – quiz Intro to Discourse	Online Module 4	Syntax Quiz (in lieu of HW4)
Topic 8: Child language acquisition			
Oct 22 (T)	Critical period hypothesis and other age-related effects on acquisition	Ch. 13 (pp. 433-445)	
Oct 24 (R)	Milestones of L1 development	Ch. 6	Bb R on news items (Acquisition)
Oct 25 (F)	Researching child L1 acquisition		
Topic 9: Semantics and pragmatics			
Oct 29 (T)	Fundamental semantic and pragmatic concepts – what is meaning?	Ch. 4	
Oct 31 (R)	Review of semantic concepts & practice activities		
Nov 1 (F)	Speech acts and rules for conversational interaction (e.g. turn-taking)		HW #5 (Acquisition) due
Nov 5 (T)	Gricean maxims, implicature		Project topic/proposal due

Nov 7 (R)	TEST (morphology, syntax, child language acquisition)		Study for test
Topic 10: Discourse			
Nov 8 (F)	Conversation, narrative	Ch. 5	
Nov 12 (T)	Planes of discourse		Bb R on news items (Discourse)
Nov 14 (R)	Practice discourse analysis with transcripts		HW #6 (Semantics) due
Topic 11: Language acquisition and bilingualism			
Nov 15 (F)	First, second and bilingual LA		
Nov 19 (T)	Individual differences in SLA	Ch. 13 (pp. 446-454)	Final Project References & Outlines Due
Nov 21 (R)	How second languages are taught	Ch. 13 (pp. 454-460)	
Topic 12: The politics of language			
Nov 22 (F)	Standardization, language policy, language and politics	Ch. 11 (pp. 373-389)	Bb R on news items (Policy)
Nov 26 (T)	Official English and bilingual maintenance, bilingual education	Ch. 11 (pp. 389-398)	
Thanksgiving Break Nov 28 & 29			
Topic 13: Final project presentations			
Dec 3 (T)	Final project presentations*		
Dec 5 (R)	Final project presentations*		
Dec 6 (F)	Final project presentations*		

*These class meetings may be replaced by a larger block of time if schedules permit.

Linguistic Learning Goals

	Students will gain knowledge of:	Students will be assessed by:
1	Seminal readings and approaches related to the analysis of language.	Demonstrated knowledge on HWs, tests, and news item analysis.
2	The equality of languages and language varieties and commonly held misconceptions about them.	Participation in Bb and class discussions on <i>prescriptive/descriptive</i> approaches to language; <i>language variation; language policy; language, culture and identity</i> and performance on HW#5 (<i>discourse analysis</i>), TEST #1 (<i>dialect variation</i>) and TEST #2 (<i>discourse analysis</i>).
3	The complexity and underlying systematicity of language.	HWs and tests on sound, form and meaning, involving <i>linguistic problems that show the complexity and underlying systematicity of language</i> . Discussion of <i>dialect variation</i> and performance on TEST #1 (<i>dialect variation</i>).
4	The role of variation in linguistic theory and application.	Participation in Bb and class discussions on <i>dialect variation</i> and performance on TEST#1 (<i>phonetics, phonology and dialect variation</i>).
5	The relationships between language and a variety of social contexts.	Participation in Bb and class discussions on <i>dialect variation, discourse</i> and performance on HW#5 (<i>discourse analysis</i>), HW #6 (<i>semantics/pragmatics</i>), TEST #1 (<i>dialect variation</i>), and TEST #2 (<i>discourse analysis</i>)
6	How first and second languages are learned.	Participation in Bb and class discussions on <i>L1 and L2 Acquisition</i>
7	How languages are structured and how they convey referential and social meaning.	Participation in Bb and class discussions on <i>semantics and pragmatics, morphological and syntactic structure</i> , and performance on HW # 3 (<i>morphology</i>), HW #4 (<i>syntax</i>), HW#6 (<i>semantics and pragmatics</i>) and TEST#2 (<i>morphology, syntax, and discourse</i>).

	Students will be able to:	Students will be assessed by:
8	How language is processed—cognitively and computationally.	Participation in Bb and class discussions on either <i>language processing or computational models</i> and performance on TEST#2 (<i>morphology, syntax</i>)
9	Analyze linguistic data at various levels of structure and use.	Completion of HWs and tests (see 3 & 7 above)
10	Analyze, critically evaluate, and integrate classic and current research in linguistics connected to contemporary theoretical and practical issues.	Completion of HWs and news item reports (see 2, 4, 5, 6, &8), and final research paper.
11	Craft clear and coherent linguistic analytic arguments.	This is a developing skill. Completion of HWs on sound, form and meaning will begin this process.
12	Design, carry out, and report a small original research project on a current issue.	Completion of final project.
13	Relate linguistic constructs to other academic fields.	Completion of final project.