

LIN 200

Introduction to Language

Fall 2022

Instructor: Jingying Xu
Office hours:
Class Time: 10:20am–11:40am
Class Web Page: d2l.msu.edu

E-mail: xujing21@msu.edu
Zoom office:
Class Room: Hubbard Hall G28

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 do we know when we know a language?
- How do we acquire this knowledge?
- How is this knowledge used in the production and comprehension of speech?
- How is this knowledge 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) We recommend that you print out a copy of the entire book.

3 Grading

Exams		Total
2 exams	30% each	60%
Homework		
7 Problem Sets	5% each	35%
(8 assigned; lowest group grade dropped.)		
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 Class Format

This is an in-person course. You are expected to come to class and participate at the scheduled class time.

Homework and exams

- Homework should be turned in on paper at the beginning of the class it is due.
- Exams will be in class.

5 Course details

Problem Sets Much of the work in the class is in the form of Problem Sets (PSets). Some problem sets will be done in groups (assigned by the instructor) and others individually. The grade for the group is the grade that all members of the group receive.

Pset 1, 2 and 8 will be done individually. PSets 3–7 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. The lowest graded group assignment will be dropped from the final grade calculation. Individual assignment grades may not be dropped.

Groups might need to meet more than once to complete the PSets. Make sure you have the email addresses of the group members or other relevant contact information so that you can reach each other.

Each group turns in a single copy of the homework. No individual homework will be accepted (other than PSets 1, 2 and 8). 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.

D2L Site All homework, class readings and handouts will be posted on the D2L 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 Office hours will be held using Zoom, and possibly in-person when we return to in-person teaching. Please use the Office Hours Zoom link rather than the classroom Zoom link.

If you do not understand something, please ask either by email or by coming to office hours. 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.

Recording and redistribution of class materials As members of a learning community, students are expected to respect the intellectual property of course instructors. All course materials presented to students are the copyrighted property of the course instructors and are subject to the following conditions of use:

- With the permission of the instructor, you may record lectures or any other classroom activities and use the recordings only for your own course-related purposes.
- You may not post the recordings or other course materials online or distribute them to anyone not enrolled in the class.
- Any student violating the conditions described above may face academic disciplinary sanctions.

The Spartan Code of Honor Academic Pledge The Spartan Code of Honor was adopted by ASMSU on March 3, 2016, endorsed by Academic Governance on March 22, 2016, and recognized by the Provost, President, and Board of Trustees on April 15, 2016.

“As a Spartan, I will strive to uphold values of the highest ethical standard. I will practice honesty in my work, foster honesty in my peers, and take pride in knowing that honor in ownership is worth more than grades. I will carry these values beyond my time as a student at Michigan State University, continuing the endeavor to build personal integrity in all that I do.”

Persons with disabilities Michigan State University is committed to providing equal opportunity for participation in all programs, services and activities. Requests for accommodations by persons with disabilities may be made by contacting the Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities at 517-884-RCPD or on the web at rcpd.msu.edu. Once your eligibility for an accommodation has been determined, you will be issued a verified individual services accommodation (“VISA”) form. Please present this form to me at the start of the term and/or two weeks prior to the accommodation date (test, project, etc). Requests received after this date will be honored whenever possible.

6 Schedule

MONDAY	WEDNESDAY
Aug 29th	31st Introduction PSet1 assigned <i>Reading: Introductory Reading</i>
Sep 5th Labor Day NO CLASS	7th Words and Morphemes <i>Reading: Chapter 1 (§1.1-1.3)</i>
12th Allomorphs/Psycholinguistics of Words <i>Reading: Chapter 1 (§1.4-1.7)</i>	14th Phonetics: Consonants PSet2 assigned PSet1 DUE <i>Reading: Chapter 2 (§2.3 until Vowels)</i>
19th Phonetics: Vowels <i>Reading: Chapter 2 (§2.3 Vowels)</i>	21st Transcription, Syllables and Stress PSet2 DUE Groups assigned <i>Reading: Chapter 3</i>
26th Phonology I PSet3 assigned <i>Reading: Chapter 4</i>	28th Phonology II
Oct 3rd Morphophonology PSet4 assigned	5th Sociolinguistics I PSet3 DUE <i>Reading: Chapter 5 (§5.1-5.2)</i>
10th Sociolinguistics II PSet5 assigned Groups assigned <i>Reading: Chapter 5 (§5.3-5.5)</i>	12th Phonological Change PSet4 DUE <i>Reading: Chapter 6</i>
17th Sociolinguistics/Acquisition PSet5 DUE	19th Review
24th Break Day NO CLASS	26th Midterm Exam

MONDAY		WEDNESDAY	
31st	16	Nov 2nd	17
Lexical Semantics/Syntactic Categories <i>Reading: Chapter 7 (§7.1-7.2)</i>		Word structure I PSet6 assigned <i>Reading: Chapter 7 (§7.3-7.4)</i>	
7th	18	9th	19
Word structure II		Syntax: Structure I PSet7 assigned PSet6 DUE Groups assigned <i>Reading: Chapter 8 (§8.1-8.5)</i>	
14th	20	16th	21
Syntax: Structure II Project-II assigned <i>Reading: Chapter 8 (§8.6-8.10)</i>		Sentences and meaning	
21st	22	23rd	23
Syntax: Unpronounced elements PSet7 DUE PSet8 assigned <i>Reading: Chapter 9 (§9.1-9.2)</i>		Syntax: Movement <i>Reading: Chapter 9 (§9.3)</i>	
28th	24	30th	25
Syntax: continued		Syntactic variation and change <i>Reading: Chapter 10</i>	
Dec 5th	26	7th	27
Acquisition of Syntax PSet8 DUE			

Final Exam

Tuesday, December 13 Place TBA